EFL Learner's Silence at University Level: Where to?[■]

Dr. Huda Fadhil Al-Halawachy*
Dept. of English, College of Arts, P.O.Box 11160, University of Mosul, Iraq
* E-mail of the corresponding author: huda1971jan30@yahoo.com

"A wise old owl sat on an oak; the more he saw the less he spoke; the less he spoke, the more he heard; why aren't we like that wise old bird?"
(Richards: Via the net)

Abstract
The above quotation echoes the wisdom of silence. But, this wisdom is not workable thoroughly as it has been a terrifying phenomenon in higher education atmosphere. A silent class definitely threatens the process of learning in Iraqi higher education as "[silence]is often troubling when students speak, but disturbing when they do not" (Boler, 2004quoted in Armstrong,2007b:p.1). The present study aims to identify, describe, and analyze the reasons behind silence of the majority part of the silent students at university level. It is hypothesized that certain psychological and pedagogical factors could be the main source of Iraqi learners' silence. The empirical data is based on a questionnaire administered to two groups of 4th grade students at the Dept. of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul during the academic year (2008-2009). In total, 43 students (20 females) and (23 males) participated in this study, with gender as the main dependent variable for the purpose of statistical analysis. The study concludes that some psychological and pedagogical factors come to the forefront of the reasons behind Iraqi undergraduate students' silence. The paper also ends with some suggestions that might help students not to be "like our wise old bird" completely while learning English in the classroom.
Keyword: silence, Iraqi EFL learners, Higher education, psychology and pedagogy.

1. Preliminary

In her preface, Bosaki (2005: p. xiv cited in Shizha, 2005: p.2) states that "I learned that speaking made you vulnerable to criticism and judgment, so across most contexts, it was safer to remain silent to others". She continues: "As a child, I derived equist pleasure from the belief that no one could read my mind. My thoughts were my own …". Like Bosaki, we all have experienced silence during childhood and even adolescence; the last cited text echoes part of my belief about silence in my childhood.

It is worth mentioning that the dynamics of silence is everywhere just like voice or talk. In her taxonomy of situations or "levels and domains" of silence, Saville -Troike (1985: pp. 16-17) mentions, among others, silences are determined by institutional settings as: temples, libraries, religious services, legal proceedings, funerals, classes in schools, and public performances. Other settings where silence appears to be the norm, or where it is highly valued are recording studios (Enninger, 1987), hospitals, museums, galleries, and so on (Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.274). As part of the formal learning situations, which is the core of the present investigation, Armstrong (2007b: p.1) emphasizes that "…., it is not uncommon for silence to be assumed as being conducive to learning". Still, he views silence as two faces of the same coin- positive silence vs. negative silence in the learning process; "[in] schooling, [for instance], silence is more often associated with classroom discipline. In one culture of learning, silence may be made meaningful by being recognized as integral to the learning process. But in other cultures of learning, there is a persistent attempt to break or disturb the silences"(p.1).

As a teacher, being influenced by the salient dichotomy of 'voice' and 'silence' or 'talk' and 'silence' in the classroom setting, I am continually seeking ways to break the silence of the classroom by adopting the discussion approach (Al-Halawachy, 2008: n.34: p.86). This is done to encourage every student to participate in the discussion. Yet, I find my experience similar to that of Briskin (2000) showing her personal appeals in breaking the silence in her classroom by admitting that "[i]n many many instances, I have cajoled and implored students to share their thoughts, sometimes successfully and more often not"(p.1).

Broadly speaking, it is not easy to understand the nature of silence nor even to determine its boundaries since "[s]ilence means something more than a void or an empty space" in communication(Armstrong, 2007b: p.1). In the literature, there are flaws for this reasoning. In her opening article entitled "The Place of Silence in an Integrated Theory of Communication", Muriel Saville-Troike presents an overview of the complex nature of

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silence including its varied types and functions (Saville-Troike, in Tannen and Saville-Troike, 1985: pp.3-18). Jaworski, the author of landmark successive comprehensive works on silence believes that "…, [silence] can be said to have an important position in those branches of linguistics that deal with how people actually communicate with each other"(1993: p.1). In his book entitled <u>Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives</u>, Jaworski argues that "[s]ilence is a diverse concept and its study merits an interdisciplinary approach"(1997: p.1), as the title clearly suggests. Consistent with this view is that silence has such a capacity to provoke diverse interpretations and ambiguities which, in turn, makes it one of the highest forms of communication and yet one of the greatest sources of misunderstanding. It also makes it one of the most elusive of all communicative behaviours to describe and measure (Barnlund, 1989 cited in Liu, 2002: p.39). Silence, then, has been shown by many scholars to go beyond the non-communicative absence of speech and has been described as a complex linguistic item whose functioning needs a comprehensive and explanatory treatment in a plethora of frameworks as Politeness Theory, Relevance Theory, Discourse Analysis, to name just a few (Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.273) (Readers may refer to Al-Halawachy, 2008: pp.111-128 for full details on non-verbal communication, including silence in different disciplines).

In pedagogy, as a framework, this vague nature of silence is evident in the sense that it is part of a web linked to speaking and listening/hearing; a web organized by and saturated with power (Briskin, 2000: p.1). This makes it difficult for educators to predict and may observe the patterns of silence in the classroom and challenge them.

To this end, we have reported some preliminary concepts about silence. Yet, some basic questions are needed to be posed here as: What does silence connote pedagogically?, Is silence positive or negative in the classroom setting?, What are the main causes of learners' silence at different educational levels?, etc.

2. Background

The role of silence has long been accorded central importance within disciplines as philosophy and religion figuring both in their framework and practice (Saville-Troike, 1985: p.3). Within the framework of linguistics, silence has been traditionally ignored except for its function as a boundary-marking, delimiting the beginning and end of utterances (Ibid.). Yet, "[in] recent years, there has been a growing interest in the role of silence in communication in the field of linguistics"(Nakane, 2007: p.5).

As a first step in arriving at the connotations of silence, it is useful to realize the relationship between speech and silence. In a recent work, Meyer (2009: p.47) admits that "[s]peech and silence are not binary opposites without a relationship to one another. Instead the relationship between speech and silence is much more complicated". According to his conceptualization, Picard (1948/1952 cited in Ibid.) views speech and silence or "language and silence [as belonging to each other]: language has knowledge of silence as silence has knowledge of language" (p.xx). The interrelationship between speech and silence, though, begins with silence; he states: "[s]peech came out of silence, out of the fullness of silence"(p.8). As such, "[s] speech and silence are not separate entities; rather, speech and silence are connected" (Meyer, 2009: p.48) and intertwined. In the same vein, Dauenhauer (1980 cited in Meyer, 2009: p.48) argues that "silence is a complex positive phenomenon. It is not the mere absence of something"(p. vii). In this sense, he criticized various philosophers who attack silence as irrational in relation to the rationality of speech as follows: "Discourse without silence would be merely a temporal language and silence without discourse would collapse into either muteness or nonsignitive vision. But genuine discourse and silence in their inextricable interconnection, are ingredient in the living of the multiple modes of interpersonal involvement of which people are capable" (pp.96-97).

Few traditional frameworks would allow for silence to be merely a background to speech. Bruneau (1973) offers the analogy of the printed page to support this view: "Silence is to speech as the white of this paper to the print" (p.18) (cited in Jaworski, 1993: p.12) and for others who voice similar definitions of silence say: "[it] is the contrastive material against which auditory images are cast"(Bowers et al, 1985: p.523 cited in Ibid.). In Jaworski's view (1993: p.17) "… silence and speech are two intersecting and equally relevant communicative categories". This recent stand argues against the traditional one regarding silence only as a background to speech which would be a drastic oversimplification. As the common saying echoes: 'Silence speaks louder than words', silence is as powerful as voice in communication, if not towers speech or noise, which is evident in Picard's statement (1963: p.121 cited in Meyer, 2009: p.54) when he privileged silence saying that "…; silence seems more powerful than language; but silence has this power only because it is from silence that language comes, because it contains language".

Broadly speaking, the meaning of silence is polysymous and its dictionary meanings are embraced under various entries as (1) abstaining from speech or utterance, sometimes with reference to a particular matter,

(2) the state or the condition when nothing is audible, (3) omission of mention or notice, etc. In all these entries, silence connotes the absence of something else (Saville-Troike, 1985: pp.9-10).

The connotations of silence tend to vary since silence cuts into different frameworks; a fact which we point to so far. "[T]here are as many kinds of silence as there are of relevant sounds" (Bilmes, 1994: p.79 cited in Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis, 2012: p.91). He operationalizes silence in terms of two general categories, viz. "absolute silence" and "notable silence"(Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.274). Similarly, Armstrong (2007a) states that "the range of meanings [of silence] is diverse"(p. 1).

Silence is positively viewed since silence 'is golden' referring to the retreatist, contemplative function of experiencing silence. On the contrary, silence could be negatively viewed in other contexts where silence is connoted as punishment, i.e., solitary isolation, for instance, when students are asked to sit in silence, with fingers on their lips. More neutral sets of meanings link silence to language; it may shape sequences of speech. Silence can also be interpreted as empty but full of meaning. More specific is the sense of silence as linked to secrecy, in terms of what is not being said. This links to more explicitly political and ideological meanings (Rapp, 2000) (See Ibid.).

Some clues of the meanings of silence are apparent in different speech communities; they can be found in proverbs: 'silence is golden' (English), 'Because of the mouth the fish dies'(Spanish), 'The way your eyes look can say more than your mouth'(Japanese) (Saville-Troike, 1985: p.10). Silence also has a significant social value in Arabic proverbs (see, among others, Ahmed's study, 2005 of Sudanese proverbs).

Even silence functions differently in accordance with the framework where it is analysed. The role of silence is significant in communication maintaining certain types of interpersonal relations, e.g. respect, submission or defiance, manifesting emotions, e.g. anger or sympathy, or expressing propositional meanings, e.g. to refuse an invitation (Johnson and Johnson, 1998: pp.287-288).

One could go further on citing other examples on a web of meanings and functions of silence in different frameworks. Since our goal here is to investigate silence pedagogically, further literature is needed focusing on silence in the pedagogic framework which is our main concern in the forthcoming discussion.

3. The Problem of the Problem

Very broadly put, it is not surprising nor reproving to note that the study of communication has focused on talk to the relative exclusion of silence (Tannen and Saville-Troike, 1985: p.xi). In Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis' (2012) words: "[the] dominance of discourse in Western societies may account, in part, for the lack of systematic scientific research on the experience and use of silence in different communicative contexts"(p.92). We would argue that this is not only true for Western culture; Eastern culture lacks such systematic investigation and empirical studies on silence as well. In this line of thinking, the Chinese scholar, Zhong-hua (2008) states the following: '… research on "silence" is still an academic blank at home and abroad' (p.36). The Arab culture, and the Iraqi culture, which is a case in point, as an Eastern culture shares China in that gap of little research on silence which is part of the problem of the present investigation.

The other part of the problem which is our main concern here is that theoretically, "…few studies have focused on silence inside the classroom…" (Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.276) and practically, there are "…limited empirical investigations on silence inside the classroom…" (Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis, 2012: p.92). To the best of our knowledge, the Arab literature lacks both treatments of EFL learner's silence in the classroom whether in the Arab culture or the Iraqi culture.

In active theories of learning, there is an assumption that "students should not remain silent"(Armstrong, 2007b: p.1). Based on the belief that the instructors typically prefer to have learners participate orally and often assign participation grades (see Jacobs and chase, 1992; Bean and Peterson, 1998; Balas, 2000 and Fritschner, 2000 cited in Meyer, 2009: p.1), the factors why learners choose to participate or remain silent have largely been neglected by scholars. Again, no studies on different educational grades have explored silence from the learner's perspective in our academic writings (cf. Meyer, 2009: p.2).

The current research could build a solid knowledge base of the EFLs' silence at advanced levels; university level as a case in point, and further inform educational practitioners or teachers education courses at different levels; not only advanced levels.

4. Motivation for the Study

Quite apart from some adults teachers' view that "silence in the classroom is rarely a problem…"(Armstrong, 2007a: p.3), in recent years, I have often felt uncomfortable with my silent students in the class, and my colleagues have told me of similar experiences. In every class, a few students participate, more than the rest, and I have often asked myself why the majority of students behave like this. My discomfort with my attempts, as stated in the preliminary section, to challenge silent students encourages me times to open a discussion with my students asking them about the way they perceive their silence. Students identify fears of speaking, shyness, fears of committing mistakes, the subject of the lecture, and for some students, the teacher. These factors, and may be others, hinder the students' oral participation. This encouraged me to investigate such an area relying heavily in the practical part on my experience with the silent students.

5. The Pendulum Swings: Teachers' Silence Vs. Learners' Silence

5.1 The Teacher's Silence Swings in the Class

In some educational settings, the teacher's silence is advocacy, i.e., it is a teaching methodology which supports the teachers. Yet, "Ok, who would like to begin?" is commonly a question raised by teachers to disturb or even challenge the learner's silence in the class which is, in turn, adopted by learners as a strategy (Elsewhere, Al-Halawachy, 2008: p.72). So, silence swings into two directions; the teacher's silence and the learner's silence, as the words in the title imply.

Our pedagogical experience leads to an emphasis on the concept which signifies that teachers often seek to fill their teaching moments with speech. But, what can they encourage of moments of silence? The answer is partly built on the 'silent teacher' in the well-known approach, viz. the Silent Way which was originated in the early 1970 by Caleb Gattegno (Richards and Rogers, 1986; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; and Al-Humaidi, N. Y.). "It represents Gattegno's venture into the filed of foreign language teaching … [building] on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom and the learner should be encouraged to produce as much language as possible" (Richards and Rogers, 1986: p.99). For the two authors, the key theories underlying the Silent Way can be stated as follows:

1.   learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned,

2.   learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects; and

3.   learning is facilitated by problem-solving involving the material to be learned.

Aspects of the Silent Way have come into play and observed in some modern classes. "[It] has been used creatively for various purposes from teaching pronunciation to story-telling"(Al-Humaidi, N. Y.: p.1). In the 1980s and early 90s, for instance, the common argument was that '"excessive teacher talking time" was something to be discouraged' (Ibid.). Mostly, all methods have their fair share of criticism; and this one is not different. As Richards and Rogers (1986: p.111) puts: "[T]he actual practices of the Silent Way are much less revolutionary than might be expected" since "… the method exemplifies many of the features that characterize more traditional methods; such as Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism,…". The functioning of the Silent Way is justified by Al-Humaidi (N.Y.: p.3) yet it cannot be applied even in Saudi Arabia classes. Briefly put, "… it cannot be used separately and independently. It can function better when used with other learning methods". The dynamics of silence as a methodology in teaching is proved in La Forge's (1975) observation of classrooms for more than five years. Basically, his study of (1977) is built on La Forge's examination of the different reactions of learners being Japanese, Spanish, and American groups engaged in Community Language Learning (CLL)-towards silence. The crux of La Forge's argument is his categorization of silence as follows: Silence on the part of the teacher, silence on the part of the learner, and silence during evaluation period after the given tasks. Type 1 silence is of relevance in the current discussion. The possible meaning of silence given by (Stevick, 1976: p.119 quoted in La Forge, 1977: p.373) is that it is "a psychodynamic phenomenon" magnifying "what goes inside and between folks". In this sense, the former type of silence is related to silence within learners and the latter type is related to silence between teacher and learner. In three different activities tested in La-Forge's examination, it has been hotly proved that there is a direct mapping between psychology and silence, being a teaching method, as the latter provokes three different psychological reactions on the learners shown in Fig.(1) below:

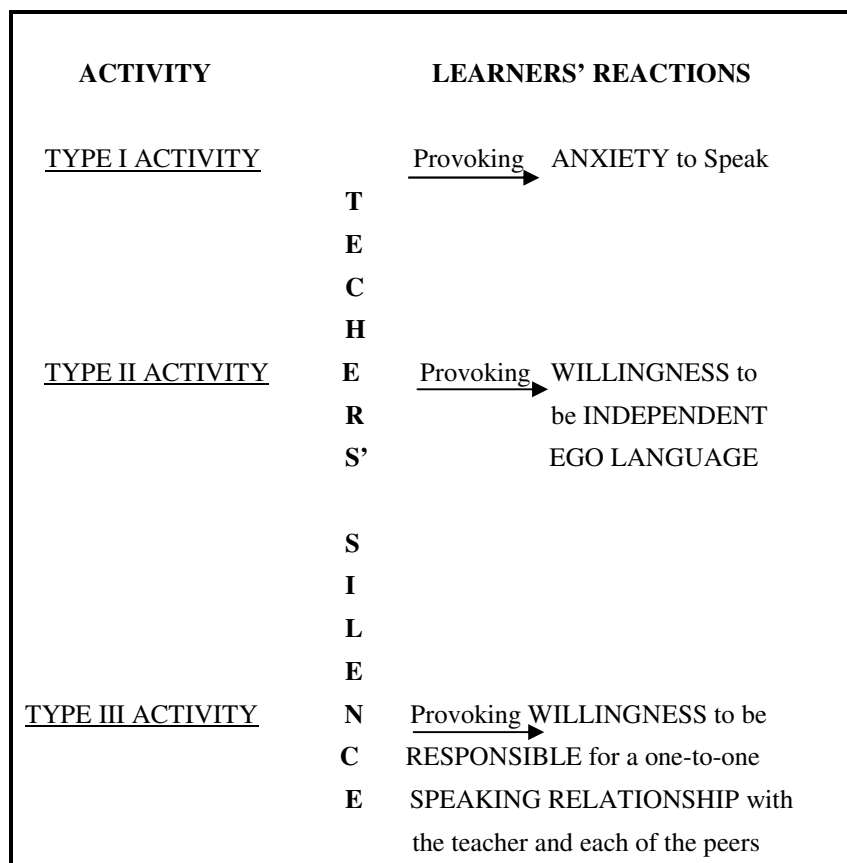| ACTIVITY		LEARNERS' REACTIONS
TYPE I ACTIVITY		Provoking ⟶ ANXIETY to Speak
	T	
	E	
	C	
	H	
TYPE II ACTIVITY	E	Provoking ⟶ WILLINGNESS to
	R	be INDEPENDENT
	S'	EGO LANGUAGE
	S	
	I	
	L	
	E	
TYPE III ACTIVITY	N	Provoking WILLINGNESS to be
	C	RESPONSIBLE for a one-to-one
	E	SPEAKING RELATIONSHIP with
		the teacher and each of the peers

Fig.(1): Silent Teacher – A Positive Methodology in Language Settings

(Adopted from Al-Halawachy, 2008: p.76)

Not only does the teacher's silence provoke FLs; more significantly, some teachers who teach special classes, for learners rather than FLs, find themselves in need to cultivate a learning environment where all learners feel comfortable to voice their views on some potentially explosive issues. In an interesting teaching note titled "Gaining Voice through Silence" (2008), Kaufman, a professor of sociology talks about what he calls the Silent Discussion; a strategy which he has been adopted for years. Put briefly, it is an exercise given to the students with a handout instructing them to answer some questions by writing their answers on separate pieces of paper without uttering any single word or without writing their names. When the students are done, they pass their papers around to the left. Then, they read that paper in front of them and write a one-paragraph response to it and start passing around the papers to the left. This fashion takes 45 minutes and after the teacher's alarm goes off, all the papers are circulated; each student gets his/her original paper back. S/he has to decipher this by the style of writing and even the views. The students read all the responses and write one last response and at this moment verbal discussion starts. Some crucial issues as gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, etc. are central in teaching sociology. In this vein, Kaufman raises his questions in relation to these issues and has benefited from literature (Hill Collins, 1990; Kleiman, 1990; Mclntosh, 1988; and Sanday, 2007). The gift of the Silent Discussion for Kaufman is manipulated in his wording: "[I]t has become obvious to me that not all students feel comfortable expressing themselves vocally on these matters [referring to the issues raised in the questions]. In particular, students who may have the most to offer in terms of personal experiences and perspectives are often inhibited from sharing their wisdom with the class. I have found the silent discussion works on multiple levels to ensure that all students gain their voice" (p.176).

I would like to zero in on the fact that the above text implicitly guides to the path of psychology empowering the role of silence as a teaching methodology which offers the students a comfortable safe space to voice their views and the experiences (cf. p.175).

The silent period of teacher-student communication in the class after the teacher raises a question is a plain vanilla of the teacher's silence positive function. Pedagogically speaking, the silent period is known as the "wait-time". On strengthening the role of the increased wait-time period, Rowe (1974 cited in Jaworski, 1993: p.10;

see also Jaworski and Sackdev, 1998: p.278) well documented and studied two-types of wait-time in monocultural classroom setting: (1) the teacher's pause between the end of his or her question and the beginning of the student's response, and (2) the teacher's pause between the end of the student's response and the teacher's beginning of his or her response to it, next question, and so on. Her detailed recordings of classroom interactions in elementary school science programs in the United States showed that "the average length of teachers' wait-time of type 1 to be 1 second, and of type 2 to be 0.9 seconds". Yet, having trained the teachers to increase both types, "[i]t is not difficult to observe that … pausing more than usual improved the quality of classroom interaction …" (Jaworski, 1993: p.11 and Nakane, 2007: p.18). Rowe states that "the increase of the amount of wait-time indicates that teachers' expectations toward the performance of weak students improve"(1974 cited in Jaworski, 1993: p.11) (cf. Muchinsky's, 1985 study in Polish high school). Similarly, in multicultural classrooms, not only does the increase of wait-time increases the quality of classroom communication and student's performance, but also reveals that there are differences in community-specific expectations about wait-time. In a study conducted at an all-Indian school on Odawa reverse in Canada, Mohatt and Erickson (1981 cited in Nakane, 2007: p.17) spell out that the students who were given a wait-time of 4.6 seconds by an Indian teacher were more responsive than those who were given a wait-time of 2.0 seconds average by a non-Indian teacher. There is much evidence of a top position of psychology here.

Furthermore, the idea that the value of the teacher's silence as a power within educational processes has been confirmed in other studies. In a secondary (or high) school ELT classroom in Botswana, teacher's use of silence is viewed as a mechanism for exerting power over pupils (Hildson, 1996 quoted in Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.277). "One can observe that teachers' authority power is being exercised when students are listening to teachers imparting their knowledge" (Botas, N. Y.: p.11). Relatedly, silencing orders have been used to control the minority children and languages in educational settings in both Britain and Canada (Edwards and Redfern, 1992 quoted in Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.277). To be added, silence is frequently recommended to novice teachers as a means of "keeping control" in the classroom (Gilmore, 1985: p.147). In early work, Lehtonon et al, 1985 quoted in Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis, 2012: p.93) presented some evidence supporting that high levels of anxiety in the classroom are likely to result in silence and increased reticence on the part of the learners (Readers may refer to Fig.1, please).

Further research also strongly encourage for a more detailed empirical analysis of the role of the teacher's silence in the classroom setting. It has been a concern of Gilmore (1985) to conduct a three-year study in predominantly low-income black urban community and elementary school. The major problem identified in this study is that "a good attitude" of the student seems the central factor for students' general academic success and literacy achievement in school (see pp.139-140). All situations, and classroom is not an exception, carry with them appropriate feelings. In her presentation of the issue of "emotion work", Hochschild (1979: p.552 quoted in Gilmore, 1985: p.142) describes it as "the act of evoking or shaping as well as suppressing feeling in oneself". She claims that there are "feeling rules", so to speak. For Gilmore, classroom is an excellent medium '… to capture the pedagogy involved in "emotion work" and the teaching and learning discourse that surrounds "feeling rules" since they are "frequently articulated"' (p.142). A picture begins to emerge of what is called "silence displays"; they are significant signs of teacher-student interaction in the classroom with non-verbal behaviour   which   is   mutually   understood by the participants. In her section titled "Teacher Silence", Gilmore illustrates that the teacher's uses of silence do affect the student's behaviour which, in turn, affects his/her academic achievement. Teacher's silence seems to mean in some situations "pay attention to me" and/or "What you are doing is not acceptable to me". More effectively, silence display is a way to get attention and class cohesion for a new lesson or activity, marking the beginning of a new fame (Mehan et al, 1976 quoted in Gilmore, 1985: p.147). Additionally, silence is not only used for "maintaining an orderly interaction" or "only to initiate but also to regain and maintain the orderliness of the lesson structure"(Gilmore, 1985: p.147).

5.1.1 Nothing Lasts … but Nothing is Lost!

In reviewing the literature given earlier, it would appear for me that the teacher's silence is given a limited space in that it is used to facilitate teaching-learning process for reasons mentioned implicitly and/or explicitly here and there. Still, these studies do not fill in the gap of the teacher's perception of silence in a definite clear way. In the same line of thinking, Vassilopoulos and Konstatinidis (2012) say: "Although these investigations [referring to the literature on silence in classroom setting] are important as an initial starting point, they offer limited insight into teachers' perceptions of when, why, and under what conditions they use silence in the classroom and how they learned to use silence in the classroom and how they learned to use silence" (p.93). Glimpses into

Gilmore's methodology in collecting the data via personal observations, interactions, and interviews documented over a three-year period with field notes, audio tape recording, and collections of relevant artifacts, and moreover her analysis of teacher's silence and student's silence in relation to pedagogical silence display would encourage me to exclude her study from that limited insight literature. I would just argue against that part of the data collected out of schools which should be fully in schools only.

Ollin's (2008) qualitative research study has provided opportunities to discover and begin to interpret teacher's beliefs on their silence and its types used in the learning environment. "Involving interviews with 25 teacher participants "[,t]hese participants identify different types of silence and report how they use various silences in the classroom, suggesting that many types of silence may be used productively in teaching and learning"(p.1) (see also Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis, 2012: p.93). Jaworski and Sachdev's (1998) questionnaire-based work overlooks some basic truths about teachers' silence and pupils' silence from the pupils' perspective, being 319 secondary school students as the participants in the study. Part of their general findings magnifies that teacher's silence in the rural schools, as one of the three schools in Wales being included in the investigation, stems from the facilitative function of silence in teaching. Moreover, teachers use silence for controlling their pupils in the inner-city schools; the second type of schools included in the investigation (p.285). To quote the two authors' words, it is evident that "[f]rom a conceptual point of view, … silence is also a positive communicative item. In the case of this study, it seems to be positively viewed as a facilitative device enabling students to gain access, organize and absorb new material" (p.286).

Again we refer to the author Vassilopoulos (in preparation quoted in Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis, 2012: p.93) who has recently investigated 12 experienced teachers' perceptions about their use of silence in the classroom setting. Teachers perceive using silence to: "control the student", "facilitate problem-solving", "convey empathy and support", "facilitate reflection", "develop autonomy in the student", and "facilitate expression of feelings". Furthermore, teachers perceive the increased effectiveness of silence as a fact which is due to a positive teacher-student relationship. Typically, teachers also believe that they currently use silence more comfortably and confidently than they did as novice teachers, and that they had learned how to use silence through teaching experience. Replicating and extending Vassilopoulos' (in preparation) qualitative study, a survey methodology is adopted by Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis (2012) in a study investigating 96 primary school teachers perception of using silence during a specific event and their general attitudes of using silence in the classroom. Some preliminary findings draw a road map to some of the teachers' use of silence. It seems to mean "pay attention to me" and/or "what are you doing is not acceptable to me" as reported by Gilmore (1985: p.147) (See the above discussion). Also, the results articulate that the teachers were fully aware and thoughtful in using silence "not as a Means (M) to exercise their authority on the students, to make them feel uncomfortable, to form a barrier or to convey suspicion and mistrust"; rather, it can be used with caution to avoid being misunderstood by the students. A general use of teacher's silence, especially with active students solving a task indicates "an inner time for the individual to think, to absorb and reflect" which matches Bruneau's (1973) notion of "slow time" (cf. our discussion on Rowe's notion, 1974 on "wait-time"). Certain types of silence also proved to be facilitative device in the learning process as suggested by (Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998 and Olline, 2008 referred to earlier). Furthermore, the teachers participating in the study mostly use silence with students who are "sensitive to criticism, probably in their attempt to protect them and avoid hurting their feelings" and even with older students "perhaps because silence, as one of the highest and subtle forms of communication requires a certain degree of cognitive ability or maturity on the part of the student". With students who were "sad, hostile, hyperactive, anxious, dependent, needing support, and indifferent", teachers were moderately likely to use silence due to some variables as classroom environment. On the contrary, elementary school teachers were unlikely to use silence with students who "might misunderstand the silence or when there is a poor teacher-student relationship" (p.100).

To this end, Gilmore (1985), Olline (2008), Vassilopoulos (in preparation), Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis (2012), and Jaworski and Sachdev (1998), on the one hand, initiate valuable issues as far as teachers' conceptualization and belief of silence; on the other hand, students' beliefs about their teachers' silence in the classroom in the literature on silence are viewed. In Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis' (2012) wording: "….Olline's (2008) and Vassilopoulos (in preparation) studies are valuable additions to a sparse literature on teacher's perceptions about using silence in the classroom…"(p.93). Yet, the authors view these studies as having some limitations as involving a small sample of teachers, raising questions about whether the results would generalize to a larger and more representative sample, and asking teachers about their perceptions in using silence in general rather than asking about specific instances. For me, such studies seem to be the driving force behind other search on teacher's perception of silence in different educational institutions all over different

communities, and more particularly in the Arab community where such an area is ignored and under-researched, as the present work is appealing for researchers and educators to highlight.

5.2 The Learner's Silence Swings in the Class

To reverse the tide of literature that casts a positive light on silence as a teaching methodology, more research is needed to address the negative function of silence on the part of the learners whether in EFL or ESL classes. Starting from childhood, Day (1981) carried out an experiment in which he investigates the problem of the so-called "silent-children" at laboratory school in Honolulu, Hawaii. 5 children- 3 boys and 2 girls who had the reputation for not talking at all were the subjects. Measuring the silent children's verbal performance, two preliminary tests were designed and involved elicited imitation. In his efforts to come up with accurate findings concerning silence, he set for himself a limited goal, namely stimulating speech or talking on the part of the silent children in the class (pp.35-36). Story-telling sessions came as the major technique adopted by Day, which embodied other minor techniques (pp.36-37). The most obvious result of Day's (1981) study is that the non-verbal children became verbal after a three-week period. Changing the classroom setting, i.e., the environment is the key notion behind the subjects' positive change of behaviour which can be plainly justifiable from a psychological perspective (Al-Halwachy, 2008: pp.80-81). Hence, Day addresses teachers saying that "caution is needed in labeling children non-verbal… [and] that a classroom can be created which allows children the opportunity to speak"(p.39). Some researchers in more recent studies of the "quiet child" in a primary school setting have built their studies on "the premise that habitually quiet non-participatory behaviour is detrimental to learning" (Collins, 1996: p.195 quoted in Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.287). The African-American's children absence of talk in American schools creates an atmosphere of silence which devastates more than helps as noticed by Copenhaver (2000). Her field notes suggest that "candid race discussions are not happening in schools. Furthermore, if classroom libraries lack literature with African American characters, how will African American children feel about readings? How will all children learn to value diversity if they do not know how to acknowledge its existence?". She believes that "all children are entitled to representation in the books we read to children, and books might help break the silence in the classroom"(p.9).

The study touches upon the responses of African American and white children in 4 multiethnic classrooms (K-3) as the children responded to African American books. The data were drawn from two studies of how African American children responded to books in racially integrated elementary classroom setting. In the current study, Copenhaver was a participant-observer in the classrooms interacting with children and collecting their comments and questions via fieldnotes and audio equipments. The examples show that many of white children distance themselves from discussing issues about race and keep silent, but once they renegotiate the topics, they turn into discussion. "Others avoid responding at all unless prompted by the teacher" and their silence is due to the fact that they "are coping with feelings born out of misunderstanding, unfamiliarity, and discomfort" which are psychologically-rooted factors "and many clearly lack the background experiences to help them participate fully in race-related conversations" (p.14). As for the African-American children's comments, "…they have much to say about race-related literature and engage deeply with African American books when they are shared" (p.10). This is consistent with Copenhaver's (1998) study who found that "African American literature fostered more frequent and higher levels of response from African American children than literature with non-African American protagonists and themes"(Copenhaver, 2000: p.9).. Their silence springs again from feeling uncomfortable, lacking the courage or even hesitation to discuss such issues. As Shipler (1997: p.10 quoted in Copenhaver, 2000: p.14) clarifies "[t]he black person cannot go very long without thinking about race". Silence that results in race discussion hinders communication and dialogues of both white and African American children and it is negative in the classroom setting. Still with the multi-ethnic primary school atmosphere, non-white pupils less talk and interact than the white peers. It is not surprising that three reasons justify the pupil's silence: (1) teachers interact less frequently with non-white pupils than with their white counterparts, (2) their interactions with non-white pupils are less elaborate and shorter in duration than with the whites, and (3) teachers spend less time discussing the particular task that has been set with non-white than with the whites (Biggs and Edwards, 1991 quoted in Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: 276). Another interesting study triggers some emotional displays in school classroom setting which are represented by student's silence observed by Gilmore (1985). She distinguishes two types of student's silence displays- "submissive subordinate", only observed with the teacher or other adult authority, never with peers. It is accompanied by some body gestures as a bowed head, a smile, or even a giggle. On the other hand, "non-submissive subordinate silence" carries different bodily configurations; silence here shows power and control practiced by the student (pp.148-149). To use Gilmore's term, student's "sulking" is commonly referred to by teachers as "pouting", "fretting", "acting spoiled", "being

rebellious", "acting nasty", "having a temper tantrum" and so on; definitely it is negatively oriented. Yet, students get benefits as sulking results in the message- "pay attention to me"(p.154)((cf. teacher's silence demonstrated by Gilmore reviewed above). In American secondary school, it has been noticed that some students in the group members adopt silence or listening in conversation. Offering the students a chance to speak up, Oliver et al (1992) have adopted a fruitful approach which they call Teaching Public Issues in Classroom referring to problems persisting throughout history and cross cultures. Here the teacher uses conversation as a tool which the students enjoy to express more about their characters by speaking and discussing (cf. Al-Halwachy, 2008: p.86).

The scenario described earlier in the second part of this body of literature attests to the fact that silence is a strategy adopted by children and advanced learners in school setting due to different reasons. Still, learner's silence can be distinguished at more advanced stages. In La Forge's (1977) experience as touched upon earlier in (5.1), the participants, belonging to different cultural background, reacted differently to the teacher's silence as clearly viewed in Table (1) below (see also the discussion below).

Table (1): Different Cultures- Different Reactions to the Silent Teacher in Community Language Learning Groups (Adopted from Al-Halawachy, 2008: p.82)

No	CLL Group		Reactions to the Silent Teacher
1	**Japanese**	High School Male Students (Junior and Senior)	POSITIVE – Learner's enjoyment of silence
2	**Spanish**		IN BETWEEN- Learner's state of being irked as a first step and gradually engaged in intensive argumentations
3	**American**		HIGHLY POSITIVE- Learner's great amount of anxiety by drilling in foreign language circles and engaging in conversation

In an article examining research accomplished over twenty-five years related to women in the higher educational classroom, Seifried (2000) looks at other factors than the gender of the instructor which have "chilling effect" on women's development. Hall and Sandler are said to have coined the term "chilly climate" in their (1982) report on which Seifried's article is based. They "pointed to the male academic instructor as the primary culprit" and "… that the higher education classroom environment was not only less hospitable for women than for men, but that women's development was actually stifled"(Seifried, 2000: p.25). Of particular interest is women's 'voice' or 'lack of voice' in the classroom. To earn the point, women's participation in the classroom more so than men's may be affected by the teacher's approach in calling only on students who raise their hands in order not to embarrass other students (Hall and Sandler, 1982 quoted in Seifrtied, 2000: pp.27-28). Describing such a chilly classroom climate, it has been proved that "… women are overshadowed. Even the brightest women often remain silent …"(Boyer, 1987: p.150 quoted in Seifried, 2000: p.28). Being silent on the part of the women springs from two facts: (1) many women have been socialized to be silent, especially in formal mixed groups, and (2) some women may feel angry or alienated particularly when their participation is not welcomed in the class; an indication of the teacher's approach hinted at earlier (Seifried, 2000: p.28). Armstrong (2007b) has written about how different "academic tribes" (p.1) value the use of silence in pedagogic space which is part of a three-year research project, "Investigating Cultures of Learning in Higher Education". For him, "[i]n one culture of learning, silence may be meaningful by being recognized as integral to the learning process. But in other cultures of learning, there is a persistent attempt to break or disturb the silence" (p.1). His viewpoint is based on two case studies; the first one is the philosophy lecture where students' silence is negative, and communication studies workshop, where silence is positive; "[t]here is very little evidence of a middle position"(p.2). Liu's (2002) paper explores deeply the complexities of silence and its cultural interpretation on the part of three Chinese students, as part of a larger investigation of Asian students' classroom communication patterns in US universities. The influence of the instructor in the class is one of the factors behind the three Chinese students' silence; "[t]hey were more likely to participate in class discussion when they had social support from their teacher or peers" (p.50). Chinese silence is also culturally defined as Saville-Troike (1985) states: "Within a single speech community, social values and norms are closely tied to the amount of talk versus silence that is

prescribed-according to social distinctions such as rank in the social hierarchy, to role (sacred or secular), or to age" (p.4). Lacking oral skills in English seems to be another factor behind Chinese silence as Liu realizes in one of the three focal Chinese students in that "he was unable to match the speed and fluency of his native-English speaking classmates"; the student's statement reads: "In discussion, they [American peers] speak much faster than what the teacher speaks in the lecture. So, you can catch up the professor in class, but you may feel yourself lost in discussion. Sometimes, you even don't know what they are talking about. It is frustrating" (p.44). Liu's study is delicately woven into a broader context of what might be labeled as "Negotiating Silence in American Classrooms", as part of the title echoes, keeping in mind queries like: "What needs to be done when we encounter cross-cultural conflicts in American classrooms?", "Should Chinese students as a minority adjust or adapt to the cultural norms of the American classroom that endorse active oral classroom participation?", and other basic queries which are left open for discussion and worth investigation (pp.52-53). A major problem identified in the study site and voiced repeatedly by researchers is the teacher's pedagogical styles in the classroom; Botas' (N.Y.) study on how students perceive the teacher's pedagogical styles in higher education connotes some meanings of students' silence. Drawing on interviews with postgraduate and undergraduate students in higher education concludes that "the perceptions students have of their teachers' pedagogical styles can be empowering and/or dispowering depending on the intention underlying the teachers' choice of pedagogical style" (p.1). Students' silence readings are as follows:

1. "Silent listening does not mean that students are not engaged in an intellectual manner with the teacher and the subject, because some students like to listen to other people's ideas and opinions in order to build their own".

2. "[B]eing silent can mean that the students are used to being silenced throughout their lives".

3. "[B]eing silent can mean… students' resistance to the teacher's authority or coercive power in the classroom".

4. "[B]eing silent can mean that the students are tired, particularly if they are part-time students attending an evening course".

5. "[B]eing silent can mean that the students are being silenced and sedated by the teachers' pedagogical styles".

(pp.26-27)

It is worth mentioning that Botas' research has certainly enriched the study of higher education and expanded my awareness of an important factor that may de/increase student's silence at university level which is the teacher's pedagogical styles which go hand in hand with the subject being taught (Please, refer to section 10).

6. Cultures of Silence

It is also worth pursuing the space of "cultures of silence" in education as (Freire, 1972 quoted in Armstrong, 2007b: p.1) has called. Analysing class silence in China, Zhong-hua (2007: p.36) argues that "[s]tudents do not interact with teachers out of their own will"; rather, they listen attentively "until signaled out passively". This is the common learning style in China due to the Confucian virtues that prize harmony in getting well along with others. In this sense, "…Chinese students preferred didactic and teacher-centered style of teaching and would show great respect for the wisdom and knowledge of their teachers" (Zhou et al, 2005: p. 288 quoted in Armstrong, 2007b: p.4). Giles et al (1992 quoted in Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998: p.276) conclude that silence is more important, more enjoyable and being used for a social control for the Chinese more than the Caucasian Americans. On the contrary, the '"dead air" in class is an apparent symbol of disrespect to teachers' according to the western ideology' (Zhong-hu, 2008: p.36). Two other researchers, Hu and Fell-Eisenkraft (2003) describe the immigrant Chinese students' perception of silence in their American middle school classroom setting; the language Arts classroom. Asian students in general, are known as "quiet and hardworking"(p.55); a comment often heard from the teachers in the school. What is beginning to emerge from the researchers' findings is that the salience of silence among Chinese students is very dependent on underpinning cultural beliefs. "Being shy", "fear of not having the correct answers", "unfamiliarity with talking to learn", and "lack of confidence in speaking English language" are commonly the reasons behind students' silence. As a southeast Asian country, China has been under the influence of Confucian ethics that stressed political and social stability where two key concepts guided human relationships: hierarchy and obedience (p.56). Therein lies the potential of the "Chinese teachers, [who] more often than not, perform a solo on the podium with their students listening attentively as audience" in Chinese culture (Zhong-hua, 2008: p.36). The Japanese students' silence, being 'silent Asian' has been reported in 'Western' classroom, Australian University in a detailed rich study by Nakane (2007). Finnish students are also characterized as shy and quiet, as a Finnish student says: "In Finland we don't talk so much and quietness is natural to us. If somebody talks all the time he/she [sic] can also be considered even a bit arrogant…

the French [in my group] and [Americans] consider shy people socially handicapped…" (Berry et al, 2004: p.269). Looking at silence cross-culturally, "[i]t is not merely a question of cultural difference and diversity…" (Armstrong, 2007b: p.4) since it is legitimate to consider the predominant values of a society as they relate to talk or silence (Sifianou, 1997) which, in turn, offers an opportunity to an understanding of students' silence in the classroom interaction.

In sum, the teacher's silence in the classroom still stands in the investigations reviewed earlier. Yet, the literature seems to be contradictory about the function of silence in the formal learning setting as suggested by Li, 2001 and Vrettos, 2003 quoted in Vassilopoulous and Konstantinidis, 2012: p.92). For the former, "[it] is still a widely accepted belief that silencing is an indispensable disciplinary act that aims at establishing an ordered milieu for effective teaching and learning"; yet she adds "the use of silence in educational settings may simply allow time for reflection on teaching and learning"(p.157). This contradictory view also covers the various reasons why students are silent in the classroom as Boler (2001 quoted in Vassilopoulous and Konstantinidis, 2012: 92). Broadly, one factor that may come into play explaining such a controversy among authors in their investigations on silence role in the classroom is the ambiguous nature of silence; a point which we crystalized in the foregoing discussion. Zembylas and Michaelides' statement (2004 quotes in Ibid.) matches our wording here; they conclude that "…[the] contradictory functions of silence in educational settings reveal its ambiguous role in educational practices" (p.193).

7. Hypotheses and Research Questions

Given the above adequate literature on classroom silence, the current investigation aims to synthesize some personal observations and disparate lines of literature on silence into a set of hypotheses. 4 research questions pertinent to the present investigation emerge from:

Research Q.1: As educators, should we regard Iraqi university students' silence as a threat in higher education classroom and that oral participation should be there? (as the westerners and Americans place a great deal of value on student talk in education, Meyer, 2009: pp.77-79).

Research Q.2: Do Iraqi university students' (fe/males) global beliefs about silence predict some prominent factors resulting silence being embraced under performance factors, psychological factors, and factors related to the class?

Research Q.3: Are the three sets of factors resulting silence (mentioned in research Q.2 above) equally or differently predicted by female Iraqi university students and male Iraqi university students?

Research Q.4: Is Iraqi university students' silence always predicted as a learner's drawback?

8. Method

8.1 Participants

Because my research is ongoing, it may be too early to confirm that there are negative things around the value of silence for learning, we set out to explore and unearth beliefs and causes about silence in the classroom amongst Iraqi university students. In total 43 students (20 females) and (23 males) were recruited from 2 groups of the 4th grade students at the Dept. of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul, during the academic year (2008-2009). It is the 4th grade students who were chosen, on purpose, as the participants in the study as they are supposed to be less silent than other undergraduate students at the Dept. of English.

8.2 Instrument

Gender was the main dependent variable for the purpose of statistical package. But why only the variable of gender? Bosaki (2005 cited in Shizha, 2005: p.3) feels that gender is among other factors which determine silence; she states that "social and cultural factors such as race, ethnicity, gender and social class are determinants of the silence/voice dichotomy". We were primarily interested in gender since we presumed that silence varies across boys and girls (cf. Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis, 2012). Other dependent variables include: (1) General beliefs about the value of silence by students (fe/male) with regard to performance factors, psychological factors, and factors related to the class, (2) Beliefs about the value of silence by female students with regard to performance factors, psychological factors, and factors related to the class, and (3) Beliefs about

the value of silence by male students with regard to performance factors, psychological factors, and factors related to the class.

Methodologically, observing the common sense of students' silence in the classroom possess a range of difficulties due to the different interpretations of silence in teaching and learning, whether positively or negatively valued, and the ways of how to measure and record silence (Armstrong, 2007a: p.1). He firmly disagrees with the common assumption that silence can be identified and measured; for him, "… this is dissatisfying and fraught with problems" (p.3). We partly agree with Ollin's (2008) assumption considering "[c]lassroom observations[as] an important source of information about teaching and about the practice of particular teachers" (p.1) since observations should be considered as an important source of information about the practice of the learners too.

A questionnaire (see Appendix) incorporating the measures mentioned above seems fruitful in the analysis. It was administered to the participants with some instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire. We excluded the students who were absent at the day of administering the questionnaire. Unfortunately, some students skipped some questions; they are excluded too.

Background information on gender only was obtained from the participant. Additionally, the measures were divided into three sections: A, B, and C; each of which includes questions that match the measures without giving them headings on purpose.

9. Research Findings

In order to illuminate the salience of Iraqi university students' silence, I will present first preliminary analysis of Iraqi university students' general beliefs about the value of silence in relation to the factors included in sections A, B and C in the questionnaire.

- **Iraqi University Students' General Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Performance Factors in the Class**

I, with my colleagues, may find it difficult to stomach the idea that the students' use of silence as "making their listening better" is (80%) which is the highest computed value. Though many previous lines of inquiry in the literature have been raised to serve some questions about the positive value of listening on the part of the learners, it becomes the most preferable safe way in order not to participate in the class for those who are reluctant to volunteer. The rating of students who view "problem solving", as a performance factor is (69%). "Trying to ignore teachers' questions" is another factor via which students view their silence; its rating is (68%). The students also indicate that their silence springs from "fear of making grammatical errors"; the given rating is (64%). The last two factors, viz. "fear of pronouncing a word incorrectly" and "fear of giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher" seem to be the less effective factors behind students' silence. (62%) and (61%) are the ratings for the former factors, respectively. Clearly, the statistical analysis package shows that there is no significant difference between these two factors. Table 2 shows the distribution of the 6 different performance factors via which students view generally the value of silence.

Table 2: The Distribution of the Students' Performance Factors Resulting Silence

Students' Performance Factors Resulting Silence	Students' Responses in Relation to Measures				Total	Degree	%
	Always	Some-times	Rarely	Never			
To make listening better	19	18	3	3	43	3.233	80%
To solve a problem	9	21	7	6	43	2.767	69%
To ignore teachers' questions	11	16	9	7	43	2.721	68%
To avoid making grammatical errors	7	19	9	8	43	2.581	64%
To avoid pronouncing a word incorrectly	7	19	5	12	43	2.488	62%
To avoid giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher	12	12	3	16	43	2.465	61%

- **Iraqi University Students' General Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Psychological Factors in the Class**

As far as psychological factors are concerned, "feeling shy" is the most frequently chosen by 26 students (60%) as their hindrance to speak in the class. One important point deserves to be mentioned here. According to my personal observation, I commonly notice that most of the students are not reluctant to silence when they speak their mother-tongue with their teachers and peers when I meet them in my office, my colleagues' offices or even passing them by at the corridors of the department. Glimpses into "lacking confidence when speaking English language", 8 students (18%) rate that this psychological factor comes as a reason behind their reticence. 6 students (13%) throw light on the fact that "some subjects do not appeal to them. They do not like the materials taught" which causes their silence and less participation in the class. Additionally, 2 students (4%) indicate that "not having interest in English" is the main factor for their silence. Compared to this low rate, 1 student (2%) indicates that "fear of being mocked at by classmates" troubles his/her speech in the classroom setting.

Table 3 below provides the distribution of the psychological factors that cause students' silence as viewed by the students themselves.

Table 3: The Distribution of the Students' Psychological Factors Resulting Silence

Students' Psychological Factors Resulting Silence	Students' Responses No.	Total	%
Feeling shy	26	43	60%
Lacking confidence when speaking English language	8	43	18%
Some subjects do not appeal to the students. They do not like the materials taught.	6	43	13%
Not having interest in English	2	43	4%
Fear of being mocked at by classmates	1	43	2%

- **Iraqi University Students' General Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Factors Related to the Class**

More shocking, perhaps, is the students' ratings in this part of the questionnaire. It should be made clear for the readers that in the case of tracking and/or selecting the class where the students' silence is salient, the students were asked to choose one class and one option determining the factor behind their silence for each (see Appendix, please). Yet the majority of the students chose mostly all the classes; this issue warrants further concern on the part of the staff. Out of the 6 different classes ranging between Linguistics Classes and Literature Classes given in the 4th grade's curriculum, students' responses reveal that 39 (90%) have no voice in Drama Classes while Linguistics Classes come the second, 37 (86%) students believe that it is the class which disturbs their voice and participation. From 36 (83%) students' perspectives, Grammar Classes hinder them from speaking. Literary Criticism Classes are ranged the fourth class according to 35 (81%) students. The least ratings are 34 (79%) and 33 (76%) for Novel Classes and Poetry Classes, respectively (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: The Distribution of the Students' Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence

Students' Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence	Students' Responses No.	Total	%
Drama Classes	39	43	90%
Linguistics Classes	37	43	86%
Grammar Classes	36	43	83%
Literary Criticism Classes	35	43	81%
Novel Classes	34	43	79%
Poetry Classes	33	43	76%

- **Female Iraqi University Students' General Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Performance Factors in the Class**

One of the basic questioned premises in the present research is that students' beliefs about their silence in the classroom is gender-dependent. Of the 6 performance factors, "making my listening better" ranges first (85%) while "problem solving" comes the second (73%) followed by "trying to ignore teachers' questions" and "fear of giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher" (71%) for each, "fear of making grammatical errors" (65%), and the last rating is "fear of pronouncing a word incorrectly" (63%). Table 5 provides the way the 20 female Iraqi students conceptualize the value of silence with regard to their performance in the class.

Table 5: The Distribution of the Female Students' Performance Factors Resulting Silence

Female Students' Performance Factors Resulting Silence	Female Students' Responses in Relation to Measures				Total	Degree	%
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
To make listening better	10	8	2	0	20	3.40	85%
To solve a problem	4	12	3	1	20	2.95	73%
To ignore teachers' questions	8	4	5	3	20	2.85	71%
To avoid giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher	5	11	0	4	20	2.85	71%
To avoid making grammatical errors	4	8	4	4	20	2.60	65%
To avoid pronouncing a word incorrectly	5	7	2	6	20	2.55	63%

- **Female Iraqi University Students' Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Psychological Factors in the Class**

Glimpses into the psychological factors that hinder females to practice speaking in the classroom, the data gained from the female respondents reveal the following. As far as "feeling shy" is concerned, it is the most frequently chosen factor (65%) by 13 students out of 20 females. "Lacking confidence when speaking English language" is the second factor which 4 (20%) perceive as their hindrance to speak in the class. Regarding "fear of being mocked at by classmates", "not having interest in English", and "Some subjects do not appeal to me. I do not like the materials taught" are perceived by 1 female student (5%) equally for each factor as a reason behind their silence. Table 6 shows the ratings of the female students psychological factors causing their silence in the class.

Table 6: The Distribution of the Female Students' Psychological Factors Resulting Silence

Female Students' Psychological Factors Resulting Silence	Female Students' Responses No.	Total	%
Feeling shy	13	20	65%
Lacking confidence when speaking English language	4	20	20%
Fear of being mocked at by classmates	1	20	5%
Not having interest in English	1	20	5%
Some subjects do not appeal to the students. They do not like the materials taught	1	20	5%

- **Female Iraqi University Students' Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Factors Related to the Class**

Readers may care to look back at the point which is raised earlier in the current section where the students general beliefs about the value of silence in relation to the factor at hand, i.e., their choices of all the items instead of one. All the 20 females (100%) view Linguistics Classes as the classes where they cannot participate and speak. Drama Classes come next; the females' rating is 19 (95%) followed by Literary Criticism Classes where 18 (90%) females find them the cause behind their silence. A mixture of Linguistics and Literature Classes share the last range; 17 (85%) believe that Grammar Classes, Novel Classes, and Poetry Classes hinder their voice equally. Table 7 provides the ratings.

Table 7: The Distribution of the Female Students' Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence

Female Students' Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence	Female Students' Responses No.	Total	%
Linguistics Classes	20	20	100%
Drama Classes	19	20	95%
Literary Criticism Classes	18	20	90%
Grammar Classes	17	20	85%
Novel Classes	17	20	85%
Poetry Classes	17	20	85%

- **Male Iraqi University Students' Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Performance Factors in the Class**

In this new body of the findings, the male participants' views on silence with respect to the factors viewed earlier are presented. Out of the 6 performance factors, "making my listening better" ranges first (77%) while "trying to ignore teachers' questions" and "solving a problem" come next (65% for each), followed by "fear of making grammatical errors" (64%), "fear of pronouncing a word incorrectly" (60%) and "fear of giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher" is the least rating (53%). Table 8 summarizes the male students' beliefs about their performance factors resulting their silence statistically.

Table 8: The Distribution of the Male Students' Performance Factors Resulting Silence

Male Students' Performance Factors Resulting Silence	Male Students' Responses in Relation to Measures				Total	Degree	%
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
To make listening better	9	10	1	3	23	3.087	77%
To ignore teachers' questions	3	12	4	4	23	2.609	65%
To solve a problem	5	9	4	5	23	2.609	65%
To avoid making grammatical errors	3	11	5	4	23	2.565	64%
To avoid pronouncing a word incorrectly	2	12	3	6	23	2.435	60%
To avoid giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher	7	1	3	12	23	2.13	53%

- **Male Iraqi University Students' Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Psychological Factors in the Class**

The data shows among 5 psychological factors, the highest percentage 13 (56%) is for "feeling shy"; a point which needs further concern as compared with the gained percentage for females which is (65%) but it remains the highest percentage among other factors for females. 5 male students (21%) perceive that "some subjects do not appeal to them. They do not like the materials taught" as a psychological factor preventing them from speaking in the class. "Lacking confidence when speaking English language" results in silence for 4 male students (17%). 1 male student (4%) chooses "not having interest in English" and no male student (0%) finds in "fear of being mocked at by classmates" a factor causing reticence in the classroom. Table 9 provides a distribution of the male students' responses in relation to psychological factors hindering their speaking in the class.

Table 9: The Distribution of the Male Students' Psychological Factors Resulting Silence

Male Students' Psychological Factors Resulting Silence	Male Students' Responses No.	Total	%
Feeling shy	13	23	56%
Some subjects do not appeal to the students. They do not lack the materials taught.	5	23	21%
Lacking confidence when speaking English language	4	23	17%
Having no interest in English	1	23	4%
Fear of being mocked at by classmates	0	23	0

- **Male Iraqi University Students' Beliefs about the Value of Silence with Regard to Factors Related to the Class**

For 20 (86%) male students, Drama Classes are ranged first regarding them a major reason behind their reticence in the class. For 19 (82%) male students, Grammar Classes are viewed as their hindrance to speak English in the class. What is followed is 3 classes, namely Linguistics Classes, Novel Classes, and Literary Criticism Classes which are chosen by 17 (73%) male students. The least rating is for Poetry Classes given by 16 (69%) male students. Table 10 provides a statistical distribution of the male students' responses with regard to factors related to the class.

Table 10: The Distribution of the Male Students' Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence

Male Students' Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence	Male Students' Responses No.	Total	%
Drama Classes	20	23	86%
Grammar Classes	19	23	82%
Linguistics Classes	17	23	73%
Novel Classes	17	23	73%
Literary Criticism Classes	17	23	73%
Poetry Classes	16	23	69%

10. Discussion:

As a first step on arriving at a clear image of Iraqi University students' reticence in the class, it was not an easy task for me to mould a framework of the multi factors hindering students' oral participation in the class; this is due to the vague nature of silence, as remarked so far. The merging of the theoretical and practical efforts of scholars in the search, on one hand, and my experience and intuition as a teacher, on the other, possibly provides a balanced investigation of some of the effective factors resulting students' silence from their own perspectives.

10.1 General Research Findings:

Research findings of the general use of silence with regard to performance factors suggest that Iraqi university students tend to be silent to listen more attentively and make their listening better as (80%) of the responses represents the highest calculated value among other factors. This in part seems convincing. The rate here is in consistency with one of Botas' (N. Y.: p.11) readings about students' silence in higher education in the sense that "… listening empowers students with the tools to formulate and express their voice…". It is the case of one of his participants; an M.A. student in adult and continuing education who likes listening to other people's opinions to build up her own opinion. She says: "I like very much listening [sic] other people's opinions. First of all, I am a keen listener. I am not sure that I am going to say anything, but I am very interested in other people's opinions and views in order to build mine"(Ibid.). Based on accumulation of notes and observations of experimental nature, Iraqi university students are not too much different from Botas' participant in preferring, rather than liking or disliking, so to speak, to listen to the teacher's opinions and their classmates' opinions. In addition, listening is the 'way [the students] may replace or search for the "right answers" with a critical understanding and evaluation of their own and others' perspectives' (Maher, 1985: p.44 quoted in Botas, N. Y.: p.11). It is significant to quote another participant in Botas' study; she is an M.A. student in philosophy who writes: "I am interested in seeing what other people's problems are, because often there are things that happen to you. [sic] Which you might not have considered until then. And then, by hearing the teacher's answers to their problems, you have [the ability] to understand the subject"(p.11) (cf. items 2, 4, 5 and 6 in section A in the questionnaire). We come now to the crucial question: Are the silent Iraqi university students said to be good listeners? To be noted, listening implies silence, yet this silence is rationale involving a set of processes which are positively evaluated to facilitate learning more than speaking or talking. Still, elsewhere, I consider listening as "… a safe strategy adopted by learners to avoid making mistakes for fear of talking or for any other reason (Al-Halawachy, 2008: p.87). Also, listening may spring from students' lack of oral skills in English due to their experiences in high schools; they are unable to match the speed and fluency of the teacher or some of their peers. I was asked many times by my students to repeat, or even slow down, when raising questions, discussing an issue, or spelling some new vocabulary. "Speed of reaction" is a positive cognitive processing time which is needed for the participants in an interaction. But it can cause a period of silence for students when searching for words and formulating ideas as the participants need more time to think; Japanese learners need this time with their Australian counterparts since the latter are too fast to keep up with (Nakane, 2007; p.91). Again, Chinese students come into stage. Their anxiety in participation being in American universities is rooted back to their high school in China where lack of oral skills in English is prominent due to the Chinese cultural concept of "listening attentively". It is even true for Chinese educators as evident in Jian's expression, an International Teaching Assistant in America and one of three cases studied by Liu (2002) who states the following: [referring to Jian] "He felt ashamed that he often asked his students to repeat what they said or to simply slow down for him. He avoided classroom participation to conceal his weakness in speaking…. His advisor encouraged him to participate as often as possible, but he did not have the courage to tell his advisor what exact problem he had in participation" (p.44). (Readers can refer to section 6 on Asian cultural principles on listening). On a firm practical base, one can say that though the respondents conceptualize their silence as a result of listening, their listening is not that healthy time in the class since they are unable to participate and speak. The ranges of the other two factors, viz. "being silent to solve a problem" and "being silent to ignore teacher's questions" are (69%) and (68%), respectively. Though the ranges approximate each other, but pedagogically speaking, I find students' silence resulting from the former factor is healthier than the latter. Students, in general, need some time for problem-solving in the class. And the better factor made me very conscious about the vacuum of the students' silence is the latter factor. I would legitimately argue that students' lack of motivation mould their ignorance of teacher's questions. Some basic truths about motivation in learning have been evident in the literature in that it is a key to students' learning success (Songsiri, 2007) as it can affect students' reluctance to speak (Nunan, 1999). Furthermore, motivation, as an inner energy the learners possess enhances their study interest (Zua, 2008) (All quoted in Juhana, 2012, p.103).

"Fear of making mistakes" is another factor which hinders students' speaking of the three types of mistakes given in section A in the questionnaire, "fear of making grammatical errors" ranges first (64%), "fear of pronouncing a word" incorrectly ranges next (62%), and "fear of giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher" ranges the last (61%). So, students' lack of proficiency in English, and grammar in particular, is a major barrier to participation. This matches what Nakane (2007: pp.73-74) diagnoses in Japanese students in Australian universities with respect to language proficiency resulting their silence. In this sense, she states that "[w]eak language skills of Japanese students were frequently mentioned as a problem" (p.74). One may also argue that fear of mistakes, as an umbrella term used for the three factors mentioned formerly, is rooted back to

psychology. In fact, it is regarded as one of the main factors of students' reluctance to speak in English in the classroom (Yi Htwe, 2007 and Robby, 2010). It is a resounding yes, yet I preferred to include 'fear of mistakes' with its three types in section A in the questionnaire. This is done on purpose to crystallize students' silence with respect to their performance in the class.

As for psychological factors, 26 (60%) of the responses indicate that students tend to be passive participants in the class activities for "feeling shy". What strengthens the range of shyness is that students' silence in the class is that Briskin (2000: p.2) mentions some patterns of students' silence in the class; one of which to use the author's word is "the silence from shame". Being a pattern, more than a factor, shyness is proved to be salient among students when they are required to speak English if not a source of problem in students' learning activities in the classroom(Gebhard, 2000 in Juhana, 2012: p.101). For me, respondents' shyness can neither be explained as a character flaw nor an individual long histories of being used to silence through their lives as Brisken (2000: p.2) and Botas (N.Y.: pp.11-12) view. The fact that nothing troubles respondents' speaking with their classmates and teachers outside the classroom, as I observe, or even friends outdoors does not match Briskin and Botas' readings about students' shyness causing silence. Since shyness is an emotion, it is developed through cultural scripts which also influence developing a connected mind and voice (Bosaki, 2005: p.6 in Shizha, 2005: p.2). Iraqi cultural norms develop the inner emotion of shyness in females rather than males even in the culture of school not only in the culture of university, as a case in point. Let me remind my readers that we are still discussing the general use of silence from both female and male students' perspectives. It is worth considering that the cultural premise that influences developing females' shyness is true only inside the classroom due to the fact that this cannot be always taken for granted when they are involved in communication outdoors. To sum up, female and male students' shyness which hinders them from speaking can be attributed to the following:

(1)   Shyness is an umbrella emotion for the students which embraces other emotions as "lacking confidence when speaking English", "fear of being mocked at by classmates", "having no interest in English" and "some subjects do not appeal to me. I do not like the materials taught".

(2)   Speaking in front of people is one of the more common phobias that students encounter and feeling of shyness makes their minds go blank or that they will forget what to say, as echoed by my students (see Baldwin, 2011).

(3)   Drawing on points (1) and (2), students' shyness contributing to silence in the classroom can be explained in terms of face-saving view by Brown and Levinson (1987); it is commonly practiced by most Asian cultures (Liu and Littlewood, 1997). Likewise, I find Iraqi students practice face-saving with respect to silence in the classroom. To maintain a positive face, they tend to be silent for the reasons in point (1), previously mentioned. Additionally, students' silence may "preserve [their] privilege" (Briskin, 2000: p.2). In this line of thinking, "[n]on-native speakers may sometimes appear to be behaving in a pragmatically inappropriate manner (for example, by being unexpectedly deferential) because they (rightly) perceive themselves to be at a disadvantage" (Thomas, 1983: p.106 quoted in Nakane, 2007: p.84). In Thomas' view, this is evident in the context where non-native speakers of English speak in front of native speakers; I would argue against this saying that likewise, the silent non-native speakers of English would put themselves on a different footing from their lecturer and their volunteer participant counterparts, as it is commonly observed in our classes. Students' silence articulates their perception of being negatively perceived by the lecturer; a fact confirmed by Nakane's Japanese participant: "I must say asking questions to the lecturer is kind of scary. Because I don't have confidence in grasping the theories. I have this fear that lecturers may in fact spot my weakness if I ask questions. So I decide I'd better not do it" (Nakane, 2007: p.84). Thereupon, students' silence reflects "…undervaluing oneself and one's knowledge" (Briskin, 2000: p.2) which again can be applicable to part of the sample of the present study, as I experienced in the classes. According to what has been explained, the respondents' silence is a strategy to save their faces rather than protecting the addressee's face as always the case in politeness principles. What mainly concerns the individual's image, i.e., the respondent is his/her character and the way it is perceived or judged by the classroom community represented by the teacher and the classmates. In this sense, the respondents aim through silence to protect their positive face which "includes the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: p.62). In Nakane's (2007) study, her Japanese respondents' silence in Australian universities similarly matches our respondents' silence in this respect (cf. Liu, 2006: pp.40-41 on Chinese silence in American universities).

8 respondents (18%) indicate that "lacking confidence when speaking English language" resulting their silence in the class. When the students are involved in a discussion, a conversation, or an activity, they realize that the teacher and the peers cannot catch them; they would rather keep silent due to their lack of confidence. More

probable, "student [sic] who lack of confidence about themselves and their English necessarily suffer from communication apprehension"(Nunan, 1999 cited in Juhana, 2012: p.102).

For 6 respondents (13%), their silence is caused by another factor –"Some subjects do not appeal to me. I do not like the materials taught".

As commonly acknowledged by some students when I ask them about their less participation in the classroom activities, two other factors come into stage representing the least percentages in the analysis- 2 students (4%) represents "having no interest in English" and 1 student (2%) represents "fear of being mocked at by classmates".

To formulate a global psychological judgement of students' silence, certain psychological factors are interwoven in a net form dominated by shyness as the statistical package shows.

More is at stake than better learning of the curriculum and the methodologies adopted by the teachers in the classroom. Here comes section C in the questionnaire which tackles the respondents' silence with respect to factors related to the class. Research findings indicate that 39 respondents (90%) believe that they are commonly silent in Drama Classes. Their silence which hinders their speaking is due to different reasons according to the students' choices as shown below:

Rs ≠ 6: "Because the teacher gives me no chance to participate".

Rs ≠ 5: "Because the class goes on in the form of teacher-talk".

Rs ≠ 10: "Because the material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only"

Rs ≠ 16: "Because the material is difficult to be comprehended".

Rs ≠ 2: "Because the material is explained in the handouts".

So, 16 respondents justify their silence in Drama Classes supporting my claim which echoes "the material is difficult to be comprehended," and this is the highest number of respondents compared with the number of respondents choosing other reasons. To be noted, Modern Drama is given in the 4th grade curriculum, still I guarantee that the students are just listeners in the class. Their justification implies that (1) the selection of Modern Drama textbooks is not fully accurate which, by definition, touches upon some drawbacks in the design of the curriculum, and (2) the methodology adopted by the teacher does not match the material itself. We are all aware of the fact that teaching Literature Classes involves activities where the student is the pivot of discussion, criticizing, presenting reports, and even acting. This is a point that addresses the concern of educational experts, the curriculum designers, and the teachers as well.

Other 37 respondents (86%) believe that they keep silent in Linguistics Classes due to their choices of the given reasons as viewed in the following manner:

Rs ≠ 3: "Because the teacher gives me no chance to participate".

Rs ≠ 8: "Because the class goes on in the form of teacher-talk".

Rs ≠ 19: "Because the material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only"

Rs ≠ 3: "Because the material is difficult to be comprehended".

Rs ≠ 4: "Because the material is explained in the handouts".

19 respondents justify their silence in Linguistics Classes saying that "the material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only". The students' silence, for me, is justifiable to a certain extent as the material given in the curriculum obliges the teacher to explain it him/herself. Still, one could give the selected material a second thought.

For 36 respondents (83%), Grammar Classes is a good medium where they are reluctant to silence; their causes of keeping silent are:

Rs ≠ 5: "The teacher gives me no chance to participate".

Rs ≠ 10: "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk".

Rs ≠ 10: "The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only"

Rs ≠ 4: "The material is difficult to be comprehended".

Rs ≠ 7: "The material is explained in the handouts".

Two factors are equally emphasized by the respondents to justify their hindrance of speaking in Grammar Classes; 10 respondents have chosen the factor which echoes: "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk", and other 10 respondents have chosen another factor pertinent to the former which echoes "The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only". For me, it is necessary to dig out the reflection about silence with reference to these two factors from surface to depth. More often, Grammar teachers, as the respondents believe, perform "A Solo on the Podium" with the students' complete reticence similar to Chinese teachers (see again Zhong-hau, 2008). Grammar teachers should not always be the pivot in the class; time should be devoted to do activities, and may be to change the atmosphere of the class into a chilly atmosphere.

For 35 respondents (81%), they believe that they keep silent in Literary Criticism Classes; their justifications are given as follows:

Rs ≠ 5: "The teacher gives me no chance to participate".

Rs ≠ 11: "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk".

Rs ≠ 6: "The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only"

Rs ≠ 8: "The material is difficult to be comprehended".

Rs ≠ 5: "The material is explained in the handouts".

The respondents' choices restress the fact that the podium is left again only for the teacher in Literary Criticism Classes resulting the respondents' silence. 11 respondents, which is the highest number, justify their silence believing that "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk". To the best of my knowledge, the contents of the textbook are somehow abstract; the philosophical and logical issues raised by the author of the book support the solo of the teacher. Despite this fact, the students must be motivated by the teacher in different ways, and activities should be assigned to them to break their silence. The dynamics of up-dating the textbook is heavily recommended which is not surprising if my readers know that the same textbook is included in the curriculum when I was a 4th grade student!

Novel Classes come next. 34 respondents (79%) find themselves reluctant to silence in Novel Classes; they justify their silence in different ways as follows:

Rs ≠ 9: "The teacher gives me no chance to participate".

Rs ≠ 10: "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk".

Rs ≠ 8: "The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only"

Rs ≠ 4: "The material is difficult to be comprehended".

Rs ≠ 3: "The material is explained in the handouts".

The 10 respondents' silence in Novel Classes, which is the highest number in this part of the discussion, is due to the fact that "the class goes on in the form of teacher-talk". The A B Cs of Novel Classes are teacher-student discussion, critical analysis of the text, presentation, writing reports, or even the teacher would leave the podium to the students to explain parts of the text. Such a justification given by the students speaks to the urgent thinking of developing the methodology of teaching Novel in our classes.

Our findings, also, indicate that Poetry Classes is the least Classes where respondents are opt to silence; 33 respondents (76%) support this view. The reasons behind their silence can be manipulated in the following manner:

Rs ≠ 5: "The teacher gives me no chance to participate".

Rs ≠ 9: "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk".

Rs ≠ 8: "The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only"

Rs ≠ 5: "The material is difficult to be comprehended".

Rs ≠ 6: "The material is explained in the handouts".

For 9 respondents, which is the highest number, the basic reason which hinders their participation and speaking in Poetry Classes is that "The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk". This is where up-to-date methodologies in teaching Poetry Classes come into picture. Like other findings, the students have their role in the class and that illegitimate listening and only listening would be cut now and forever.

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10.2 Specific Research Findings

In the foregoing subsection, we approached silence as viewed by Iraqi university students, both females and males. This time, gender variable which is the core of the present work, is considered. How female and male Iraqi university students conceptualize their silence still requires explanation as presented in this body of the discussion.

As for the performance factors contributing to students' silence, statistics show that (71%) of the females' responses support that "trying to ignore the teachers' questions" is behind their silence, whereas the ratio of the males' responses is (65%). Though the calculated value of the present factor is higher in females' responses rather than the males, the tabulated value is not significant; the (z value = 0.425) and (1.96 > 0.425). In other words, for both female and male students, "trying to ignore the teachers' questions" is not a significant factor behind their silence as they suggest. But in the language of real classroom situations, I observe that students ignore my questions and they keep silent simply owing to 'not knowing the answer', 'lacking the confidence', 'being shy', etc., as I commonly hear. A glance at the factor which echoes: "I keep silent when there is a problem to be solved", (73%) of the females' responses and (65%) of the males' responses believe that such a factor contributes to their silence. The (z value = 0.61) and (1.96 > 0.61). So, such a factor is non-significant in resulting female and male's silence in the class. The calculated value for females' responses is (85%) as opposed to the males' responses which is (77%) as far as the factor which reads: "I keep silent to make listening better". Statistically, listening again is not significant and it does not contribute to result silence on the part of both genders. The (z value = 0.66) and (1.96 > 0.66). Moving to the fourth factor – "I keep silent for fear of making grammatical errors", statistics indicate that the females' responses rating is (65%) opposing (64%) of the males' responses; the calculated value is not much different. Yet, the (z value = 0.06) and (1.96 > 0.06); hence this factor is non-significant. (63%) of the females' responses as opposed to (60%) of the males' responses conceptualize their silence owing to the factor "I keep silent for fear of pronouncing a word incorrectly". This factor is non-significant since the z value is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 0.19). For the last factor, (71%) of the females' responses opposing (53%) of the males' responses indicate that the factor which reads: "I keep silent for fear of giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher" hinders their speaking in the class. But statistically this factor is non-significant. The (z value = 1.239) and (1.96 > 1.239). Table 11 shows the statistical distribution of the performance factors with respect to gender variable.

Table 11: Statistical Distribution of Performance Factors Resulting Silence with Respect to Gender Variable

Performance Factors Resulting Silence	Students' Responses in Relation to Measures								Degree		%		z Value
	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never						
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
To ignore teachers' questions	8	3	4	12	5	4	3	4	2.85	2.609	71%	65%	0.425
To solve a problem	4	5	12	9	3	4	1	5	2.95	2.609	73%	65%	0.61
To make listening better	10	9	8	10	2	1	0	3	3.4	3.087	85%	77%	0.661
To avoid making grammatical mistakes	4	3	8	11	4	5	4	4	2.6	2.565	65%	64%	0.06
To avoid pronouncing a word in correctly	5	2	7	12	2	3	6	6	2.55	3.435	63%	60%	0.195
To avoid giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher	5	7	11	1	0	3	4	12	2.85	2.13	71%	53%	1.239
Total	20	23	20	23	20	23	20	23			100	100	

- **The z value is compared to the tabulated value which is 1.96. When the z value > 1.96, the z value is significant and vice versa.**

Table 12 below shows the statistical distribution of the psychological factors contributing to female respondents and male respondents. As for "feeling shy", the z value = 0.571 and it is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 0.571). Thus, shyness is not significant in resulting the respondents' silence. The z value of the second factor which is "lacking confidence when speaking English language" = 0.219, and it is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 0.219). It is non-significant in relation to females and males' silence. The z value of the factor which reads: "Fear of being mocked at by classmates" is non-significant; the z value = 1.026 which is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 1.026). Another psychological factor which reads: "Having no interest in English" is non-significant; the z value = 0.1 and it is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 0.1). The last factor which reads: "Some subjects do not appeal to the students. The students do not like the material taught" is also non-significant in resulting female and males' silence; (1.96 > 1.693).

Table 12: Statistical Distribution of Psychological Factors Resulting Silence with Respect to Gender Variable

Psychological Factors Resulting Silence	Females' Responses		Males' Responses		Z Value
	No.	%	No.	%	
Feeling shy	13	65%	13	56%	0.571
Lacking Confidence when speaking English language	4	20%	4	17%	0.219
Fear of being mocked at by classmates	1	5%	0	0%	1.026
Having no interest in English	1	5%	1	4%	0.100
Some subjects do not appeal to the students. The students do not like the materials taught.	1	5%	5	2.1%	1.693
Total	20	100	23	100	

Table 13 below shows the statistical distribution of factors related to the class. Silence in Grammar Classes is non-significant for females and males. The z value = 0.213 which is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 0.213). Silence in Linguistics Classes is significant for the female respondents and the male respondents; the z value = 2.849 which is more than the tabulated value (2.849 > 1.96) (The dotted space in Table 13 represents this clearly). In Novel Classes, students' silence is non-significant (1.96 > 0.913). In addition, female and male respondents' silence is non-significant in Drama Classes; (1.96 > 0.941). In Poetry Classes, statistics indicate that the respondents' silence is non-significant as the z value is less than the tabulated value (1.96 > 1.236). Literary Criticism Classes show no effect in resulting respondents' silence; (1.96 > 1.418).

Table 13: Statistical Distribution of Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence with Respect to Gender Variable

Factors Related to the Class Resulting Silence	Females' Responses		Males' Responses		Z Value
	No.	%	No.	%	
Grammar Classes	17	85%	19	82%	0.213
Linguistics Classes	20	100%	17	73%	2.849
Novel Classes	17	85%	17	73%	0.913
Drama Classes	19	95%	20	86%	0.941
Poetry Classes	17	85%	16	69%	1.236
Literary Criticism Classes	18	90%	17	73%	1.418
Total	20	100	23	100	

11. Conclusion

The research findings reported so far lead to spelling out that Iraqi University students' silence, regardless gender, is a hindrance to their speaking as their responses supported by statistical package show.

Part of the findings suggest that students are opt to silence basically "to make their listening better" as the calculated value which is the highest among other factors with regard to performance in the class score (80%) for students (fe/male), (85%) for female students, and (77%) for male students. Statistically, the z value for such a factor is non-significant. More importantly, student's listening is not proved a healthy cognitive process; it is the most preferable way in order not to participate in the class. In the zoom of psychology, students claim that "feeling shy", as resulting their silence, hinders their participation. "Feeling shy" is ranged the first among other psychological factors – (60%) for students (fe/male), (65%) for female students, and (56%) for male students. Again, statistically speaking, "feeling shy" is non-significant, and as we explained so far in our discussion, female students and male students' justifications of "shyness" resulting their silence in the class is not fully accurate if we think about the fact that their shyness does not disturb their voices when they code – switch in the class or when they speak their mother – tongue with their teachers and peers outdoors. As shown earlier, "shyness" is an emotion embraces other emotions, i.e., other psychological factors as "lacking confidence when speaking English", "fear of being mocked at by classmates", etc. (see points 1, 2, and 3 in 10.1). To my intuition and experience, I do believe that "shyness" resulting silence for some students, yet for the majority, it is a mask to conceal their unwillingness to participate orally in the class. For me, students' silence in their two cases is optional. On a solid ground, students' responses, with regard to factors related to the class resulting silence, magnify more clearly that students' silence here is not their choice. Some classes given in the 4th grade syllabus, if not all, should be given a second thought. The research findings show that Drama Classes hinder students (fe/male) from speaking as it scores the highest rate (90%), for female students, it is Linguistics Classes (100%), and for male students, it is Drama Classes (86%). The z value of Linguistics Classes is only significant here; that is, all the female students are silent in Linguistics Classes and they are more silent than the male students. The students' acknowledgement of 4 basic factors related to the class varying between one class to another warrants not only teachers' concern, but experts, educators and syllabi designers as well. It is worth considering here that students' silence is not a choice; rather, students are obliged to be silent as compared to the factors resulting silence mentioned above.

There is no need of a show of hands. All this cluster of issues and factors reinforces the following: (1)students' silence, whether a choice or not, is a terrifying threat in Iraqi higher education classes, (2)educators dwell upon the assumption that oral participation should always be there to cut students' silence as it is linked to learning. This fully matches the belief that there is "[a] link between student oral participation and performance outcomes such as critical thinking and learning" (Davis, 1993 and Fassinger, 1995), and that "… classroom participation … produce[s] positive outcomes in terms of students learning and communication skills" (Dallimore et al, 2006, 2008) (All quoted in Meyer, 2009: p.15), and (3) students' silence should not always be presumed as the students' drawback. In this sense, Hypotheses 1 and 4 are verified.

As for Hypothesis 2, the research findings throw light on Iraqi university students' beliefs about silence in the class. Generally, Iraqi students (fe/male) believe that they are silent due to "making their listening better" as this factor is rated (80%) which is the highest. Still in the zoom of performance factors, Iraqi students believe that "avoiding giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher" is the least reason which disturbs their voice and results in silence; its rating is (61%). In addition, Iraqi students' global belief about psychological factors resulting their silence in the class is basically due to their "shyness" as it scores the highest rating (60%); still "fear of being mocked at by class mates" does not have that much effect on their voice; its rating is (2%). As for factors related to the class, Iraqi students' silence is clearly evident in Drama Classes; (90%) of the responses acknowledge this class. In this respect, 16 students justify this acknowledging the reason which reads: "The material is difficult to be comprehended". The least classes which disturb the students' voice is Poetry Classes; its rating is (76%) and 9 students believe that the reason behind their silence in such classes is that "the class goes on the form of teacher-talk". Hypothesis 2, thus, is verified.

As gender is the main variable in the study, findings show a variation between female students and male students. Among the performance factors, female students and male students believe that their disturbance of voice is due to "making listening better" which is the highest rating for both; (85%) and (77%), respectively. The least factor which disturbs females' voice is "to avoid pronouncing a word incorrectly"; its rating is (63%) whereas the least factor which disturbs males' voice is "to avoid giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher"; its rating is (53%). Psychologically speaking, female students and male students conceptualize "feeling shy" as the major hindrance of their voice; its ratings are (65%) and (56%) for females and males, respectively. The least psychological factor resulting students' silence is "some subjects do not appeal to the students. They do not like the material taught" for female students and its rate is (5%). For male students, "fear of being mocked at by classmates" does not result in any silence at all in the class; its rating is (0%). Among the

factors related to the class, Linguistics Classes are said to be the top class which hinders females' speaking; all the female respondents, (100%) share this belief. On the other hand, Drama is the top class which disturbs male students' voice; its rating is (86%). Both female students and male students belief that the least class which disturbs their specking or oral participation is Poetry Classes; its ratings are (85%) and (69%) for females and males, respectively. Though the rating is different among female students and male students, still what is hidden behind the curtains is a fact which is worth considering. To the best of my knowledge, Poetry Classes (including 2nd grade and 3rd grade) in our department are taught via a parrot-like methodology; teachers may dictate the evaluation of the poems or deliver a ready-made handout for the students to be Xeroxed. I can recall here my memories when being an B.A. student. Yet, the situation seems somehow different for our 4th grade students; this may due to the up-to-date material, the activities assigned by the teachers or some other reasons which need investigation. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is verified.

Unearthing all these facts about Iraqi university students' silence in higher education atmosphere, I would like to end quoting the Sufi poet, Rumi (1994 in Armstrong b, 2007: p. 6) who writes: "Now let silence speak…".

12. Where to?

If we look back at the samples, which are pulled from one grade, and it is supposed to be an advanced grade, we realize that Iraqi university students (fe/male) do suffer from a disease which needs a quick remedy. Talk is subservient to silence for the majority, if not all, adult teachers in Iraqi higher education, and even for their students. As our knowledge merged, we realized that students' beliefs about their silence prove our claim which reads: 'silence is an enemy to the students' talk and oral participation in the class', and it is a challenge for all language learners (Pinter, 2006). We may hope that this documentation offers the expects an opportunity to consider some tentative issues as follows:

1. The present work is an appeal to investigators to study and examine students' silence in higher education more fully. Observational studies and interviews-based studies should be conducted. Here I would happily quote Vassilopoulos and Konstantidis' (2012) implications: "Teachers and students could also observe videotapes of classroom interaction and be asked about their experiences and reactions during moments of silence" (p.103). Consequently, types of silence could be diagnosed as "intentional vs. unintentional" (Similarly, readers may notice the conclusion where "optional vs. obligatory" silence is implicitly touched upon), teachers initiated vs. student imitated silence, silence in relation to gender, silence in relation to ethnic groups, etc. Such factors could be examined at different grades in higher education atmosphere.

2. Qualitative studies involving interviews with adult teachers should be encouraged so as to examine the teachers' perception of silence and their uses in the class (Ollin, 2008). Methods for training novice teachers to use silence as a positive methodology in the class plus their personality factors (Vassilopoulos and Konstantidis, 2012: p.103) are needed so as to cut the students' use of mimic language to communicate in our classrooms.

3. Iraqi educational policy seems to be similar to the Greek policy; it is that "… traditional banking model of education depositing knowledge into students' mind" (Ibid.: p.95). The teaching style of teachers should be given a second… a third… and may be a fourth thought. All teachers should be aware of the term "communication apprehension" which is written in over 250 articles in communication discipline – not including books. The vast majority of these articles focus on different issues in relation to communication. What concerns us here is "…the means of prevention by classroom teachers". Johansen (1996) comes with "dialogic prescriptive" as a remedy for such a fear implying that all communicative participants are allowed to, are encouraged to, and actually participate by speaking, listening, and sharing ideas with each other (Petress, N.Y.: p.3). In our case, the first and the most important step is to teach our students how to communicate dialogically; this is done by "offer[ing] a wide array of communication channels (i.e.: [sic] discussion, debates, analysis, brainstorming, group work, etc.). This is adopted in few classes, including my writing and reading skills classes, which should be the policy of all the teachers. (cf. Ibid.: p.5).

4. It is a second appeal and this time, to experts, educators, syllabi designers to reevaluate the syllabi of the courses beforehand as far as English as foreign language in higher education is concurred.

5. It is hoped that workshops, sessions, conferences, and symposiums are held now and then in all educational institutions and faculties to negotiate students' silence. This evidently provides an occasion to share, reflect on and shift our teaching, practices and beliefs (cf. Briskin, 2000: p.3). Likewise, some programmes that are devoted for this purpose would help to find solutions and get students' voice (cf. Shizha, 2005: p.1).

6. Conducting empirical works on preadolescents' silence is pedagogically desirable as it is detrimental to the child's education and learning success (cf. Jaworski and Sachdef, 1998, among others). And my inquiry is ongoing…

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My respect to silence has not started with me recently. It has been there since 2008 when working on my Ph.D. dissertation and enriching my conceptualization of silence in that plethora of invaluable literature. I am grateful to all the editors and the authors who let their pens speak about silence and giving mine as well a chance to speak about my students' silence here. I owe the genesis of this paper to my students, in particular, 'silent students' who carried me to conceptualize my questions in terms of a questionnaire. It is only you, my always advisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Hussein A. Ahmed, who encourages me to work. I do appreciate your reading for the first draft and helping me in printing the paper using your magical fingers to be the way it appears. My near Dr., I look forward to inquire and work together again.

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Appendix: Silence in the University Classroom

Questionnaire

Dear Students:

I am carrying out an investigation concerning the phenomenon of silence in the classroom. You need to answer the questions by ticking the correct answer. Please,

- *try not to skip any question, and*

- *state the responses that come to your mind without erasing, changing, or crossing.*

Thanks, in advance, for your participation.

Gender   **Male** ☐   **Female** ☐

A.

1.   I keep silent when trying to ignore teachers' questions.

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

2.   I keep silent when there is a problem to be solved.

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

3.   I keep silent to make my listening better.

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

4.   I keep silent for fear of making grammatical errors.

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

5.   I keep silent for fear of pronouncing a word incorrectly.

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

6.   I keep silent for fear of giving wrong answers to the questions raised by the teacher.

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

B.

I wish I could participate in the ongoing activities in the class but I keep

silent because

    a. I feel shy. ☐

    b. I lack confidence when speaking English language. ☐

    c. I fear of being mocked at by classmates. ☐

    d. I have no interest in English. ☐

    e. Some subjects do not appeal to me. I do not like the materials being taught. ☐

C.

I keep silent in (Choose **one** of the following options):

    Grammar Classes ☐   *because*   a.☐ The teacher gives me no chance to participate.

    b.☐ The class goes on in the form of teacher – talk.

    c.☐ The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only.

    d.☐ The material is difficult to be comprehended.

    e.☐ The material is explained in the handouts.

    Linguistics Classes ☐   *because*   a.☐ The teacher gives me no chance to participate.

    b.☐ The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk.

    c.☐ The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only.

    d.☐ The material is difficult to be comprehended.

    e.☐ The material is explained in the handouts.

    Novel Classes ☐   *because*   a.☐ The teacher gives me no chance to participate.

    b.☐ The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk.

    c.☐ The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only.

    d.☐ The material is difficult to be comprehended.

    e.☐ The material is explained in the handouts.

    Drama Classes ☐   *because*   a.☐ The teacher gives me no chance to participate.

    b.☐ The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk.

    c.☐ The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only.

    d.☐ The material is difficult to be comprehended.

    e.☐ The material is explained in the handouts.

    Poetry Classes ☐   *because*   a.☐ The teacher gives me no chance to participate.

    b.☐ The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk.

    c.☐ The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only.

    d.☐ The material is difficult to be comprehended.

    e.☐ The material is explained in the handouts.

Literary Criticism ☐	*because*	a.☐ The teacher gives me no chance to participate.
Classes		b.☐ The class goes on in the form of teacher-talk.
		c.☐ The material is supposed to be explained by the teacher only.
		d.☐ The material is difficult to be comprehended.
		e.☐ The material is explained in the handouts.

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