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Literacy, learning and the language of silence: identifying the processes of focused silence as a pedagogic tool in education

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Abstract

Literacy, learning and the language of silence: identifying the processes of focused silence as a pedagogic tool in education. Csikszentmihalyi's notion of 'the zone', a stage of creative practice often interpreted as an immersion in some form of silence, has been fundamental to my evolution as a writer of fiction, and as a teacher of both literacy and creative writing. This contribution will explore techniques for embedding intentional silence methodologies into teaching literacy-based subjects, nurturing arts-based approaches to learning. Through such teaching the process of silence can make quantifiable differences at all levels of education. Focused silence offers an aid to imagination, to creative thinking, and to problem solving. Through silence learners engage with more than the tangible task; deepening the silence-experience engages emotion and whole-body awareness, opening potential for widening benefits related to ownership of ideas, confidence, and motivation – all current issues within teaching and learning. When learners engage with silence, it gives voice to their inner introvert. Learners hear themselves think, and know, through connection with that quieter voice, they have something valuable to say.

Keywords

Silence, literacy, holistic, creative-writing, education

Parole chiave

Silenzio, alfabetizzazione, olistica, scrittura creativa, educazione

Silence: Preparing the Mind

Silence. A perceived space between sounds. In a human context silence seems often an interlude between talking and doing, something that requires no conscious guidance. Even when silence is used as a tool for impact – perhaps to register disapproval or create atmosphere – there is a sense that individual responses are instinctive; they present as innate reactions to an invisible form of communication.

My approaches begin with this notion of instinct and the unconscious methodologies that identify perceptions and pre-conceived beliefs, fostering a ‘creative state of mind.’¹ Consciousness creates the illusion that a thought, idea, decision or solution has just occurred within the moment it is acknowledged, but research suggests that in order to enable these visible responses, the unconscious mind has previously done all the work.² However, there is a point, identified through analyses of neural activity, wherein ‘readiness potential’ can be observed – a moment that triggers a gathering of energies that precede conscious decision making.³ To align this with qualities related to literature and creative writing, this gathering of energies might be likened to a heroic protagonist in a quest narrative – the ‘call to arms’ that readies them for action. In actively combining this readiness with silence as pedagogy, I seek to heighten conscious expectations through linguistic, visual, and atmospheric approaches. In essence, a room is prepared but it is not a physical room. It is a mind-space designed as preparation for creative responses. Within this space of heightened expectation, focused, purposeful silence has the power to deepen thinking, to inspire and transform. It also has the power to enhance learning.

Learning is as much about learning to think – the quality of thoughts – as it is about received knowledge. Robin Nelson positions the concept of ‘doing knowing’ as a means of making the practice of knowledge visible.⁴ Knowing and thinking are not passive and thinking can be nurtured as a distinct activity which has time afforded, the process itself teased out and nurtured. In this realm Robert Fisher, an educator specialising in teaching philosophy to children, evolved elements of ekphrastic practice, forging a community of enquiry through engagement with visual stimuli where pupils were encouraged to take their time looking at a painting, walking around it, asking questions, feeding both the eye and the mind.⁵ This engagement with visual stimuli deepened discussion and stimulated the philosophical debates that underpinned Fisher’s intentions. Fisher extended this to art evolved *by* the pupils, identifying ways a pupil’s unique creation enables both intellectual and emotional growth. Through the development of his pupils as artists, Fisher discusses how, through connections with process, young learners gain access to thoughts and feelings that ‘lie too deep to know.’⁶ These combinations, connecting image with focused cognitive processing, lead some way towards my own practices, both in my quest to evolve ‘good’ writing – in the

¹ Bohm 1998, pp. 16-17.

² Brophy 2009, pp. 38-39.

³ *Ibid*, p. 39.

⁴ Nelson 2013, p. 40.

⁵ Fisher 2015, pp. 211-213.

⁶ Fisher 2014, p. 192.

context of emerging fictions that someone else is willing to publish – and as an educator within school-based learning and academia.

Good writing is generally not about writing, but about rewriting. Early drafts are experimental, raw, and imperfect. They need revisiting, revising and reshaping – to be viewed from a range of angles and, like a piece of pottery still being shaped by the potter, held ‘...up to the light’.⁷ In this sometimes messy and uncertain process, many established authors work through stages. Those stages include bursts of writing, time for research, and space for thinking. The thinking stage often involves significant periods when it may appear that the writer is doing nothing. It feels at best akin to procrastination, at worst daydreaming. Unfocused and purposeless. Educational systems, whether within early primary or advanced higher education, cannot afford learners the luxuries of time spent ‘doing nothing’. Emphasis is more often on achievement, attainment, and the perceived success that relates to evidence-based accomplishments. Aims typically place attention on what can be seen, heard, and consciously recorded. There is scant room for the raw and imperfect, and, arguably, few educators who would consider daydreaming to be a valuable resource for teaching. However, it is from the scraps of these fragmented daydreams and awkward beginnings that I have fostered the practice of silence.

This contemplative daydream-time does not need to be an isolating experience. In my evolution of these approaches I have identified that to engage with silence is less a retreat from the noise and bustle, and more of an enabling of a channelled space.⁸ This space empowers communication with the unconscious, creating an internal environment which aids the potential to experience that moment of ideas forming. I am back to the quest as metaphor again. The protagonist is waking, identifying their mission.

The notion of an ‘imagination space’ aligns with elements of Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory; an immersion in a chosen activity that is so intense that distractions are blocked out and time itself seems to stand still.⁹ Within Csikszentmihalyi’s immersive approaches, the quality of thinking is not only deeper, but the mind’s associations and connections have a wider reach. In the context of developing works of fiction, this imagination space enhances the evolution of plots, characters, themes, and visual detail.¹⁰ In acknowledging this widened reach, I have observed that innovations advanced through the process demonstrate more original, enhanced content.¹¹

Originality may seem an ambiguous notion; all ideas are original to the individual who first thinks them, and, arguably, there are no new ideas – they are all borrowed, and

⁷ Magrs 2001, pp. 251-252.

⁸ Waite 2017e, pp. 69-70.

⁹ Csikszentmihalyi 2002.

¹⁰ Waite 2021a.

¹¹ Kenett 2021.

re-invented. In schools, particularly regarding younger learners, pupils work with existing texts – often popular, well-known narratives that are either time-served, or that receive a high level of media hype and publicity. In my experience, learners often then regurgitate those stories, rarely exploring alternative, more unique possibilities. In this context, when I use the word ‘original’ I am not, then, thinking about merely finding a different way to express something known, but drawing out the not-yet-known – ideas from below the surface of conscious awareness. Escaping from the ‘regurgitation trap’, however, is not always easy to achieve. It is not only children who are influenced by – sometimes deeply ensnared by – the lure of what already exists. These existing influences take the form of narratives we have loved and returned to again and again. Many of us carry around storylines we can recall consciously or have stored subconsciously and can bring back easily when triggered. Author Ray Bradbury describes how he was seriously hampered in his early attempts at writing, as he tried to emulate those whose works he revered and ‘...succeeded in making quadruple-layered mudpies, all language and style, that would not float, and sank without a trace’.¹² My experiences echo Bradbury’s. To re-hash that which is already identifiable rarely produces outputs which are truly distinct. It seems, instead, it is through accessing associations with our *personal* memories and experiences that manifests more discrete, powerful and diverse outputs.¹³ Focused silence enables this point of access. In this context, and referencing both my own writings, and my teaching methodologies, I have researched how emergent material outputs become unique to the individual, enabling explorations around the notion of ‘voice’ – the voice of both the author and the evolving style; the quality that makes a narrative distinct.¹⁴

For younger learners, the appropriation of existing material is still a viable starting point. These groups will inevitably have less lived experiences and subsequent memories to draw exclusively from, and for those who are reluctant or struggling readers, the scope for potential scenarios are weakened further. Yet, if the appropriation is viewed *only* as a starting point, and confidence in alternative developments instilled, the climate for new connections and possibilities leads to those enhanced solutions. To produce something both personal, and original to others, gives learners agency. This agency is, of itself, inspiring and often prompts further enquiry, establishing greater connections with alternative modes of learning.

It may appear contradictory that something motivating and energising might be born of silence, and yet it is silence that allows the time for associations to be explored. Silence prepares the mind and opens up a space that enables new networks and connections. Within a pedagogic practice, this mind-space can be nurtured and

¹² Bradbury 1990, p.14.

¹³ Waite 2021a.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

prepared through staged interventions that combine silence with elements of visualisation and holistic approaches.¹⁵

Thinking in Stages

The use of the term ‘holistic’ often conjures perceptions of vague, drifting approaches that cannot be pinned down, harnessed, or evidenced. However, in aligning processes with distinct stages, it is possible to chart the activities and guide learners towards clear visible outcomes. In the Csikszentmihalyi model, Creativity has five distinct stages. The first of these is *Preparation*: an immersion in ideas that stimulates curiosity. The second is the period of *Incubation*, as this initial curiosity combined with gathered knowledge is processed by the subconscious mind. This second stage is vital to the quality of the eventual output, as it is during this stage that unexpected connections and combinations of thought evolve. The third stage is the ‘aha!’ moment of *Revelation*, which brings new insight and moves through to the fourth stage: *Evaluation* – questioning whether this spark of possibility is worthy of pursuit. The fifth stage is when the work starts, and ideas are followed through into conscious *Application*.¹⁶

Csikszentmihalyi’s five stages are not the only model for creative thinking. Other theorists have identified less, or more, of such phases. Social psychologist Graham Wallis’ version, evolved in 1926, suggests four stages.¹⁷ Other significant psychology studies that identify stages of creativity include Robert Thomson (1966); Bowers (1984); Velmans (1991), et al.¹⁸ More recently an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research study evolved its own rubric of four steps, designed specifically for use in creative and critical thinking within education.¹⁹ There are commonalities between all cited approaches, and each exhibit credibility in their content, but the phased elements they identify arguably need recognition of a more non-linear complexity. Creative process evokes a stopping and starting: a ‘survival of the fittest’ wherein some ideas never make it past the boundary of unconscious to conscious.²⁰ This intangible boundary brings in something of the elusive quality of that moment of insight; a ‘... quivering edge when something is happening.’²¹ However, regardless of models and complexities, it is the early stages wherein the practice of silence can evolve that shiver of

¹⁵ Waite 2017e.

¹⁶ Csikszentmihalyi 1996, pp. 79-80.

¹⁷ Wallis 2014.

¹⁸ Brophy 2009, p. 40.

¹⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development <https://www.oecd.org/education/blank-rubric-template.pdf>.

²⁰ Waite 2021a.

²¹ Cocker 2018, p. 53.

inspiration. Silence can then shift from the perception of a mere space between sounds, and exist instead as a place of energy, a place of possibilities.

This possibility place is, perhaps, the point at which the practice of silence can allow that which was intangible to be revealed. Silence enables purposeful thinking, it is a place where new perceptions break through the boundary and make associations with relevant material already consciously acknowledged. Combined, these form innovative credible revelations, which are then directed towards the solution. This silence can be viewed as a form of mindful control, the visualisation the focus which leads to the solution. Inside this visualisation actions can be felt as well as seen. Emotion, physical reactions and whole-body learning can be activated through this mindful process.²² Author and creative writing lecturer Robert Olen Butler urges his students to observe the world through the eyes of an artist, to not 'have an idea', but to feel it. To dream it. This is when they will find stories worth telling.²³ Focused silence enables such connections. Characters can be observed. Settings flood with colour. Trees stretch their branches to a bruised lilac sky. The wind picks up, leaves scutter. Someone, or something, is moving slowly around the edge of the castle. Suspense grows. A frantic squawk from a bird. The senses are heightened. Feel the mood. Watch for movement. Listen for sound.²⁴

These visualisations, in a subsequent writing activity, have impact on early drafts, and the consequent quality of the writing. The voice of the thinker is made audible through writing, inspired by the sound of silence.

Mindful Education

Schools can be noisy places. Bells ring. Groups move from place to place. Instructions are shouted. Even outside of play and break-times, vocal and energised engagement is encouraged.²⁵ Class-based discussions can generate vociferous opinions, and such activities are deemed inclusive and beneficial. Silence, in this context, may be perceived as weak or passive. In the past, silence in schools has, arguably, been used more as a weapon than a positive space for learning. 'Be quiet. Sit still. Listen. Don't interrupt'. The teacher as director would demand silence and might even apply it as a disciplinary measure. 'Sit outside the class. Turn your face to the wall. You'll stay behind and work on your own until you have got this finished'. In today's democratic, contemporary classroom, interruptions abound. Learners are urged to ask questions, to challenge and experiment. Within this, the extrovert becomes dominant. That student who puts

²² Gendlin 2003.

²³ Butler 2005, p. 13.

²⁴ Waite 2017c, p. 71.

²⁵ Lees 2012, p. 101.

themselves forward, who always has something to say, advances the lesson from which discussion can evolve; the whole class engaged in talking and sharing.²⁶

Yet, in the space of silence, the introvert can step forward. Taking longer to think does not mean the output is diminished. Quiet, slow decision making can evolve deeper, more considered and more valuable responses.²⁷ A silent practice is not the opposite of a noisy one. In silent practice the activity is still energised, but internal. It affords inner reflection, yet it can be vivid, active, swirling with possibilities.

Mindfulness itself is gaining credibility within educational institutions but is more often linked to notions around wellbeing and therapeutic benefits.²⁸ ²⁹ The value of silence as a teaching pedagogy seems limited and under-researched, and my own awareness of the value of silence came initially not from conscious research, but from experiential learning – a week spent on a silent retreat. There were no telephones or televisions, no music, no radio, no books, no writing implements. The focus, as with educational applications using silence as therapy, was on wholeness, and on ways to nurture ‘inner stillness’.³⁰ This connection with an ‘inner self’ had multiple benefits. Initially, the cluttered anxieties of a life outside the retreat slipped away; and, as explorer Erling Kagge suggests, it seemed as if the secrets of the world might be hidden inside silence.³¹ I felt in tune with nature, living in the moment, and each moment appeared to be expanded, multi-layered and profound. However, this experience nurtured not only a place of calm, but of creative energies, linking with Butler’s theories around dream-space – the ‘white hot centre’ from which artistic practice can emerge.³² I used the retreat time to consciously inhabit that dream-space, ‘dreaming’ new ideas and subsequently wrote four short novels as a result.³³ These novels were not stories with a mystical, magical or spiritual slant. They were short, urban, contemporary tales commissioned for reluctant Young Adult readers. The retreat was, arguably, the pre-prepared room - the space where the world of my characters’ rose through that boundary from the unconscious into consciousness. I could trace the plots. I could see their houses. I sensed their moods and acknowledged their dreams. In short, I got to know them, in advance of writing them down. Focused silence, therefore, does not necessarily engage outputs more typically perceived as dreamy or surreal. Instead it is an attentional practice, enabling new material to manifest regardless of content or intent, and although this was not the first time I had used silence as a source for inspirations, it

²⁶ Cain 2013.

²⁷ Cain, 2013, pp. 49-51.

²⁸ Lees 2012.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 90-91.

³⁰ <https://gaiahouse.co.uk/retreats/> (accessed May 3, 2023).

³¹ Kagge 2018.

³² Butler 2005, p. 13.

³³ Waite 2017 a; b; c; d.

was the first time I had had the privilege to immerse myself at this level, and for such a protracted period.

This immersion forged a sharpened awareness of techniques I might apply in the context of teaching and learning; ways I might adapt and develop the evident scope and power of this silence into a strategic tool. However, the protracted period raised both questions and scepticism. I had the luxury of a week bathed in silence. Would that be possible in the current educational environment? Could I repurpose the process effectively so that its effects could be felt not in a week, but a day? An hour? A minute? Less than a second...? I have previously articulated that time itself seemed expanded and multi-layered at the retreat, so it seemed there could be something about that sense of expansion where a quality of focused thinking could happen in a prescribed shortened but intense period, yet if I were to achieve this it seemed evident I needed to nurture some shift in attitude for the learners, to enable a confidence attached to the process of seeking inspiration through experiential learning.

Seeking and introducing other specialists who practice silence is one approach for embedding more holistic practices in a learning context. This acts as a platform for garnering not necessarily confidence, but a belief that the process *might* have value. David Lynch, acclaimed filmmaker, artist, writer, and musician demonstrates, not least because of his own success and outputs, evidence that the process works. Lynch consciously searches for inspiration through a specific mantra-based meditation, describing how he actively ‘fishes’ for ideas, diving into his unconscious. These rippling, glittering insights can be hooked up and drawn past his own watery boundary to the surface. Lynch describes how the deeper (into thinking) he sinks, the more pure and more powerful the fish become. ‘They’re huge and abstract and they’re very beautiful’.³⁴ Lynch nets these abstract visualisations and reworks them into films for screen, arguing his is not an intellectual pursuit, but an experiential one. ‘When you focus on a thing, it is almost as if you start it moving and vibrating.’³⁵

Silence in Practice

This focus – getting ideas moving – inhabits the centre of my blended visualisation and focused silence techniques. Following initial identification of premise through discussion or brief notes, silence then acts as a distinct developmental phase. Inside this phase learners are prompted to watch their ideas, to make visual representations – to create a film in their mind. Who is in this film? What are they doing? What else is happening? Participants replay their film on a loop, enhancing the detail.³⁶ The visual quality of

³⁴ Lynch 2006, p. 1.

³⁵ Ibid p. 75.

³⁶ Waite 2017e, pp. 70-71.

the process heightens awareness at a range of levels. Learners are evolving the potential not just to look, but to see.³⁷ The ‘readiness-potential’ spills out into action. The quest has begun; archetypal heroes, heroines, wise-ones, fools and villains all take up positions. This seeing is not mere observation, but leads to new perceptions, activating Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘aha’ moment evolved from the previous incubation stage.³⁸ In repurposing silence practice as a tool for teaching, I have observed in learners not only Lynch’s ripples of ideas, made evident in the subsequent writing, but an essential enhanced confidence between learners and emerging outputs. If the mind is prepared, and the space-time afforded, then whole new species’ can come glimmering to the surface.

In one research project where the intent was to improve descriptive writing for reluctant middle-grade learners, a space for silence was evolved by simply drawing the blinds in the classroom and utilising LED candles. Pupils engaged in a series of two-minute silence visualisations. The consequent stories that evolved demonstrated an imaginative and visual quality, and this extract captures that vibrant, descriptive quality which is not static, but energised. Or perhaps, as Lynch suggests, it vibrates...:

The rock face she swam past almost glittered like her baby blue scales. The dark blue sea rippled as she sped through it...there was a moon pool, different lights shining down on it.

The demographic were learners previously disengaged from writing, with no belief in the value of their own ideas, and aspects of my research in this area have placed a focus on those who do not believe they have sufficient imagination.³⁹ Many schools have continued such practice beyond an initial research or consultancy period, as expressed within the following statement:

To maintain the focus of children whilst writing is often extremely difficult, especially with a reluctant writer or those with a significant barrier to writing. Judy used an electric tea light for each child...[she] built atmosphere, it allowed the children to clear any other ‘clutter’ from their minds and channel their ideas... mixing this with guided silent visualisation, allowing them some time to consider before a burst of writing. Then, when they started to lose focus, a timely repetition of this drew them back on task. I still use these in my teaching of writing.⁴⁰

This search for a new species sometimes takes a literal form. The following three examples and subsequent extracts demonstrate discrete plots evolved independently by secondary

³⁷ Berger 1972.

³⁸ Csikszentmihalyi 1996.

³⁹ Waite 2014, pp. 15-21.

⁴⁰ Hadlow 2021.

level pupils who, prior to a silent practice with the focus on alien existence, articulated that 'I don't have many ideas'. 'I struggle to think what to write about' and 'I don't know where to start'. Pupils initially worked in groups as they evolved imaginary worlds, but then worked independently as they imagined, through silence, their alien species, and the possible plots that might connect this alien species with an emerging story. They then wrote the stories, narratives that emerged as original, descriptive and profound.

Sample Year Eight Plot Ideas

- A corrupt but physically beautiful planet focuses on outer appearance but covers up/hides damages within a society of people. This planet is secretly run on technology.
- Humans arrive at the planet like refugees – maybe 'spaceship travellers' rather than 'boat people'?
- Humans invaded and caused terrible things for years and have enslaved the alien people who are forced into hiding in rogue/rough groups until someone decides to stand up and get rid of or stop the humans before they destroy their planet.

Sample Writing from 2-minute silent visualisation:

Sample 1:

In the still night, the body lies paralysed... No sound. No movement. Not a breath. Through the window the moon gleamed, a picturesque painting. Lavender streaked across the background as a blue glow illuminated the sky. The moon was awake. The body was awake too, just still. The world was asleep and everything was shut down. Silence. Nothing was. -
'ERROR 404'
'What the..?'
'ERROR 404'

Sample 2:

So many Humans.
They surrounded all of us. In every corner of this cage like city. In every part of the musty air. In every cramped building and every one of those horrific mines we worked so

hard in. With their pale skin and their tiny eyes and the hideous weapons that caused instant death.⁴¹

All of this from pupils who struggle, have no ideas, and do not know where to start. Despite the benefits that silence can bring to learning at all levels, silence is rarely connected to literacy, or even to learning *per se*. When the therapeutic, sanctuary period of peace, calm, and ‘inner stillness’ is over, everyone can go back to the serious business of learning. It is in this context that it may be possible not to view the silence and the learning as opposites, but instead to find ways to blend them together, each aspect identified as distinct, but merged.

Taking Silence Forward

In embedding something of the still quality of silence in between the more pressured demands of learning, the yin and the yang of sound can balance these seemingly oppositional approaches and afford demonstrable results. Ellen Langer expresses this when she discusses silence in the context of mindful learning. Langer identifies how perceptions are altered when learners are engaged within a heightened and focused experience, stating: ‘The mechanisms of the mind behave differently in this silent zone, enhancing mental and emotional clarity’.

If the mechanisms of the mind work differently, then the challenge seems to be that the mechanisms of the institutions should also behave differently, accessing altered and innovative approaches to learning. Author, speaker and UK government advisor for arts in education, Ken Robinson, ascertains that, to improve education for the emerging generation, systems need not to be reformed, but ‘transformed’.⁴²

The practice of silence, embedded as a teaching pedagogy, could be embraced within Robinson’s vision, although there will be resistance. This is perhaps where the new thinking, the transformations, might begin to shine a different light. In the same way that I have experienced many learners, of all ages and abilities, who do not recognise themselves as creative, these inhibitions additionally spill into the practice of silence. Belief systems, ideologies and current practices frequently place silence as something ‘other.’ Experimental. Alternative. Whacky. Busy schools, pressured teachers and challenging deadlines may all potentially build walls that keep such transformation out, and it should be recognised that this resistance is grounded in a reality. In addition to the concrete reality of attainment and pass-rates, silence is often aligned to the spiritual, rather than the educational. Julia Cameron, discussing silence in the context of religion and meditation, explores how silence may be ‘...simply mulling over “is there or isn’t

⁴¹ Waite 2021b.

⁴² Robinson 2016, p. xx.

there” [a God]...’ going on to say, ‘Silence allows us to hear the opening of that door...’⁴³ Powerful though this is, in an eclectic society, this is potentially problematic for schools and institutions.

If silence isn’t perceived as spiritual, it may be linked to the artistic. Arts -based activities are more open and receptive to the value of silent and unconscious applications, with Brophy acknowledging that ‘... it might be possible to make particular uses of the permeable boundary... particularly in the situations where creative and complex thinking is being developed, as is the case in creative arts.’⁴⁴

Again, in educational climates where art struggles for its voice to be heard, the more empirical challenges that art-subjects present may cast clouds over the practice of silence as a viable pedagogy.

However, in the writing of this chapter, and while still acknowledging the values of silence to spiritual or arts-based outputs, I would suggest that those who may consider silence to be of no value are limiting its scope to the spiritual and artistic communities. Fostering new ways of thinking may seem the central value of creative endeavour, but worries around how such ‘newness’ might be implemented needs acknowledgement and respect. New ways of thinking need new ways of thinking, to reassure and allay those deeply held perceptions that silence is useless – it has no educational value and cannot contribute to the productivity of the institution. However, silence is not only for the philosophers and the artists, the spiritual, the freethinkers and the *flaneurs*. As my dissemination of this learning has extended, I have explored focused silence in the context of sport, business schools, and language studies. Following an online silence and visualisation workshop hosted by OECD, one senior lecturer in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Portugal, repurposed the methodologies I presented for use with veterinary students in their lecture on gastroenterology:

Yesterday I gave my gastroenterology lecture and I thought you might like to know how it went.

It was GREAT!!! 42 students participated and all but 1 of them want me to do it again. All but 2 of them stated that it helped them review the material AND that it helped them identify areas that they need to work on better understanding the physiology. I asked them to submit their stories by the end of the day (filling them out with research if they need too) and I am over the moon with the results.

(Email to author. 3 December, 2021 from Rute Teixeira, *Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária MIMV-ULHT*.)

Wherever silence is embedded into teaching pedagogy, it yields results.

⁴³ Cameron 1997, pp. 172-174.

⁴⁴ Brophy 2009, p. 49.

Silence. A perceived space between sounds. When that space is acknowledged, silence becomes a place that can be entered. Inside that place of silence, we hear it speak. The language of silence is both translatable, and visible. And, in these times of economic decline, it is also free...

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JUDY WAITE

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