



The Sociolinguistic Roles of Silence in Jordanian Society

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Abstract

The study of silence has not got much concern in the Arab world in general and in Jordanian Arabic in particular. The purpose of the current study is to seek to understand the practice and perception of silence in casual conversation in Jordanian society. Twelve dyadic conversations were conducted for 30 minutes each. The participants were 24 university students at Yarmouk University (Jordan-Irbid): twelve males and 12 females. They were categorised into two main groups: friends and strangers. Ninety seconds are analysed from the beginning, the middle, and the end of each conversation. The theoretical framework of this study draws on Turn-Taking system, ethnography of communication Speech Act Theory and Grice's Conversational. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that silence is functional and meaningful in Jordanian society. It also has different interpretations in different contexts depending on the relationship between the interlocutors, the context of situation and the topic.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics; silence; ethnography of communication; Turn-taking; Speech Act Theory; Grice's Conversational Maxims and Jordanian society.



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Introduction

Although silence is practised in almost all speech communities, it has received little attention from linguists, sociologists and linguists in the Arabic speaking communities in general and in Jordanian society in particular. The concern about studying the communicative function of silence in discourse has increased recently especially in western societies. Many linguists have found that silence is as significant as speech, since they complement each other (Kurzon, 1998; Szcuchewycz, 1997, Bruneau, 1973). Silence has been negatively defined as the absence of speech sound, and it does not receive the same attention that speech does. Consequently, it is crucial to explicate the functions and the meanings of silence in interpersonal communication in Jordanian society. Recognizing the meaning of silence in casual conversation is problematic, because its interpretation depends on various factors: the culture; the relationship between the communicants; "the background of the participants; the occasion and the verbal and non-verbal contexts surrounding the silence" (Johannesen, 1974, p. 29). Johannesen (1974, p. 29) argues that "human silence is pregnant with meaning because of its assumption." That is to say, silence is rich in meaning. Therefore, without understanding these meanings during communication, there will be a possibility for ambiguity and misinterpretation between speakers (Tannen, 1985). Bruneau (1973, p.17) adheres that "absolute silence, then is impossible: even when not speaking aloud, man carries on a continuous interior monologue". Silence and verbal language are collocative and they can be also included under extralinguistic modes of communication (Ephratt, 2011).

Another crucial issue is that the place and the length of silence in discourse are unpredictable, as silence is difficult to define and anticipate. Hence the study of silence requires many linguistic frames with various forms, and it carries several meanings (Jaworski, 1997). To explain the richness of silence, Jaworski (1997) discusses how silence as needing "a wide-ranging approach, to be interpreted." Jaworski refutes Sobkowiak's (1997) approach of dealing with silence as a secondary (marked) linguistic item that does not convey meaning in interaction. In contrast, for Jaworski (1997) silence is an essential linguistic form that conveys meaning. Following Jaworski's assumption, this study regards silence as a primary linguistic form in discourse i.e. it adds meaning to spoken words. To illustrate, silence is a form of non-verbal communication that conveys a linguistic message just as words do.

This study aims to investigate the sociolinguistic functions of silence in casual conversation in Jordanian society. It also seeks to address the following questions:

- A) How is silence perceived and practised in Jordanian society?
- B) Can silence be interpreted in different ways in casual conversations?
- C) Does silence affect the mainstream of communication?

Silence has been a neglected area of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis (Jaworski, 2005), especially in Jordanian Arabic, so this study will serve as a foundation for future studies of silence as a socio-pragmatic phenomenon. This study has also gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the perception and practice of silence in daily life. This study is significant, because it adapts Volosinov's notion of 'multi-accentuality'. This is the first study, to the researcher's knowledge, that investigates the perception and practice of silence by speakers of Jordanian Arabic. It also proposes that silence is a non-deviant linguistic form in discourse. Rather, it is functional and conveys many meanings (multi-accentuality).

Methodology

The methodology of the present study was qualitative in nature; an ethnographic approach was applied to answer the questions of study. The study adopts the micro-socio-ethnographic technique which involves analysis of small-scale events and processes, such as dyadic communication in social settings. Dyadic Conversations lasted for 30 minutes each and they were video recorded. "Ethnography literally means 'a portrait of a people'. An ethnography is a written description of a particular culture - the customs, beliefs, and behaviours - based on information collected through fieldwork" (Harris & Johnson, 2000, p. 4). It is a distinctive approach to answer the questions of study, because it attempts to examine how culture affects the perceived and practised silence in interaction in social settings. It is also associated with the anthropology, which is suitable for this kind of study because of its primary emphasis on context, and on the understanding of actions as they arise within the dynamics of contemporary culture. In its intrinsic form, ethnographic study involves the first hand observation of subjects in a cultural context. The notion of ethnography as a qualitative method recognises the relationship between the ways in which speakers of Jordanians perceive and practise silence in daily interactive social settings.

The sample for this study was 24 speakers of Jordanian Arabic (12 Females and 12 Males). The number 24 was chosen to ensure gender balance. In each conversation, there were two participants. The participants were university students. The purpose of the study was explained to them only in general terms to make sure that they did not try to become silent during the conversation, and to keep to mainstream communication. The participants were divided into two groups: Twelve friends and 12 strangers, who did not know each other. In order to investigate the differences in practicing and perceiving silence between friends and strangers.

Ninety seconds from the beginning (minutes 1:00-1:30), 90 seconds from the middle (minutes 12:00- 13:30) and 90 seconds from the end (minutes 23:00-24:00) of each conversation were considered in data analysis. These periods were selected from each conversation in order to have a comprehensive overview of the whole conversation, and they represent the whole conversation. In addition, the researcher tried to be systematic in selecting these periods. Praat Software was used to detect the length of silences. After detecting the length of silence periods, discourse analysis



approach was used to analyse these data. In addition, Grice's (1975) conversational maxims were used in interpreting silence, since speakers: first, make sure that their contribution is as informative as required. This is why they remain silent at the Transition Relevance Place (TRP) or between turns. Second, they are silent as they think that they should not say something inappropriate or something that lacks adequate evidence. Third, they employ silence to make sure that what they have said is relevant to the current topic. Finally, silence is employed to avoid ambiguity in conversation, to be brief and orderly. Furthermore, the present study relied on Speech Act Theory to interpret the functions and meanings of silence in social setting in Jordanian society. Thus, silence has illocutionary force, per-locutionary effects and adds truth-value to speech. For example, silence can be used "to question, promise, deny, warn, threaten, insult, request or recommend, as well as to carry out various kinds of ritual interaction" (Saville-Troike, 1985, pp. 6-7).

Literature Review of Silence in Social Setting

There has been a good deal of research on functions and meanings of silence from different perspectives in intercultural communication. Silence does not indicate a lack of power of the participants, especially when it is practised by women in mixed sex conversation (Kurzon, 1992). This can be slightly true in Jordanian society where a woman should practise silence in discussions that involved family matters such as marriage. For example, when someone asks for the hand of a woman, he must ask her hand from her father or younger brother, if her father is dead. Traditionally, the man should speak in the details of the marriage in front of the groom and his family not the woman who should practise silence as a means of showing respect to the spoken man. The woman's silence in this case does not mean lack of power, because the women organise everything before this event. Silence can be also as a result of psychological reasons, in this case the listener knows the answer, but s/he is shy to tell the speaker. In this sense, silence can be a lack of power. In addition, silence can be a result of modalistic interpretations, that is, the listener is trying to hide information (Kurzon, 1992).

Jensen (1973) states that silence is sometimes followed by other non-verbal clues, such as facial expressions which may have some roles in communication. It can help in binding or severing relationships. It may therefore have a positive or a negative effect. In other words, silence may heal or wound the feelings of the interlocutors; it can be a way of revealing or hiding information from the other interlocutor. In addition, silence might be agreement or disagreement to the other speaker's judgement. Besides, silence can activate the thoughtfulness of the interlocutors or it may not.

In Jordan, there are only two studies that examine the communicative function of silence: Salih and Bader (1997) who examine the function of silence in the classroom in Jordanian schools. Al-Sahawneh (1996) studies the function of silence in Jordanian society in general and in classrooms in particular. He studies three occasions: funerals, wedding parties, and engagements. He discusses the differences and similarities between the function of silence in Jordanian society and American and Danish societies. Al-Sahawneh (1996) concludes that silence is functional in Jordanian society with regard to deaths, wedding parties and engagement occasions as well as in Jordanian classrooms. The function of silence can be changed according to context and social settings. Silence is also practised by Jordanians "to avoid confrontation, thoughtfulness, ignorance, safety and security, resistance to an authority figure, embarrassment, respect, patience and wisdom"(Al-Sahawneh, 1996, p. 80).

One of the limitations of Al-Sahawneh's (1996) study is that it does not explain how silence is perceived and practised on these social occasions. In addition, there is no real context of situation. He asks his participants to fill in a questionnaire. His results can be therefore simplistic and superficial. He conflates the study of silence in social settings with silence in classrooms, which are two different fields of studying silence. Furthermore, these occasions are formal. His study is mainly focused on silence in the context of Jordanian classrooms. Nevertheless, this study is distinctive, because it investigates how Jordanians perceive and practise silence, particularly in social settings. In other words, it studies silence in an informal setting i.e. casual conversation. As a result, this study fills this linguistic gap. It is also more comprehensive than the previous studies in terms of the methodology. Al-Sahawneh used the quantitative approach, but this study is qualitative and ethnographic in its approach; it also sheds light on gender differences in Jordanian society.

Meanings of Silence

Silence can convey multi-meanings, such as "impressions, attitudes, emotions, and intentions with illocutionary force" (Nakane, 2003, p. 20). Furthermore, "silence is the language of all strong passions, such as love, anger, surprise and fear" (Bruneau, 1973, p. 37). Silence has been defined by the Oxford English dictionary as "complete absence of sound" or "the fact or state of abstaining from speech". Soundlessness, noiselessness, absence of sound, stillness, quietness, emptiness, tranquillity and peacefulness are all words that describe silence. It is clear that silence is defined negatively, because silence in real interaction functions as a linguistic form that conveys meaning in the same way as speech does. Silence is a non-verbal human behaviour that supplies non-verbal indicates the cultural beliefs and activities of a given group (Hall, 1959). Hall (1959) suggests that culture and communication are the same and that culture determines behaviour, and if someone wishes to interact with a person from a foreign culture, s/he should recognise that non-linguistic and linguistic patterns are significant. The interpretation of silence is therefore culture-specific (Kurzon, 1998). Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985) explain that the communicative silence may change the intention of the speaker from verbal to non-verbal channel of communication. Silence has the most pivotal cues of the message. Silence can be cultural-specific, which is different from one culture to another or even between friends and unacquainted people.

It is clear that speech and silence do not contradict each other. However, they "form a continuum of forms ranging from the most prototypical instances of silence to the most prototypical instances of speech" (Jaworski, 1993, p.34). Silence also occurs during speech. Thus, it is impossible to avoid it (Saville-Troike, 1985). Silence and speech should be interpreted in relation to each other. Speakers also have to recognise the structure, the meaning and the purpose of silence in communication. The function of silence not only marks the boundaries of utterances, but also has the "stylistic



function of emphasizing arguments and ideas, they [silences] are especially used by experienced speakers to impress their listeners and elicit applause" (Jaworski, 1993, p.15). Saviile-Troike (1985, p. 5) highlights that the meaning of silence is affected by the values and the norms of a speech community. For instance, social status and age may serve as a social distinction. The meaning of silence will therefore change.

According to Jaworski (1993, p. 46), "the absence of speech does not imply the absence of communication". In addition, the interpretation of speech is strongly based on the non-verbal component of communication. In other words, interlocutors can communicate without speech. For example, acquainted speakers can communicate using body movements and silence. This study corroborates the idea of Jaworski (1993) who suggests that in conversations between people who are intimate, interlocutors use silence rather than words, especially when one of them is trying to criticise the other. In other words, the distance between the interlocutors can make speech (verbal communication) very difficult, especially when they wish to say a word which is socially unacceptable. The speaker therefore relies on non-verbal cues such as visual signals or silence to say that word.

Silence has communicative function in interaction; it functions as speech (Jaworski, 1993; Jaworski 1997a; Saviile-Troike, 1985). Walker (1985, p. 61) defines pause as "some unit of time in which phonation is absent, but filled pauses have no agreed-upon definition at all". In addition, a pause is "a noticeable hiatus in an ongoing speech stream, which implies, of course, that what is a pause in some circumstances is not in others" (Walker, 1985, p.62). Researchers in psychology classify the pause into two main classes: in-turn pauses, which occur with the utterance of one speaker only, and switching pauses, which occur at the end of the speaker's turn (Walker, 1985). Walker (1985, p. 61) divides switching pauses into: "A-pause for (Answerer) and Q-pause for (questioner), and they are so named ownership of the stretch of time in which they occur". Therefore, any silence after the question belongs to the answer. Walker (1985) establishes two critical times for pause: a pause between turns becomes a switching pause when it meets or exceeds 1.5 seconds, and an in-turn pause is counted when it reaches or exceeds 1.0 second.

Sacks et al (1974) identify three different kinds of silence: first, intra-turn silence or within a single turn, not at a Transition Relevance Place (TRP), is a pause. Second, silence after TRP is a gap and it can be minimised or transformed into a pause when the current speaker continues talking. Third, a lapse occurs when silence at TRP is extended, because no speaker has selected him or herself to be the next speaker. This type of silence is similar to what Goffman (1967, p. 36) called 'lull', which occurs when the interlocutors have nothing to say in the conversation.

This study deals with three types of silence: intra-turn silence, silence within a turn. This silence usually occurs before TRP. Inter-turn silence occurs at TRP. This silence is firstly a gap, when it is extended; it becomes a lapse, where neither the current speaker nor the recipient takes the floor.

Silence and Multi-Accentuality

Volosinov's (1986) notion of multi-accentuality of language means that the same word has different meanings in certain situations. Holborow (2006, p. 14) provides a good example for explaining this notion. The statement, "I am hungry", when it is said by a child to his mother, means his/her desire to eat. For an adult to his/her friend, it might be a suggestion to go to a restaurant to have food. When it is written on a piece of paper and carried by a homeless person, it will be a request for money. It is also an initiation for donating money when it appears in an advertisement in the Newspaper or on the TV, since it expresses the meaning that people in a certain area are starving.

Volosinov (1986) focuses on the idea that language is linked with the social relations and its elements are: "the ideological, the social, the unstable and the creative aspects-gains theoretical unity through his concept of verbal interaction" (Holborow, 2006, p. 15). According to Volosinov (1986), a text is created for the hearer or the reader, he states that language is as a shared territory and its meaning takes place between the interlocutors and the conditions that surround them. The word is a connection that unifies the interlocutors. The most crucial question now is how to apply the notion of multi-accentuality on silence? The answer is that the practice of silence in a certain situation provides different interpretations or meanings.

Discussion

Silence performs several communicative functions. The findings of the study indicate that silence is employed in Jordanian society to serve the following communicative functions.

1.Silence to gain Processing Time

The most interesting findings of the study are that silence appears to be used in conversation in order to gain enough processing time to think of what to say next on the one hand, while minimising the period of silence on the other hand. Jordanian speakers tend to use silence in conjunction with pause fillers such as 'e:h, ?e:m, mmm, i:l', or they tend to use the whole utterance, 'Alluhhuma s'a:li ?ala sayidina Mo?ammad'(May the mercy of Allah be upon our master prophet Mohammad) as a pause filler while they are remembering something, and as an indication to the recipient that the current speaker is still holding the turn and that s/he is thinking of what to say next.

In extract (1) below, **Nami:r** and **?Asma:?** are talking about a programming course called (C++). **Nami:r** says that it is a good idea to have a written exam in this course rather than a multiple choice one, since the instructor can more easily discover the student's mistakes in using the C++ program. **Nami:r** says that the instructors will therefore improve the way they teach students by relying on the weakness that the students have in writing the program. **Nami:r** remains silent for 0.3 seconds in line 364 after lengthening the pause filler '?e::m'. In addition, this silence is preceded by another significant



silence of 0.6 seconds in line 364. She is trying to gain enough processing time to reorganise her thoughts, and to minimise the period of silence.

Extract (1): Nami:r and ?Asma:?: (Females, friends).

364 Nami:r:→ ↑ ibtiʕirfi iða (0.6)↑ ?inuh iða ?a::::m (0.3)↑ lao bidna noxiðha. Okay ,reḥ yityelab bittasʕhi:h (0.4)↑ bes reḥ yiktaʕif
365 ?axtʕa:ʔ itʕula:b we:n min xila:l kita:bit ilbarna:mið↓ (0.2)↑ laquadam (.) reḥ yithasan ʕarḥoh↓ (1.1) ↑ reḥ yifahm
366 itʕula:b ?akθar.↓

367 (0.6)

368 ?Asma:ʔ : ↑ mumkin ?a:h↓

369 (0.4)

370 Nami:r: ↑ yeʕni momkin ?iða bidoh yideris halma:dih ?o ka:n ilimtiḥa:n muḥewseb (0.2) witʕʕula:b yimtaḥnu: (0.6)
371 ↑ ?u okey ma yʕrifif↓.

Nami:r: You know (0.6) if a::::m (0.3) okay if we would like to take it, he will have difficulty in checking the exam papers (0.4) but he will discover the students' mistakes from the way of writing the program (0.2) in the future, his teaching will be better (1.1). He understands the students better.

(0.6)

?Asma:ʔ: Possibly yeah

Nami:r: Possibly, if he wishes to teach this course and the exam will be computerised (0.2). The students will take the exam (0.6), but they will not know anything about the course.

2. Silence at the TRP

Silence seems to be employed at the Transition Relevance Place (TRP) and before a pause filler. After completion his or her turn, a next speaker usually allows a short period of silence before initiating a new turn. (Schegloff et al., 2002, p. 6) In this case, the current speaker is waiting for a response when the recipient does not start. S/he is trying to minimise the silence and is thinking of initiating again. In extract (2) below, **Raza:n** is introducing herself to **Rana** and she is telling her that she is in the third year and that her average mark is excellent. **Raza:n** keeps silent for 0.7 seconds at the TRP in line 1. It seems that **Raza:n** is waiting for a response from **Rana**. When **Rana** does not respond, **Raza:n** initiates again. She starts her utterance with two pause fillers 'ʔe::h mmm', as she is trying to have enough time to change the topic. This can be seen from her new utterance when she starts talking about the difficult courses that she has to study this semester.

Extract (2): Raza:n & Rana (Females, strangers)

1 Raza:n : → ↑ ?a:h la?inuh hala? sanih ta:litih, ↑ ?w ma:ʕa:ʔ Alluh muʕadali ?imti:ya:z↓ (0.7) ↑ ?e::h mmm fi: ʕindi
2 maw:d ikti:r sʕaʕbih.↓

3 Rana: ↑ ?a:h.

4 Raza:n: ↑ fe:h ʕindi tefre:ʕ kama:n ?innoh fereʕit accounting wi ingle:zi. (0.8) ↑ kama:n mitʕewdih ma ʕa:ʔ Allah min
5 ?ena bilmedresih yeʕni le?ni mitmeyzih ?o ʕa:tʕrih ?o he:k fe feð?eh insʕedemit heh bilyarmu:k↑ heh heh
6 heh .hhh.=

7 Rana:=↑ wilða:mʕeh widra:sit ilðga:mʕeh ?o he:k↓.

Raza:n :Post Exp→ Yeah, because I am in the third year, and my average, God willing , is excellent (0.7) a::::h mmm, so I have some difficult courses.

Rana: Yeah.

506 **Raza:n: I have a minor specialisation. I am studying English and accounting. (0.8) In addition, I used to be high**
507 **achieving and consistant in school, but I felt shocked when I came to Yarmouk University.**

Rana: The university, the study, and these things.



3. Silence and Pause Fillers

Silence may also be used in conjunction with a whole utterance which is used as a pause filler ‘*Allahuma s‘ali ‘ala sayidina Mohammad wa ‘ala ‘alihi wa s‘ahbihi ‘adma‘i:n*’ (May the mercy of Allah be upon our Master Mohammad, on his relatives and all his companions). Jordanian speakers tend to use this utterance when they are trying to gain enough time to think of what to say next and to prevent the other speaker interrupting. This utterance can be usually accompanied by a period of silence. It also serves to minimise the period of silence, because the other speaker should repeat the same utterance either audibly or silently out of respect to the prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him). In addition, one speaker may ask the other speaker to say this utterance when s/he wishes either to take the turn, or to gain more time to think of what to say next. The current speaker therefore gains enough processing time to think of what to say next. In extract (3) below, **Raza:n** is talking about a problem with one of her sisters. At the beginning, she commences her topic by giving religious evidence on the value of patience in Islam. **Raza:n** is silent for 0.6 seconds in line 525 before uttering the pause filler utterance ‘*Allahuma s‘ali ‘ala sayidina Mohammad wa ‘ala ‘alihi wa s‘ahbihi ‘adma‘i:n*’. Again, she remains silent for 0.4 seconds in line 526 after finishing this utterance. She is trying to have adequate time to think of the next utterance. There is also an important silence of 0.7 seconds in line 528. This silence serves to elicit confirmation from Rana. This can be seen from **Rana**’s response ‘*binazluh*’ (He sends it).

Extract (3): Raz:a:n &Rana(Females, strangers)

- 508 **Raza:n**: ↑kam:n ‘indi ‘oxit ‘e::h wed‘i‘ xa:s‘ ye‘ni mot‘eleqeh=
- 509 Rana:= ↑hmm=
- 510 Raza:n:=↑bes il‘hedullah reb il‘aleme:n ye‘ni [mebsu:t‘eh bi‘heya:tha: ()]
- 511 **Rana**: ↑ ma ha:i he:h exactly ‘innoh isme‘i ‘innoh it‘e:‘f (0.3) ‘e::h↑
- 512 ‘isme‘i ye‘ni ha:i ‘heya:h, bidik itkemli ↑‘omor (0.2) me‘ ilinsa:n illi bidik titibt‘i
- 513 [fe:h]
- 514 **Raza:n**: -S‘eh. (0.6)
- 515
- 516 **Rana**: fa:: (0.2) fi:ni ↑‘isme‘i↑ ‘eya:h ‘ehleh ‘ena ‘e‘e:‘f ‘heya:ti ‘ena mi,‘ mortebt‘eh me‘ insa:n↓=
- 517 **Raza:n**:= sa:d‘eh.
- 518 **Rana**: bes mebsu:t‘eh bi‘heya:ti ‘o ra:d‘yih [fe:ha]
- 519 **Raza:n**: [nefsik]
- 520 (0.2)
- 521 **Rana**: ‘em be‘heqiq ‘ehla:mi [‘em be‘heqiq ne‘‘e‘ha:ti.]
- 522 **Raza:n**: me he:h ibtir‘e‘ l’be:‘eh ‘o leqena:‘a:tik=
- 523 **Rana**:=↑ ilmohim irrid‘
- 524 (0.2)
- 525 **Raza:n**: ↑yislam ‘ummik↓=
- 526 **Rana**: ↑ma hi ha:i hi:↓=
- 527 **Raza:n**: →↑ yislam tumik ibti‘rfi ‘ana fi:h ‘indana ikti:r maqo:lih fi ilba:t ↓(0.6) ↑Allah hum s‘ali ‘ala sayidina
- 528 Mohammad wa‘ala ‘alihi wa s‘ahbihi ‘adma‘i:n↓ (0.4)↑‘ is‘‘abur rebana binazluh ‘abil ilmus‘i:bih ‘ao
- 529 ilbala:‘?.↓
- 530 (0.7)
- 531 **Rana**: ↑binazluh.

Raza:n: I also have a sister with a special case, she is divorced.



Rana: Hmm

Raza:n: But, thank God. She is happy in her life.

Rana: Exactly, listen, you are going to spend the whole of your life with the man you will be married to.

Raza:n: Right.

Rana: Listen, which is better: living alone or living with someone you do not like?

Raza:n; Right.

Rana: I am happy and satisfied with my life and I can achieve my dreams and successes.

Raza:n: Yeah, this relates to the environment where your grew up and to your convictions.

Rana:The most important thing in life is satisfaction.

Raza:n: You are right.

Rana: Exactly.

Raza:n: You are right, you know. My family believe in a saying that (0.6). May the Mercy of Allah be upon our Master Mohammad, on his relatives and all his companions (0.4) 'Allah sends patience before the misfortune or the scourge'

(0.7)

Rana: He sends it.

Silence also appears to be used after lengthening the pause filler 'ʔe:h' in order to remember a name of someone or something. In extract (4) below, **ʃu:q** is telling **ʔadi:r** about the journalistic reports that she has done recently. She therefore remains silent for 0.7 seconds in line 173 after lengthening the pause filler 'ʔe::h'. She is trying to remember the name of the sports club, and its manager, as she has done one of her reports there.

Extract (4): ʃu:q & ʔadi:r (Females, strangers)

- 173 ʃu:q: ↑ʔa:h ʔo ʃimilna liqa:ʔ maʃ ʔe::h (0.7) ↑na:di ilhusi:n [Aħmad]
- 174 ʔadi:r : [ʔah]
- 175 ʃu:q: ↑ ilhazza:ʃ ka:n ʃina bilʔa:mʃa: huna musa:ʃid raʔi:s ilʔa:mʃah bes[itqa:ʃad.ʔ]
- 176 ʔadi:r : [ʔah]
- ʃu:q: Yeah, I arranged a meeting with a:h (0.7) Al-Hussein club, [Ahmad]
- ʔadi:r : Yeah
- ʃu:q: Il-Hazzaʃ, he was the assistant of the president of our university, but he [retired.]
- ʔadi:r : Yeah

Silence may be also used in conjunction with lengthening the pause filler 'ʔo' (and), and the question word 'ʃu:' (what). In extract (5) below, **ʃAbdullah** is asking **ʃissa** about the courses that he is studying this semester. Next, **ʃissa** is telling **ʃAbdullah** the name of the courses that he is studying this semester in line 6. **ʃissa** keeps silent for 0.8 seconds in line 6 after lengthening 'ʔo'. Once again, he utters the question word 'ʃu:' as a pause filler and to minimise the silence, and then he is silent for 1.6 seconds in line 6. He is trying to gain enough processing time in order to enumerate the courses on the one hand, and to decrease silence on the other hand.

Extract (5): ʃAbdullah & ʃissa: (Males, friends)

- 5 ʃAbdullah: ↑miʃ phonetics one?↓
- 6 ʃI:sa : →↑phonetics one (.) writing one ʔo:: (0.8) ↑ʔo: ʃu:ʃu:(1.6)↑ ʃu:imnazil ʔ (0.2) ↑ʔo 111 (.) ↑ʔama 111
- 7 yazamih ʔam wallah ʔabayi:i↓.
- 8 ʃAbdullah: ↑ya zam mahi ʃa:diyih mora:ʔeʃeh lel 100.
- 9 (.)
- 10 ʃI:sa: ↑ ya zam walluh ʔe::h ↑ʔoskot ↑ʔoskot.
- ʃAbdullah: Isn't it Phonetics one?



ʕissa: Phonetics one (.) Writing one a::nd (0.8) and what? What? (1.6) What am I studying? (0.2) and 111 (.) Oh mate 111 ammm by God, oh::

ʕAbdullah:: Oh mate, it is casual. It is a revision to 100

(.)

ʕI:sa: Oh, mate, by God, ʔe::h keep silent! Keep silent!

4. Silence to Select Words

Silence may appear in Jordanian conversation when the interlocutors are selecting the appropriate words to say. Jordanians believe that their words may be used against them, particularly when they are talking about other people, or discussing an important topic. This may be why they tend to remain silent before selecting significant words. Sacks et al. (1974) refer to recipient design which is 'a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants'. In other words, the current speaker selects his or her words or topics carefully, especially when the topic or the word is sensitive. Recipient design therefore works "with topic selection, word selection, admissibility, and ordering of sequence, options, and obligations for starting and terminating conversation" (Sacks et al., 1974, p.727).

In extract (6) below, **Hiba** is telling **Yasmi:n** that she had a course with a lecturer who showed them a film that had some immoral scenes. **Hiba** remains silent for 0.7 seconds in line 207 before saying 'a film that has immoral scenes'. This silence is meaningful, because **Hiba** is selecting her words carefully, due to the sensitivity of the topic. She is talking about some scenes that have a sexual orientation, which is unacceptable in Jordanian society.

Extract (6), Hiba & Yasmi:n (Females, friends)

207 **Hiba:** → ↑laʔ ʔiħna mara ʕabilna fi:lim tfaɾaʕna ʕale:h ↓(0.7) ↑ wfili:m fiywh ʔaʕya:ʔ miʕ mili:ħa ↓=

208 **Yasmeen:** = ↑iddaktu: r inoh sʕa:r yiħki ↑ʔiħna ʕa:di bilfunu: n it is okay iʕʕaba:b wilbana:t bifutu: ↓(0.5) ↑ ʕa:di
209 ħuriyih' ↑bes ʔana ma: beħib he:k ħoryih ↓=

Hiba: No, he brought us a film and we watched it (0.7). The film has immoral scenes=

Yasmi:n: The professor said that 'in the Faculty of Arts, it is okay for males and females to be together (0.5). It is a kind of Freedom', but I do not like this kind of freedom.

Additionally, silence may be employed after selecting an inappropriate word, especially when the speaker sometimes tries to exaggerate the topic about which s/he is talking. S/he therefore uses vocabulary which is inconsistent with the current situation. In extract (7) below, **Ju:q** is talking about her journalist reports. **Ju:q** keeps silent for 0.8 seconds in line 167 after uttering the word 'ħerb' (war) to describe the football matches. This word is inappropriate in this situation, because it is an exaggeration.

Extract (7), Ju:q & Yadi:r (Females, strangers)

166 **Ju: q:** w mumkin lattarfi:h (1.0) ʔah yeʕni ʔakθar min ʔiʕi iʕmilna ʔaw tabaʕi:t ʕayab ilmala:ʕib mmm (0.4) yeʕni ma
167 [θalan ħarb ill (0.8) ilmuba:rya:t lama itsʕi:r ba:n ilwiħda:t wilfa:sʕali ʔinnuh ʕu:ilhitafa:t illi bitsʕi:r
168 ba:n

169 **Yadi:r:** ʔa:ʕ bisʕi:r ʔah

170 **Ju: q:** ʔilʔiθni:n ʔah ʔw innuh ka:f baʕid ilmubara:h bitsʕi:r ba:na:thum ʔilʔiθni:n.

Ju: q: Or possibly for entertainment (1.0) Ah, like, we did many things, or the arguments that occurred in football matches between the fans mmm (0.4). Like, for example, the wars (0.8) that occur because of football matches between ¹ilwiħda:t and ʔifa:sʕali. That is, the words that they use against each other.

Yadi:r: What happens? Yeah.

Ju: q: Yeah, or how arguments occur between the fans after the match.

5. Silence to Keep the Conversation Flowing

Silence might be employed to attract the other speakers to participate in the conversation. This silence might be accompanied by body movements, such as nodding the head, or pointing with the hand. In Sacks et al.'s (1974) model, the process of the rule-set does not force one of the speakers to speak even when s/he is selected by the current speaker; s/he may be silent before starting his or her turn. Moreover, the next speaker may not initiate when s/he is selected by the

¹ Two popular Jordanian football teams



current speaker and the current speaker may not speak. As a result, there will be a discontinuity or lapse in the conversation.

In extract (8) below, **Nami:r** is telling **?Asma:?** about her girlfriend. She states that this woman seems to be so close to her, even the first time they met. **Nami:r** utters the phrase *'fa:hmih ʕalai'* (Do you understand me?), and then she remains silent for 0.4 seconds in line 175. Again, in line 178, she utters nearly the same phrase, *'fa:hmi:tʃi fo: beħki'* (Do you understand me?) and then she is silent for 0.4 seconds. Once again, she utters *'ʕa:rʃih fo: ibniħki (0.4) iʕrʃiti?'* (Do you know what I am talking about? (0.4) do you know?). These phrases are common in casual conversation in Jordanian society. The interlocutor tends to use them, when s/he feels that the recipient is not active, or s/he does not understand what s/he is talking about. S/he is therefore trying to get him or her involved in the conversation. Silence is commonly used in conjunction with these phrases, or utterances, in order to make sure that the recipient is following what has been said, and to get him involved in the conversation.

Extract (8), Nami:r&?Asma:?(Females, friends)

- 175 **Nami:r:** → ↑fa:hmih ʕalai (0.4) ↑yeʕni ma ħasi:t bilmarah ʔari:bih, xalas^s min ʔawal ↑yeʕni kont ʔaʃo:fha. ↑yeʕni
 176 xila:l senti:n ra:qabatha min baʕi:d, ʔw ʃofna:ha↓ (0.6) ↑bes ʕan ʕad lama fa:tat ħasi:tha xalas^s he:ka
 177 qari:bih ʕala ikθi:r ʕala qalbi↓ (0.6). ↑ʔawal ma balaʃit ʔaħki maʕha: ʔa:h kont ʔaħisha: ʕan ʕad fa:hmi:tʃi
 178 ʃo: baħki.↓ (0.4) ↑ʕa:rʃih ʃo: ibniħki? ↓(0.4) ↑iʕrʃiti?↓=
 179 **?Asma:?:** =↑ʔ:ah

Nami:r: Do you understand?(0.4) Like, I did not feel that she was a stranger. Like, first, I saw her two years ago, I was watching her (0.6) but really, when she became one of our group, I felt that she was so close to my heart.(0.6) When I started talking to her I felt that she could easily understand me.(0.4) Do you know what I am saying? (0.4) Do you know?

?Asma:?: Yeah.

Silence appears to be utilised when the speaker is trying to imagine what s/he will do in the future, especially when s/he will attend a party or a function. In this sense, the speaker tends to remain silent from time to time, because s/he is imagining what s/he will do or prepare for this occasion. In extract (9) below, **Yasir** is telling **Salman** that his brother will get married in January, and he is thinking about the clothes that he will wear on that day. **Yasir** has an important silence of 1.4 seconds in line 333. This silence is significant for two reasons: first, **Yasir** expects a response from **Salman**. When **Salman** does not initiate, **Yasir** continues talking. Second, this silence allows him to imagine the kind of clothes that he will wear to the wedding. He says that he is the brother of the groom, so he should be subtle. Next, he has seven silences in lines 334 and 335. These silences function as a way of envisaging the type of clothes that he wishes to wear. **Yasir** is wondering where he can buy these clothes. This is why he is silent for 1.0 second in line 334 before describing these clothes.

Extract (9), Yasir&Salman (Males, strangers)

- 331 **Yasir:** ↑ʕindi ʕors ʔaxu:i. Fe:h illi ʔexu biddoh yitʕewaz ibʃehor wa:ħed.↓=
 332 **Salman:** =↑ʔelf mabru:k↓=
 333 **Yasir:** → ↑Allah yiba:rik fi:k ↑ibʃehor (0.9) ↑wa:ħad .(1.0) ↑t^sabʕan ʔana ʔaxu ʕari:s.(1.4) bitʕrif illibsih illi bidi ʔalbes
 334 ha. (0.7) ʔila ʔalʔa:n imħayri:tʃi we:n bedi ʔalqa:ha?.(1.0) ↑bidi ʔaʃteri t^sa:giyt ha:i ilpump (0.4)
 335 ↑ilʔamri:ki. (0.6) bes bitko:n (.) ʔani:qah ha:i .(0.2) () ↑wʕala ku:t ,(0.7) ʔiʕrʃit ʃakilhin?.↓
 336 **Salman:** hað^sa ʔa:h ʔiʕr(h)fit ʔdab bari:t^sa:ni qadi:m=

Yasir: My brother will get married in January.

Salman: Congratulations.

Yasir: May Allah bless you, in (0.9) February (1.0). Of course, I am the groom's brother.(1.4) You know, the clothes that I will wear. (0.7) Until now I do not know where I can buy them. (1.0) I would like to buy a Trilby hat, (0.4) the American one. (0.6) It is (.) subtle. (0.2) () and a coat (0.7) Do you know what they look like?

Salman: Yeah, I know, like the archetypal man in old British literature.



6. Silence and Turn-Taking System

Conversation is based on turn-taking strategies. When one speaker finishes his or her turn, s/he selects the other speaker as the next speaker, or s/he may select him or herself as the next speaker (Sacks et al., 1974). Silence can therefore play a significant role in organising or shaping the turn-taking mechanism in conversation. In Jordanian Arabic, the current speaker tends to select the next speaker in different ways, such as using body language, for instance nodding the head, or s/he may select the next speaker verbally by nominating him or her to participate, or s/he may remain silent after saying something in order to get him or her involved in the discussion. In the next section, the researcher will focus on the employment of silence in selecting the next speaker.

The current speaker selects the next speaker after drawing his or her attention to the current topic, and after s/he has remained silent for a period. In extract (10) below, **Hiba** and **Yasmi:n** are trying to commence the conversation. **Hiba** calls **Yasmi:n** and then she remains silent for 1.0 seconds in line 2 as an indication to select her as the next speaker. Again, **Hiba** selects **Yasmi:n** as the next speaker by being silent for 0.5 seconds in line 6. Once again, **Hiba** selects **Yasmi:n** as the next speaker in line 8. **Yasmi:n** tells **Hiba** that they will continue talking about the Emirates; **Hiba** encourages her to continue. **Hiba** is silent for 0.8 seconds in line 9. After that **Yasmi:n** selects **Hiba** as the next speaker by asking her to change the topic and then she remains silent for 2.6 seconds in line 11. These silences take place at the beginning of the conversation. The speakers are therefore relying on each other to start the conversation. In other words, each one is nominating the other to be the first speaker.

Extract (10): Hiba & Yasmi:n (Females, friends)

- 1 **Hiba:** ° ↑ Yasmeen
- 2 (1.0)
- 3 **Yasmeen:** ↑ hala? s⁵arlina sa⁵a bin⁵hki bera (0.3) hala? Ma re⁵ ni⁵rif ni⁵hki ⁵i⁵fi sekar ⁵ale:na ilbab bimofta⁵ heh heh
- 4 heh heh.=
- 5 **Hiba:** = ↑ t⁵ayib yallah ni⁵hki. ↓
- 6 (0.5)
- 7 **Yasmeen:** ↑ ?awal ⁵i⁵fi ?nkamil mawd⁵u⁵ ?i⁵marat wa⁵i⁵xali:q.=
- 8 **Hiba:** = yallah ni⁵hki ⁵annuh.
- 9 (0.8)
- 10 **Yasmeen:** ↑ wal⁵?inyayruh ?
- (2.6)
- Hiba:** Yasmi:n
- (1.0)
- Yasmi:n:** We have been talking for an hour outside (0.3) Now, we do not know what to talk about, he locks the door with the key heh heh heh.
- Hiba:** Okay, let's speak.
- (0.5)
- Yasmi:n:** Firstly, we will complete the subject of the Emirates and the Gulf countries.
- Hiba:** Let's talk about it.
- (0.8)
- Yasmi:n:** or shall we change it ?
- (2.6)

7. Silence and Expressing Thoughts

Silence can be used when the speaker finds it difficult to express his or her thoughts. This silence is significant, especially in conversations between friends. The length of this silence varies. It may be a lapse. This silence functions as a means of searching for the best words to express thoughts. In extract (11) below, **?Ayman** asks **Haya** about her opinion of the behaviour of young men in general nowadays, especially those who have sports cars, which are equipped with a stereo sound system, and those who have their girlfriends next to them in these cars. **Haya** explains that those young men are stupid, and she does not like to deal with them. However, there are some young men who are gentle and civilised, since



they have a subtle way of thinking and dealing with others. **Haya** is silent for 9.4 seconds in line 284. This lapse is also preceded by lengthening the particle 'ʔo' and a silence of 1.5 in line 283. **Haya** finds it difficult to express her feelings toward gentle young men. This can be seen from the utterance that precedes these silences 'baħke:lek ɖɖad ʕindhom tafke:r yeʕni ikΘe:r ra:qi' (Really, their way of thinking is superior). These silences therefore serve as a means of looking for a way to express her feelings toward modern educated young men.

Extract (11), ʔAyman & Haya: (Male-Female, friends)

- 271 ʔAyman : ↑hasseʕ bidi ʔasʔalek, ʃo: ʃo: raʔyak bi ʔe:h ʔil↓ (2.0)↑ biʃʃaba:b ibʃakil ʕa:m tasʕerofa:toh?↓
 272 (1.3)
 273 Haya: ↑ fi:h wallah [fi:h]
 274 ʔAyman : ʔinsi ʔinnik ʔinti bilyarmu:k yaʕni, (0.5) ma: beħki iʃʃeba:b ibʃkil ʕa:m=
 275 Haya :=↑ la wallah fi:h ʃeba:b ʔinnoh ilwa:ħed, itʕa:mel maʕhom [yeʕni ʔe:h =]
 276 ʔAyman : ↑ yeʕni meΘalan haðʕu:l iʃʃaba:b ʔilli biku:nu: ho:n,
 277 (0.5) biku:n kol hamoh yiʕlaʕ ib siya:reh, ʔo yi [watʕe:ha: ʕa ʔilaʔrdʕ ʔo yiɖa nitʕa:↓
 278 Haya: ↑ ʔa:h laʔ ʔaki:d haðʕu:l ta:fhe:n↓
 279 ʔAyman : ↑ʔo system, ʔo lazim itku:n sʕa:ħbe:toh ɖanboh [ʔo ʔiʃi zai he:k.]
 280 Haya: ↑ ʔa:h laʔ ʔhe:n ke:d tafhe:n, yeʕni ilwa:ħed, yeʕni ʔa:h
 281 ,(0.8) ↑yeʕni ħatta ma: ʔib ma: beħbiʃ ʔitʕa:mel maʕhom wala ħatta yiʕlaʕu: ib wiɖħi ʔake:d. (0.9) bes fi
 282 ʃaba:b yeʕni baħke:lak ɖɖad ʕindhom tafke:r yeʕni ikΘe:r ra:qi. ʔo::::↓ (1.5) ʔo (9.4)↑ yeʕni tafke:r ikΘe:r
 283 ikΘe:r ikwayis. ʔo biħħib ʔinnak titʕa:mel maʕhom.↓(0.3) ↑ʔo biɖu:z tirta:ħ titʕa:mel maʕhom ʔakΘer ma:
 284 titʕa:mel maʕ ilbana:t maʕ ʔinnoh↓(0.4) ↑ilmafru:dʕ ilʕeks, ↑ʔinnoh ilbint itħib titʕa:l maʕ bint ʔo yiku:n
 285 ittaʕa:mol more:ħ ʔo he:k↓ (0.3) ↑bes ʃaba:b sʕaħe:ħ ʔinhom birayħu:k ʔakΘer min ilbana:t↓ (0.5) ↑yeʕni
 286 gad mayku:no ikwayse:n ,ʔo moħterame:n ↑ ʔo:::: (0.7) ↑raqye:n ʔo biʕirfo: ʃo: bidek yeʕni bidʕetʕ.↓

ʔAyman : Now, I would like to ask you about your opinion (2.0) of the behaviour of young men in general?

(1.3)

Haya: Oh God! That is right, that is right.

ʔAyman : Forget that you are at Yarmouk University.(0.5) I am not saying young men in general.

Haya: By God, there are some young men whom I know.

ʔAyman : Like, those who are here,(0.5) and they are just thinking of having a sports car. =

Haya: Yeah, No! Surely, those are idiots.

ʔAyman : and stereo sound systems, and they have their girlfriends next to them in the car and like this.

Haya: Yeah, sure, they are negligent. Like, I do not like to deal with them or even to see them. Sure, (0.9) but there are some young men, like really their way of thinking is superior, an::::d (1.5) an::::d (9.4) like their way of thinking is very nice. Therefore, you prefer to deal with them (0.3) than with young women. However, it is the opposite. That is to say, a woman would like to deal with a woman smoothly and so on.(0.3) but dealing with some young men is better than dealing with women, because they are respectful an::::d (0.7) gentle, and they also know exactly what you want.

Silence appears to be practised when someone loses his or her train of thought. In this sense, the current speaker is trying to say something, but s/he forgets what to say. S/he therefore remains silent, and then s/he may change the topic, or direct a question to the recipient. Silence here functions as a means of collecting one's thoughts. In extract (12) below, **Saʕad** is telling **ʔixla:sʕ** about what he will do after graduation. He is silent for 1.4 seconds in line 5. This silence is preceded by lengthening the pause filler 'ah'. Once again, he is silent for 0.3 seconds in line 6. This silence is essential, because it seems that he has lost his train of thought. This can be seen from the fact that he does not complete his turn. Instead he directs a question to **ʔixla:sʕ**, asking her about what she will do after graduation. Again, he is silent for 1.0 seconds in line 8 before asking her about what she will do after graduation. This silence is also important and it serves as a means of diverting the topic.

Extract (12), Saʕad & ʔixla:sʕ: (Male-Female, Friends)



5 Saʿad: ↑yeʿni ʔana kont ʔimfakir ʔa::h↓ (1.4)↑ baʿid ittaxaruḏ.

6 (0.3)

7 ʔixlasʿ: ↑ʔa:h=

8 Saʿad:=→ ʔi:f hu isʿaħi:ħ ʔi:f bidak (1.0) tiʿmali baʿid ittaxaruḏ maʿAlan ħake:na bihalmawdʿu:ʿ ʔ

Saʿad: Like, I was thinking a::h (1.4) after graduation.

(0.3)

ʔixlasʿ: Yeah

Saʿad: What? Right what would you like (1.0) to do after graduation? Like, do we talk about this topic?

8. Silence and Repetition

Some Jordanian speakers do not prefer repetition, because it is considered to be an extra aspect of the conversational style (Tannen, 1987). Silence may co-occur with repetition (Tannen, 1987). Although repetition can help the speaker to think or to organise what s/he will say next, it is still undesirable in conversation. It is better to use silence rather than repeat what has been said (Jaworski, 1993). The current speaker tends to remain silent before repeating the prior utterance. This silence can function as a means of gaining enough processing time to reorganise the current speaker's ideas.

In extract (13) below, ʔAyman asks Haya whether she has been admitted into the Faculty of Engineering or if she has changed her field of study. She tells him that she was admitted into the Faculty of Engineering. However, she does not like this field of study; she likes Journalism or any specialisation in the Faculty of Economics. Haya remains silent for 0.7 seconds in line 156 after repeating the same utterance 'kemoḏtemeʿ ilhandesih' (The people in the Faculty of Engineering). This silence is significant, because it functions as a means of reorganising her ideas. This can be seen from her following utterance when she starts criticising the students in the Faculty of Engineering.

Extract (13), ʔAyman & Haya: (Male-Female, friends)

164 ʔAyman : ʔinti lema dexalti ʿalḏa:mʿeh hadesih wala ħewalti walke:f?

165 (1.0)

166 Haya:ʔah ʔana kont handeshi kont ʔe::f ʔolo:m ma:liyih (1.2) kont bidi yeʿni ha:d ittaxasʿosʿ leʔni

167 [zai ma ħeke:tlek]

168 ʔAyman : kont ħa:bih ʔiʿfi]biliqtisʿa:d yeʿni.

169 Haya:ʔah zai ma ħeke:tlek ʔinoh ʔana bidi ʔiʿfi biliqtisʿa:d ʿaʿfa:n ʔaw sʿaħa:feh ʔaw ʔai ʔiʿfi (0.3) yeʿni ha:i iʃʿeyla:t

170 heh heh heh ʔiʿfi Mmmm xelasʿ tetʿbe:q ʿemali yeʿni(0.6) ħeta fikrek yeʿni ʔw he:k

171 [ʔama ka: ʔana]

172 ʔAyman :he:f ma ħewalti?

173 (0.3)

174 Haya: kemoḏtemeʿ ilhandesih (0.7) ʔe::h (0.2) kemoḏtemeʿ ilhandesih yeʿni ma ħebe:toħ ʔina bkoliytna ma ħebe:toħ

175 yeʿni (0.5) fa ʔitwaqaʿit ʔinoh inna:s illi ʔatʿa:mel meʿhom bilhandesih (0.3) ʔe::h ʔaʿo:f mistawa

176 tefke:rhom ʔarqeh min he:k(0.4) ʔatʿa:mel meʿ na:s fiʿlen ra:qye:n yiʿayiro: yeʿni (0.6) yiku:n moḏtemeʿ

177 ʕa:ni ma: ʔaħib ʔetʿleʿ minno ʔasʿlen (0.6) bes ʔana bilʿeks ma beħeb ʔsʿlen ʔafu:t koliyit ilhandesih min

178 wera ill (0.3) yeʿni ilna:s.

ʔAyman : Were you admitted into the Faculty of Engineering at the beginning or did you change your specialisation?

(1.0)

Haya: Yeah, I was admitted into the Faculty of Engineering ʔe::h Business Administration (1.2). I like this area as I told you before.

ʔAyman : Would you like to study something in the Faculty of Economics?

(0.4)



Haya: As I said before, I would like something in the Faculty of Economics, or Journalism, or anything (0.3) because these subjects are Mmmm practical, like (0.6), and even the way you think and so on. To me,

?Ayman : Why did not you change your subject?

Haya: The people in the Faculty of Engineering (0.7)?e::h(0.2). The people in the Faculty of Engineering like, I do not like them, I do not like them. Like , I expect the level of thinking of the students in the Faculty of Engineering to be sophisticated (0.4) I would like to deal with sophisticated people who will change, like(0.5) I would like to deal with people whom I like (0.5).On the contrary, I do not like to go to the Faculty because of (0.3) like the students there.

Findings of the Study

Returning to the hypothesis posited at the beginning of the study, it is now possible to state that in conversations between male-female friends, silence is tolerated, since there are longer silences or lapses of 9.5 seconds in Jordanian society. The length of silence in a conversation relies on the strength of the relationship between the interlocutors. The stronger the relationship, the longer the period of silence. In addition, there is a strong relationship between the topic raised and the period of silence. For example, when the topic raised is about sexual, politics or sensitive issues, the period of silence will be longer due to the sensitivity of the topic. In this sense, silence functions as a means of selecting words carefully in order to avoid embarrassment.

In addition, silence occurs because of the lack of contribution of one speaker in the conversation. In other words, some speakers are reliant on others to initiate topics for different reasons such as they are not talkative, or they are not interested in the conversation. This is why the recipient sometimes keeps silent for a long time and s/he does not participate until the current speaker asks for confirmation. That is to say, the current speaker tends to produce confirmation utterances such as, *'fa:him ʕali'* (do you understand me?), *'ʕa:yif ke:f'* (Do you see how?), *'S ʕeh wala laʔ'* (Is that right or not?). Moreover, in these sorts of conversation, longer silences occur, because the current speaker speaks at a slow pace, as s/he realizes that the recipient will not interrupt him and there is no competition for taking the floor (Al-Hrahsheh, 2012).

In mixed-sex conversations between friends in Jordanian society, females have more silences as well as longer silences than males. The reason why women tend to pause before uttering words is that they are trying to speak in a prestigious dialect (Al-Harahsheh, 2012). There are three recognizable dialects in Jordanian society, which are phonologically different: first, the rural dialect (not prestigious) is spoken by the people who are living in the agricultural areas (villages, not the city centre) which are situated in the north of Jordan, such as Irbid, Ajloun and Jerash. Second, the urbanized dialect (the most prestigious) is spoken in the centre of cities in Jordan, such as Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa. This is a unique dialect in its own right which is spoken by the younger generation and it is called 'Ammani' (El-wer, 2003, p. 60). Third, the Bedouin dialect (not prestigious) is spoken in the East and the South parts of Jordan. It is easy to recognise the region of the speaker from the dialect s/he speaks. Sanders (1993, p.28) also observes that, in French conversations, it is easy to identify the region or the sex of the speaker from the way s/he speaks. Interestingly, in mixed-sex conversations between friends or strangers, females tend to speak the urbanized dialect in order to show themselves as more modernised and more prestigious. This is why they are silent from time to time in order to select their words carefully on the one hand, to set the tone of their voice on the other. In mixed sex conversations.

Additionally, the speaker who initiates more dominates the conversation, because s/he directs the conversation in the way s/he wishes, as s/he selects the topics. Dominance is also connected with the strength of the relationship between the interlocutors. The weaker the relationship, the more dominant is the male. However, when the relationship between the interlocutors is strong, a female sometimes dominates the conversation by asking more questions and by interrupting the male. This is another reason why women have more silences in the conversation. Women ask more questions than males. They therefore act in the listener role.

In similar gender conversations between female friends, one female tends to dominate the conversation by asking more questions in order to direct the conversation in the way she wishes. The other female therefore practises the role of a listener (lack of participation), and even her role is possibly passive, because the current speaker tends to ask her for confirmation frequently during the conversation in order to check her engagement in the topic. There are also longer silences, because both interlocutors speak at a slow pace. There is also no competition in taking the turn. Again, the more sensitive the topic, the longer the silence.

In similar gender conversations between unacquainted females, there are short periods of silences due to the competition to take the turn. The majority of both inter-turn (between turns) and intra-turn silences (within the turn) are less than 1.0 second. It is rare to find an inter-turn silence, which is longer than 1.0 second. Lapses are also rare and even do not exist in these sorts of conversations. The conversation is like a generative process where one interlocutor completes her turn, the other starts. The reason behind practising short periods of silence in these kinds of conversations is that the speakers are unfamiliar with each other. They therefore tend to elicit some information from each other about themselves in order to avoid awkwardness. In other words, the majority of the interviewees affirm that silence between strangers is awkward and dispreferable. In addition, both interlocutors tend to produce more acknowledgement backchannels during the conversation. Silence is usually not in conversations between unacquainted females.

In addition, the character of the interlocutor is a key factor in these sorts of conversations. In other words, some speakers are more talkative and active in the conversation than others. According to the interviews that have been conducted with



the participants, in conversation between unacquainted females, one of them tends to be silent, especially at the beginning of the conversation, because she is unfamiliar with the other participant. Moreover, talking to someone silent is considered to be an insult to the current speaker. The current speaker therefore withdraws from the conversation. However, silence is preferable when the current speaker is talking about his or her problems to his or her friend. In addition, most interviewees explain that they interpret the meaning of silence from the body language of the recipient, the personal experience in life, the sensitivity of the topic and the relationship between the interlocutors, especially between friends. They also confirm that a long period of silence impedes the continuity of the conversation.

In mixed gender conversations between strangers, there are also short periods of silence. In some cases, the female dominates the conversation by asking more questions and by interrupting the male, which is unusual, especially in Jordanian society. The reason behind this is that there is a high percentage of educated women in Jordan nowadays; they are more confident, and more open-minded. Moreover, the majority of men are educated and they have changed their traditional view toward women as weak and marginalised members in society. In addition, university education is mixed in Jordan. These reasons help women to change their attitudes and their behaviour toward conversing with men. Males and females are therefore dealing with each other as equals and all the iced walls have been melted between them. Interestingly, this affects silence in conversation. To illustrate, the traditional view is that women silence frequently in the conversation as an indication of embarrassment, since they are talking to an unacquainted man, which was culturally unacceptable in the past. However, it is acceptable now in certain situations, such as studying at university, or working together in the same place. It is therefore expected that they will communicate with each other.

Statistically speaking, in one mixed conversation between strangers, the man practices 76 silences in 4.5 minutes, while the woman practices 20 silences in the same period. In another conversation also the man practices 37 silences and the woman 44 silences. To illustrate, in the first conversation, the man's turns are longer than the woman's. This is why he practices more silences. In the second conversation, the woman's turns are longer than the man's. Again, she practices more silences. Similarly, in mixed conversations between acquaintances, men practice more silences than females. In one conversation, the man practices 71 silences, while the woman practices 40 silences in 4.5 minutes. In the second conversation, the man practices 154 silences and 5 lapses (3.0 seconds and more) in the same period. However, the woman practices 117 silences and 7 lapses. Again, the men's turns are longer than females'. Nevertheless, the women dominate the conversation by asking too many questions and interrupting the men. This leads us to the following conclusion, the longer the turn, the more silence will be practiced. There is no significant difference in gender between males and females with regard to the use of silence in Jordanian society.

In mixed gender conversations between strangers, both inter-turn and intra-turn silences are also short. The majority of inter-turn silences are less than 1.0 second, while the longer period of intra-turn silences does not exceed 2.0 seconds (Al-Harahsheh, 2012). This is another primary piece of evidence that longer silences are not tolerated or acceptable in these sorts of conversations. In Jordanian society, in one conversation between a male and a female stranger, the woman dominates the conversation by initiating more questions and by interrupting the male from time to time. In addition, the male has more silences than the female. This is an exceptional case in Jordanian society. It does, however, depend on the character of the speaker. People with hesitant or quieter personalities are not preferred by either males or females in Jordanian society.

In conversations between unacquainted males, there are also short periods of silence. The longest period of intra-turn silences does not exceed 2.1 seconds, whereas the longest period of inter-turn silences does not exceed 3.4 seconds (Al-Harahsheh, 2012). However, in conversations between strange females, the length of silence is shorter. This is related to the nature of conversational strategies of men and women. That is to say, women are more sociable than men, because they initiate more topics than men. This is also recognisable in conversations between males and females. Silence between strangers is awkward in Jordanian society. The interlocutors therefore tend to avoid silence at the beginning of the conversation which makes people uncomfortable. However, when the topic is sensitive or risky, such as talking about politics, the period of silence will be longer, because the speaker is selecting his words carefully. That is, the speaker is silent about the topic (Kurzon, 2011). Furthermore, interruption and competition on taking the turn is common in conversations between unacquainted females. However, in conversations between unacquainted males inter-turn silences are sometimes more than 1.0 second. However, it is rare to find inter-turn silences of more than 1.0 second in conversations between unacquainted females.

In conversation between male friends, longer silences or lapses are uncommon in Jordanian society, but they are tolerated, especially between those who know each other for a long period of time. The longest period of inter-turn silence is 9.0 seconds, while the longest period of intra-turn silence is 5.6 seconds. In addition, in conversations between female friends, the periods of silence are also longer. Additionally, the silences between turns are shorter, compared with conversations between female friends. In some situations, there is a competition between the interlocutors to take the turn and the current speaker may accept the interruption or s/he may refuse it by saying '*meħna binso:lif*' (I am still speaking) or '*ya zem la itgat ĩ ĩni:ŝ*' (Oh, mate! Do not interrupt me) (Al-Harahsheh, 2012). Again, the longer the period of the relationship between the interlocutors, the longer the period of silence.



Conclusion

Overall, silence is significant and it is used effectively in casual conversations in Jordanian society. However, the majority of interviewees confirm that they do not notice short periods of silence in a conversation, and they may not realise the significance of these silences, which are less than a second. In addition, the majority of interviewees explain that talking to a passive recipient, someone who keeps silent for long period of a time, is a kind of insult to the current speaker. Silence is not part of Jordanian culture nowadays, so there is no connection between silence and culture. In other words, Jordanians are social beings. They like to talk rather than to be silent when speaking is useful, for this strengthens the social ties between speakers. Yet, they prefer silence when it can lead to an argument or can hurt people's feelings. The meaning of silence is ambiguous and people may have difficulty in interpreting the meaning of silence in certain situations, especially when the relationship between the speakers is not strong. Silence is therefore polyvalent, that is, it can be interpreted in different ways. The speakers tend to interpret these meanings based on the other speaker's body language, the shared background knowledge, the utterance before and after silence and the context of the situation.

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Appendix

Glossary of Transcript Symbols based on Jail Jefferson 1995.

A left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.

A right bracket indicates the point at which two overlapping utterances end, if they end simultaneously, or the point at which one of them ends in the course of the other.

= Equal signs indicate no break or gap. A pair of equal signs, one at the end of one line and one at the beginning of a next indicates no break between the two lines.

(0.0) Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time by tenths of seconds.

(.) A dot in parentheses indicates silences less than 0.2 seconds.

:: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The longer the colon row, the longer the prolongation.



_ Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and /or amplitude. A short underscore indicates lighter stress than does a long underscore.

↑↓ Arrows indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.

WORD Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.

*indicates deleted letters due to politeness.

> < Right/left carats bracketing an utterance or utterance-part that the bracketed material is speeded up, compared to the surrounding talking.

< > Left/ right carats bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate that the bracketed material is slow down, compared to the surrounding talk.

(h) ParenDissertationed 'h' indicates plosiveness. This can be associated with laughter, crying, breathlessness.

() Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber was unable to get what was said.

(()) Doubled parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions.

.hhh A dot-prefixed rom of 'h' indicates an in-breath.

hhh Without the dot, the 'h' indicates out-breath

°° indicates whispering.

~ ~ indicates wobbly voice.

The Phonemes of Spoken Jordanian Arabic

ʔ: voiceless glottal stop ء

B: voiced bilabial stop ب

T: voiceless dental stop. ت

θ: voiceless inter-dental fricative. ث

ʒ: voiced palatal affricate ج (Jordanian Arabic)

ʤ: fricative voiced alveolar ج (Standard Arabic)

ħ: voiceless pharyngeal fricative ح

X: voiceless velar fricative خ

D: voiced dental stop د

ð: voiced inter-dental fricative ذ

r: alveolar tap ر

z: voiced dental fricative ز

s: voiceless dental fricative س

ʃ: voiceless palatal fricative ش

tʃ: voiced palatal fricative تش

s^h: voiceless fricative alveolar ص

t^h: stop voiceless emphatic ط

ð^h: Voiced fricative emphatic ظ

d^h: voiced emphatic stop ض

ʕ: voiced pharyngeal fricative ع



- ɣ: voiced velar fricative غ
- f: voiceless labio-dental fricative ف
- g: voiced velar stop ق (Jordanian Arabic)
- q: voiceless uvular stop ق (Standard Arabic)
- k: voiceless velar stop ك
- l: alveolar lateral ل
- m: bilabial nasal stop م
- n: alveolar nasal stop ن
- h: voiceless glottal fricative ه
- w: Approximant velar و
- y: palatal semi-vowel ي

Vowels:

Short vowels

- I high, front
- A low, back
- U high back

164 E mid front

165 O mid back

166 **Long Vowels**

167 I: high front

168 A: low back

169 U: high back

170 E: mid front

171 O: mid back

