

Beyond Words: Rethinking the Cultural Meaning of Silence in Japanese Communication

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ABSTRACT

Silence holds a distinctive place in Japanese communication, and it has drawn significant interest from researchers. That said, existing understanding remains fragmented across different fields-including high-context communication theory, pragmatics, and studies of interpersonal relationships. This separation has kept us from fully seeing silence as a meaningful, socially accepted way of interacting. The purpose of this study is to synthesize the conceptualization of the cultural meaning of silence in key studies on Japanese communication. Using an affirmative qualitative literature review, the analysis addressed core research on high-context communication, silence as a communicative behavior, and relational theory (*amae* and *wakimae*). Thematic analysis of the study has uncovered three interrelated cultural aspects of silence: relational practice, cultural negotiation, and shared meaning. This reveals that silence is not just the absence of words, but a meaningful cultural way to maintain bonds, harmony, and shared understanding. The present study integrates existing theories into a coherent cultural interpretation of silence in Japanese communication rather than dealing with them separately. The results of this study contribute to Japanese communication research by providing a more holistic conceptual understanding of silence and a theoretical framework for further studies of intercultural communication and culturally embedded communicative practices.

Keywords: silence communication, high-context culture, cultural meaning, *wakimae*, *amae*

INTRODUCTION

Silence plays a crucial role in Japanese communication, symbolizing cultural significance and carrying profound implications for its high-context culture (Hall, 1976). It's way more than uttering nothing — as Lebra (1987) observes, “silence is one of the active discourses of how men and women speak to each other.” It serves as a subtle yet powerful form of signifying respect, building contacts and social peace (Hasyim & Yokomoto, 2026; Bao, 2025). Silence of this type relies on common cultural knowledge and the clarity of understanding of the situation at hand. In the face of growing complexity, a globalized world, new ways to mix, and socialisation, research shows that this form of unspoken communication remains a profound and powerful aspect of Japanese culture (Hayati & Sinha, 2024).

Recent scholarship has approached silence from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. For pragmatic research, silence is an interactional resource which is utilized to build rapport, negotiate communicative intentions, and make meaning between participants (Wu et al., 2025; Ephratt, 2008; Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Silence has also been interpreted in the context of learning new languages and cross-cultural communication, as well as in negotiating or strategizing in terms of communication or, by interactional situations, adaptation to foreign culture (Sato, 2024). In Japanese communication, the literature has also reiterated the importance of implication in practice with respect to discussion, such as implicit communication, collectivism, and contextual

interpretation in shaping the practicability (Shen et al., 2024). Taken together, these studies argue that silence is a meaningful communicative practice, not a communicative void.

While there has been significant research on silence in Japanese communication, these studies have been fragmented. Hall (1976) discusses silence in terms of high-context communication and highlights the importance of shared context in meaning construction. Jaworski (1993) considers silence as an active communicative resource, while Doi (1973) and Ide (1989) define it in terms of Japanese relational values such as *amae* and *wakimae*. Recent studies have developed such discussions by considering silence in pragmatics, language education, rapport management, and intercultural communication (Sato, 2024; Shen et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2025). However, such studies generally consider special communicative roles or disciplinary viewpoints and provide limited discussion about how such theories combined together contribute to the cultural characterization of silence for Japanese communication. Consequently, while this contribution was useful, the previous work presents a limited consideration of the wider cultural relevance of the topic of silence, as it does not engage with its entire nature. This study contributes to fill this gap by integrating these mutually complementary viewpoints in order to create a broader cultural interpretation of silence as a culturally embedded communicative practice in Japanese communication.

In response to this gap, this study employs an integrative qualitative literature analysis to examine how the cultural meaning of silence has been conceptualized across major studies on Japanese communication. Drawing on Hall's theory of high-context communication, the Japanese relational concepts of *amae* and *wakimae*, and studies of silence as a communicative practice, this study synthesizes these perspectives to develop a more integrated understanding of silence in Japanese communication.

Rather than presenting silence merely as the absence of speech or as a single communicative strategy, this study argues that silence should be understood as a culturally embedded communicative practice through which interpersonal relationships are maintained, social harmony is negotiated, and shared meanings are constructed. By integrating previously fragmented theoretical perspectives, this study contributes to Japanese communication studies by offering a more comprehensive conceptual interpretation of silence and providing a theoretical foundation for future research on intercultural communication and culturally situated meaning-making.

LITERATURE REVIEW

High-Context Communication in Japanese Culture

Japanese silence is also an example of Hall's (1976) high-context theory of communication, as understanding is passed down orally through implicit understanding, the contextual influence, and collective experiences as well as spoken words. In high-context cultures, communication is less about direct language but more about what social context suggests. Therefore, its mode of interaction is indirect; relational as well as communicative; heavily mediated by non-verbal and situational cues. Japan's high-context culture (Hall, 1976) is often acknowledged and considered as a model for high-context communication because of mutual understanding, relational awareness, and shared cultural heritage. Not all Japanese words communicate what they mean; silence is more of a kind of communicative resource than a signifier that there isn't enough communication between two people. Recent research (Shen et al., 2024) reports that high-context communication is more or less common for Japanese social exchanges, as collectivism, hierarchical behavior, and implicit communication pervade social relations, whether in interpersonal or business settings.

Silence becomes significant, as in this communicative environment, the speakers and the audiences have common cultural norms which give a voice to the unspoken message without the need for direct verbalization. Silence may not be a failure of communication; it may mean acceptance, respect, empathy, hesitation, or consideration depending on the relationship and situation. Recent studies of communication

also indicate that contextual interpretation affects communication processes, even in digitally mediated interactions, making Hall's paradigm the touchstone for a lot of today's communication research.

Although Hall's theory effectively explains the cultural environment in which silence becomes meaningful, it does not sufficiently account for how silence itself functions as a communicative act or for how different forms of silence generate particular cultural meanings. Therefore, understanding silence in Japanese communication requires complementary perspectives that conceptualize silence not merely as a contextual phenomenon but also as an active communicative practice.

Silence as a Communicative Practice

Silence is becoming more and more recognised as a communicative practice and less simply as the absence of speech. Preliminary research dismissed the classical view that spoken communication is determined primarily by vocal utterances, considering silence as a practical form of communicative vehicle influenced by cultural and interactional dynamics (Jaworski, 1993). From this perspective, silence is considered an intentional communicative act, which speakers employ to carry out meanings, regulate interaction, and negotiate relationships without explicit verbalised language.

Recent studies suggest that silence may act as a mechanism of communication beyond mere breaks from or avoidance of speech. For face-to-face interactions, a user of silence will use this communication mechanism to signify agreement, disagreement, empathy, respect, reflection, emotional control, or strategic politeness according to the social context and the shared understanding of the individual or group (Wu et al., 2025). In context, aside from the concrete data of this research on silence itself, intercultural pragmatic writing demonstrated that the cultural meaning of silence can vary, and so communication misunderstandings are experienced as a result of different communicative presumptions of interlocutors (Sato, 2024). This indicates that silence should be considered a culturally specific form of communication, rather than as some universal manifestation of communicative failure.

In terms of Japanese inter- and intra-personal communication, silence serves a particularly important range of reasons. In these circumstances, silence does not stop communication, but, rather, it enhances communication because it allows speakers to infer intents through context clues and relationship knowledge. Such behavior reflects the Japanese preference for tacit communication, where shared experiences rather than verbal exchanges are the mechanism to negotiate meaning. Accordingly, silence is valuable if one tries to keep an eye on one another, not getting too confrontational in social interactions, and thus maintains interpersonal harmony. Recent work has supported the idea that silence is an essential weapon for today's communicative arena. For instance, as described by Haugh (2015), interpersonal meanings can be co-constructed by implicit qualities such as those that silence represents instead of words. Similarly, in her study, Nakane (2015) demonstrates how silence can be brought to bear in the domain of interaction management during both institutional and intercultural communication.

Although recent studies have been successful in elucidating the communicative functions of silence, they have primarily focused on its pragmatic or interactional aspects. Less focus has been placed on the cultural processes by which silence in Japanese society takes on these meanings. Therefore, the concept of silence as a communicative practice needs to be framed within a framework that also takes into account the specific cultural values and relational norms at work. In the section that follows, we address this question and explain how silence functions as a significant communicative practice in Japanese communication using the Japanese concepts of *amae* and *wakimae*.

Cultural Values Behind Silence in Japanese Interaction

The cultural significance of silence cannot be avoided because aspects of Japanese communication are so firmly anchored in the relational values that guide interpersonal interaction. The Japanese concepts of *amae* and *wakimae* describe the adequate use of silence as a social contract, while high-context communication clarifies the implied meaning of silence and defines it as a communicative action. The ideas here suggest that the communication process is not primarily information transmission; it is also about the congruence that grows in people when they share a space according to sensitivity and social awareness.

Amae is a construct that is based on Doi (1973), suggesting that people want empathy, acceptance, and emotional reliance in intimate interpersonal relationships. *Amae* works on a model of understanding rather than speaking, which relies heavily on predicting people's feelings and intentions within their context. Recent studies of Japanese interpersonal communication (Niiya & Harihara, 2012; Lewis & Ozaki, 2009) have called attention to *amae* as a relational orientation that may facilitate implicit communication, in addition to enhancing trust, especially when verbalization risks hindering interpersonal harmony. In this

relational point of view, silence is the act of empathy, trust, and emotional consideration, as contrasted with non-communication or lack thereof.

Alongside *amae*, the first one is *wakimae* – this concept, proposed by Ide (1989) can be interpreted to mean; the wisdom to adjust communication behavior according to one's roles, hierarchy, or social context requirements. This *wakimae* is an implication of determining the right communicative strategy based on social context as opposed to the preference of individuals. This principle is a tenet of modern Japanese interaction that has been demonstrated in education, organisational and professional matters in such contexts, where indirect dialogue and silence operate largely as acts of manners to convey respect, politeness, and the social appropriateness of the communication (Haugh, 2015; Nakane, 2014). As a consequence, silence is perceived not as passive behaviour, but rather as an acceptable communicative response indicative of an understanding of interpersonally oriented duties.

The relational and cultural mechanisms that give silence meaning in Japanese communication are commonly referred to as *amae* and *wakimae*. While *amae* refers to the expectation of mutual understanding between interlocutors (Doi, 1973; Yamaguchi & Ariizumi, 2006), *wakimae* is defined as the social norms that govern appropriate communicative behavior (Ide, 1989; Yonezawa, 2023). The combination demonstrates that silence is both a communication choice and a culturally embedded practice based on social norms and relational expectations. This integrated approach, which is outlined in the following section, provides a framework for understanding silence as a cultural process of meaning-making.

Toward an Integrated Understanding of Silence

As described above, however, a single theoretical approach does not account for silence in Japanese communication. Jaworski (1993) conceptualizes silence as an active act of communication rather than simply the non-existence of speech and Hall's (1976) high-context communication conceptualizes the cultural milieu that makes it possible to share what is implicitly communicated. In complement to these perspectives, Japanese relational theories of *amae* (Doi, 1973) and *wakimae* (Ide, 1989) suggest that social norms and interpersonal expectations enable silence to take on culturally shared forms. Despite each viewpoint providing valuable information, prior studies have also generally addressed silence in Japanese contexts separately, thus resulting in a fragmented understanding of the phenomenon.

Rather than competing accounts, this study argues that these theoretical positions should be viewed as complementary. Silence is the communicative medium for meaning negotiations, and the *amae* and *wakimae* are the relational and cultural frameworks through which meaning is interpreted. High-context communication provides the communicative space to communicate implicit meaning. Collectively, these discourses suggest that silence emerges as an embedded socio-cultural phenomenon of meaning making that is the result of a dynamic between contextual communication, relational expectations, and social norms, not simply an interactional tactic or cultural symbol.

This combined method allows an interesting analysis of silence for Japanese communication in three related respects. First, there's the fact that silence is a form of relational practice which actually provides reciprocal understanding and interpersonal trust. Secondly, speakers maintain interpersonal relations and maintain harmony without verbal escalation, since silence is an act of cultural negotiation. Third, silence supports shared meaning, as it creates an opportunity to read intentions from contextual awareness and shared cultural knowledge. This dimension offers a critical way of interpreting silence as an important culturally significant communicative practice in Japanese communication and the form of analysis provided in later sections.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs an integrative qualitative literature analysis to examine how the cultural meaning of silence has been conceptualized in studies of Japanese communication. Unlike conventional literature reviews, which primarily summarize previous findings, an integrative literature analysis seeks to synthesize diverse theoretical perspectives to develop a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of a particular phenomenon (Snyder, 2019). This approach is appropriate because the present study does not aim to evaluate empirical outcomes or measure the effectiveness of communication practices, but rather to integrate existing theories and research into a coherent interpretation of silence as a culturally embedded communicative practice.

Data Source and Selection Criteria

Academic publications on high-context communication, intercultural communication, silence and Japanese communication, and Japanese relational concepts like *amae* and *wakimae* were included in the databases. Internationally renowned academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis Online, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar) provided the data. The following standards were used to choose the studies in order to ensure that the analysis was reliable and pertinent:

1. Published in scholarly books or peer-reviewed international journals.
2. Written in English.
3. Silence, Japanese communication, high-context communication, or Japanese relational communication were all specifically mentioned.

Excluded were studies that focused on communication technologies, speech pathology, or language acquisition without addressing cultural communication.

Data Collection

The search for literature combined the keywords silence, Japanese communication, high-context communication, Japanese culture, *amae*, *wakimae*, intercultural communication, and implicit communication. After the first search, duplicate publications and studies that didn't fit the inclusion criteria were removed. The theoretical focus, conceptual arguments, and discussions of the cultural significance of silence in the remaining publications were then identified through a full-text analysis.

Data Analysis

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic synthesis, following the qualitative procedures proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008) and the integrative review framework suggested by Snyder (2019). Rather than comparing empirical findings, the analysis focused on identifying recurring conceptual patterns across different theoretical perspectives.

There were four steps in the analytical process. First, from each publication, pertinent ideas about silence were found. Second, these ideas—which included relational values, communicative practice, high-context communication, and cultural interpretation—were coded based on their theoretical orientation. Third, consistent comparisons across the literature led to the grouping of related ideas into more general thematic categories. Ultimately, an integrated conceptual framework that explains how silence serves as a culturally embedded communicative practice in Japanese communication was created by synthesizing these themes.

This analytical process resulted in three interrelated cultural dimensions of silence: relational practice, cultural negotiation, and shared meaning. These dimensions provide the analytical framework for the discussion section, which explains the cultural significance of silence in Japanese communication.

DISCUSSION

Silence within High-Context Communication

Research is emerging to prove that Hall's method is still very relevant for the description of communication in Japanese. Despite the achievements in technology and society in current Japanese society, context, ambiguity, and interpersonal sensitivity are still very important things during communication (Shen et al., 2024). Research into intercultural communication also indicates that failure to understand Japanese silence and the subsequent misunderstandings is likely to result if low-context people misunderstand the silence as doubt, evasion, or a lack of communication skills of their Japanese counterpart. Conversely, Japanese speakers believe that silence would be an appropriate and effective response (Sato, 2024). These findings show that the understanding of silence is less about what a communicative act is and more a matter of cultural context.

Since this is about how things are said and the meaning of conversation and Japanese communication, silence in Japan also helps to create better interpersonal relations. Disagreement or hyper-verbalization in high-context settings jeopardizes social relationships by bringing attention to interpersonal differences. As such, silence is part of communication technique. Silence allows harmony to be achieved while permitting different interpretations to coexist at the same time. This silence creates an experience of interaction where people navigate meaning through their mutual sensitivity or sensitivity to the context without the need for immediate verbal clarification. These have been attributes of other aspects of the Japanese cultural frameworks as well, where the emphasis in Japanese culture is less on direct personal expression and more on collaboration, empathy, and maintaining healthy relationships.

More significantly, the synthesis proposes that high-context communication should be viewed as a cultural mechanism that gives silence social legitimacy rather than just as a communication style. High-context communication has typically been used in earlier research as an explanation for indirect communication. The current study makes the case that this viewpoint should be expanded to acknowledge silence as a key mechanism of contextual communication. Therefore, silence is one of the communicative tools used to enact and sustain high-context interaction rather than merely a result of it.

One important theoretical contribution of the present study is this interpretation. The synthesis does not treat silence as an implicit communicative practice, but rather as a culturally organized mode of meaning-making. Communication implications result from the interaction of interpersonal sensitivity, shared cultural expectations, and contextual knowledge. In order to comprehend silence as a part of Japanese communication, one must look beyond the language of explanation and take into account a more expansive cultural interpretation in which meaning is co-constructed through context rather than explicitly stated. This perspective forms the basis for an analysis of how relational values also constitute the meaning of silence in Japanese communication as described later.

Silence as Relational Communication

The earlier conversation also showed how Japanese communication is rooted in a high-context cultural environment, which makes silence meaningful. However, how interlocutors successfully interpret silence without explicit verbalization cannot be explained by a contextually based understanding of silence alone. The current synthesis argues that relational values that govern interpersonal interaction fundamentally shape the communicative meaning of silence. In Japanese communication, silence serves as a relational practice that continuously negotiates empathy, trust, respect, and social responsibility in addition to being an indirect communication tactic.

This relational reading is consistent with *amae* and *wakimae*, which account for the interpersonal aspects of Japanese communication. *Amae* (Doi, 1973) is a concept of an expectation of mutual understanding that allows individuals to rely on others' empathy without requiring explicit verbal expression. In this relational structure, silence denotes the confidence that an individual's intentions and feelings can be interpreted with the help of shared contextual awareness. Independently, new evidence also indicates that implicit communication in Japanese society is heavily dependent on interpersonal trust and emotional sensitivity, leading silence to be seen as a legitimate communicative response rather than as a symptom of uncertainty or shortcomings in communicative competence (Niiya & Harihara, 2012; Lewis & Ozaki, 2009).

Simultaneously, *wakimae* (Ide, 1989) clarifies that situational appropriateness, social roles, and hierarchy serve as criteria for communication behaviour. So silence is not just a matter of individual taste; it also reflects awareness of social norms and promotes harmony with others. The contemporary research suggests that *wakimae* remains relevant within communication as well, whether within a professional, educational, or organizational context. Silence can also serve as a suitable relational response to social order and interpersonal harmony in this sense.

The conjunction of *amae* and *wakimae* highlights that silence acts both on emotional and social levels at the same time. *Amae* supports mutual understanding through relational intimacy and empathy, and *wakimae* governs communicative behaviour according to social expectations. Instead of standing by themselves, these relational values complement one another, providing silence with potential for meanings that need not be explicitly articulated. Here we suggest that silence should not be viewed as an indirect communication strategy, but rather as a relational resource through which people navigate their interpersonal relationships while also maintaining social harmony.

This synthesis is going to make a contribution here by asserting that silence is itself a form of relational communication. Silence has been the focus of much research as a pragmatic solution, an expression of politeness, or as a form of high-context communication. Still, viewed through the lenses of *amae* and *wakimae*, silence becomes communicative and directly shapes relationships in conjoined ways. People use silence to demonstrate their empathy, act in ways that do not contradict social obligations, to maintain relational equilibrium, and to build trust without speaking. In that sense, silence functions as an active relational force that sustains long-term social cohesion within Japanese society.

This viewpoint also clarifies how silence in cross-cultural interactions is misunderstood. Speakers of low-context cultures may perceive communication practices that are respectful and considerate in terms of Japanese relational norms as hesitant, unclear, or uninterested. These differences demonstrate that the

relational values that influence the interpretation of silence are inextricably linked to its communicative value. As a result, comprehending silence necessitates paying attention to both the cultural norms governing interpersonal relationships and the communicative context.

In the end, the discussion of this theoretical synthesis leads to a conclusion that silence is to be approached as a method of relational communication, not communicative absence. Meaning is rooted in the way that social discernment and interpersonal trust are processed through social contexts that allow speakers to maintain harmonious relationships without reliance on strictly stating anything directly. This relational perspective provides the conceptual basis for understanding silence as an integrated cultural practice of meaning-making that is addressed in the section to follow.

Silence as Cultural Meaning-Making

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that silence in Japanese communication is shaped by both the communicative characteristics of a high-context culture and the relational values embedded in *amae* and *wakimae*. Building upon these findings, this study argues that silence should be understood not only as a communicative practice or relational strategy but also as a process of cultural meaning-making. Rather than functioning simply as an alternative to verbal communication, silence actively constructs, expresses, and reproduces the cultural values that regulate social interaction in Japanese society.

This reading is consistent with previous research, which either considered silence as a characteristic of high-context communication (Hall, 1976) or, alternatively, a type of interactional resource (Jaworski, 1993). Although these viewpoints show us well how silence operates in communication, they do not go so far as to illustrate how silence itself is involved in constructing a continuous cultural meaning. These aspects combine, and the present synthesis will illustrate: silence achieves significance for others in situations of jointly held cultural knowledge, relational expectations, and contextual communication. Therefore, silence is constructed by culture as not merely being heard but instead actively contributes to the maintenance and replication of silence through the use of common modes of communication.

In this view, silence is a cultural practice which, in some respects, can operate as a cultural phenomenon facilitating the performance of important Japanese values such as harmony (*wa*), empathy, respect, humility, and social responsibility. Silence is the only way in which these particular values can be lived through relational awareness and understanding, rather than being made explicit, via relational sensitivity, but they are lived through their context, rather than explicitly. Through its impact on social interactions in Japanese communication, as revealed by recent studies in Japanese communication, implicit communication facilitates cooperation between people and decreases open conflict, enabling the maintenance of social relationships without explicit dialogue or verbal negotiation (Haugh, 2015; Shen et al., 2024). Instead of being mere abstracts of cultural ideals, then, silence is a channel through which social practice manifests cultural values.

Further, the synthesis illustrates that silence is a culturally negotiated practice, in which the definition of silence is not a static communicative behavior, but a product of a shared interpretive lexicon. In some communication contexts and interlocutors within a relationship, the silence may indicate some sense of empathy, respect, disagreement, emotional reserve, and deliberation. That the understanding of silence is cultural rather than universal has been recently confirmed in intercultural communication (Sato, 2024; Wu et al., 2025). Thus, silence should be perceived as a socially constructed communication tool having meaning, which is rooted in common cultural norms and expectations.

This study has theoretical significance by combining diverse perspectives on silence into a cohesive understanding. This study shows that relational values, communicative practice, and high-context communication operate as interdependent components of a single cultural process rather than as separate explanations. Silence is the communicative vehicle through which meaning is negotiated; high-context communication sets the stage for implicit meaning; *amae* and *wakimae* offer the relational means that shape interpretation. These things collectively indicate how silence itself becomes a culturally significant communication method that captures and perpetuates Japanese social values.

This integrated approach brings Japanese communication studies to a theoretical level by providing a conceptual framework that approaches silence as an active process of cultural meaning-making. It goes beyond the position of silence as no less than a form of indirect communication strategy and instead highlights silence in terms of the ways of maintaining interpersonal connections and cultural norms, also reproducing mutual understanding among the Japanese. Silence, therefore, should be understood as one of the core cultural tools that Japanese people employ to foster and maintain meaningful social interaction,

rather than as the absence of communication.

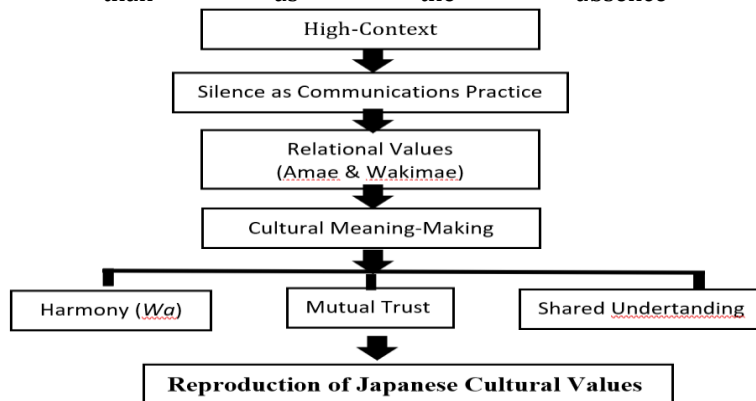


Figure 1. Integrated Cultural Meaning-Making of Silence in Japanese Communication

Figure 1 presents the main conceptual findings of this study, generated through an integrative synthesis of the literature on high-context communication, silence as a communication practice, and the relational values of *amae* and *wakimae*. This model demonstrates that the meaning of silence is not shaped by a single cultural dimension in isolation, but rather emerges from the dynamic interplay between communication context, interaction practices, and relational values. This interaction positions silence as a cultural meaning-making process manifested in harmony, mutual trust, and shared understanding. Thus, this model emphasizes that silence is not merely an implicit communication strategy but a cultural mechanism that enables social values to be understood, maintained, and reproduced in Japanese society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To this end, this article demonstrates that silence in Japanese communication is not the empty space that remains without words, but a culturally situated signifier. With an integrative cross-cutting qualitative literature review, this paper integrates the views of high-context communication, silence as a communicative practice, and the relational *amae* as well as *wakimae* perspectives into an integrated framework to provide deeper insights into the complex ways in which silence functions in the Japanese context. This article argues that silence in its understanding, emerges from the interrelationship of contextual communication, relational expectations, and shared cultural norms, which help support people's ability to maintain interpersonal harmony, negotiate social relations, and take in the implications when speaking is neither precise nor clear and explicit. This research synthesizes previous heterogeneous theoretical approaches that provide a conceptual base in Japanese communication and cultural studies by repositioning silence in both an indirect and a culturally embedded manner of communication, through cultural construction as constructing meanings — one in which the Japanese cultural values are negotiated, maintained, and reproduced in daily interaction. Whereas the present research employs a conceptual synthesis against the backdrop of existing scholarship, we posit that this proposed framework serves as a point of departure for further empirical research that will also employ ethnography, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, or interview-based approaches not only for the study of silence but also studies how silence is performed in various social, organizational, educational, and intercultural contexts, as well as comparative studies of other high-context cultures to expand and improve upon the theoretical applicability of this framework.

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