

Silence, Voice, and Writing



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The Independent Learning Association (ILA) 2018 was held at Kobe Women's University from the 5th to 8th September in 2018. Due to the heavy typhoon that hit Japan at the beginning of September, a number of conferences were cancelled not only in Japan but other countries. Fortunately ILA 2018 took place although the schedule needed some changes.

On September 7th, we gave our joint plenary titled “A Collaborative Reflection on Our Professional Journeys with Learners' Voices.” When we were invited as plenary speakers, we were informed that it was the first endeavour to have a joint, collaborative plenary at ILA. Wondering how it would work and what we could co-construct, we started to interweave the two threads. We thought of our communication and preparing for the plenary as an engagement in “doing collective biography” via dialogic emails. Our first contact with our potential audience happened, when we were invited to write a “prologue” (which we later called “A meeting of hearts and minds”) mainly to give readers of *Learning Learning* a glimpse into our journey of exploration towards the plenary (Hayashi & Karlsson, 2018). This was our first collaborative writing effort. We had hoped that some readers might have gotten a touch of our complexly interwoven emotions on the journey towards our joint plenary. And so we gave our plenary!

1. Missing a piece: Pursuing the meaning of silence

Chika: Immediately after our joint plenary ended, I realised that the room was full of silence. If my memory serves me correctly, nobody was applauding. I had attended several conferences and listened to various kinds of plenary talk, but this ending full of silence was my first experience. On reflection, I feel a sense of accomplishment every time I give a presentation, as do most people. However, I have to say that I felt awkward about the situation at the front of the room, confused about how to react to the silence (or pretend not to realise it at all) because this was a completely different ending from what I had expected. Actually, it was my first time to leave the room with such awkward feelings. What caused the silence? Was the content overwhelming and uninteresting? Was the audience just tired after listening to our one-hour talk? Had we perhaps disclosed too much in our personal stories? Was our talk too fast to understand? Was the talk successful overall? I was asking myself, but these questions that I came up with indicate that my immediate reaction was not positive.

Leena: I remember the silence. I remember how I was trying to first smile, then not to smile. It was me who had said the very last words. I had spoken about Naoko Aoki, I had finished with the lyrics of a song, I had spoken out her words: *Let's keep autonomy stories alive*. That is, if my memory serves me right. If what I did was taken to be asking for a silence in Naoko's memory and honour, then the silence was good. But at the moment when the talk was finished there was no way of knowing. Because the organizers had asked people to hurry to the next thing, because we had taken too long, because... I was stunned and remember seeing how somebody came to talk to you, Chika, to ask you a question. I hovered there for a while, then sneaked out into the corridor. A colleague who hadn't been listening was sitting and typing in the hall. My answer to a friendly “How did it go?” was a stunned “Nobody applauded.” Would we ever know what the true meaning of that silence was?

Chika: “Silence is golden”—this is a common cultural belief and practice in Japan. As far as I know, this is based on a Buddhist idea that “novice” priests need to maintain silence and devote themselves to special training to be “real” priests until they completely master special skills and manners as a priest. In my everyday life, I admit that I am

accustomed to silence in class and meetings, but the silence both Leena and I had experienced in Kobe was completely different.

On the last day of the ILA conference, Leena and I explored Kobe city (and enjoyed shopping!), chatting about many things such as our families and workplaces. (Do you remember we even dropped in at a cozy coffee shop and our chat continued almost forever over a cup of coffee? I still remember the delightful aroma of coffee we enjoyed together!) Turning this way and that in Kobe city as a stranger, I seemed to be waiting for the right time to talk to Leena about the meaning of silence which I could not get out of my mind at all. I think it was me who broke another “silence” and started to talk about the silence we had experienced. I clearly remember that you told me in a soft but firm voice that we would find out the true meaning of silence after a while. You even said that the audience also would understand the true meaning of silence after several years, which reminded me of the “parallel process” we had discussed in our *Learning Learning* piece just before the ILA conference (see Hayashi & Karlsson, 2018). I was convinced that our meanings of unspoken and nonverbal messages about silence and its various connotations would be transmitted and even shared in due course.

Leena: On our exploration of rainy Kobe we were talking, sharing stories in yet another way from the days before, including our plenary. This was more intimate, not done in front of an audience or through writing stories to be later shared in front of an audience. A Japanese coffee shop was a novel experience for me, and we were, I felt, truly becoming friends.

In the plenary, we had both emphasized the importance of learners’ voices, including their feelings and emotions. We had, at length, talked about how we both aim at truly “hearing” students’ *insider* experiences and their learner *voices*. We had written about this in our prologue as well. But now we had had to listen to the silence of our audience and needed to “hear” their collective inner experience. We both struggled. And yes, Chika, you broke the silence of the last moment of our plenary. It was important that we verbalised our embarrassment and admitted to not “hearing” what the voice of the audience was trying to say. A colleague who had been listening to us immediately said to me that she thought it was meant to be a two-minute silence to remember Naoko. I think that her words gave me comfort and an understanding of sorts was developing in my heart and mind.

When the two of us talked in the coffee shop, we started moving back to what we had come to see as shared understandings and in thinking about educational stories we were looking into the future. At the moment, I feel that there is never one true meaning for a silence. This is true of the Kobe silence as well. And, we have the same saying in Finnish: Silence is golden. In fact, the Finnish silence can be read about in a book (*The Silent Finn*) written by two linguists, Lehtonen and Sajavaara, in 1982. So I know what a silence can feel like in a classroom with Finnish students! By the way, wasn’t it on this walk that meeting each other in Helsinki was mentioned?

Chika: The Kobe silence was always in my mind and even echoed (of course, soundlessly). I guess it was the same as you, Leena. Looking back on our plenary and looking for the meaning of silence like the story of Silverstein’s (2006) “*The Missing Piece*,” I came across some reflective writings on our joint plenary in *Learning Learning*, and *Self-Access Learning Journal*, respectively.

■ Maria Giovanna Tassinari & Christian Ludwig (2018)

“Opening an authentic dialogue with learners and sharing their own personal stories, they encourage learners to find their own (inner) voices [.....] Leena and Chika’s such a reflective journey as the “textual friendship” (ibid.) they developed through their virtual and textual communication illustrates. [.....] Their plenary was much more than passing on knowledge and raising questions as they let the audience participate in their very personal “process of re-storying [their] professional pasts as practitioners, researchers and persons” (ibid.: p. 34).” (p. 72)

■ Elizabeth Schlingman (2018)

“This honest and engaging presentation, made more impressive by the fact that Karlsson and Hayashi live on opposite sides of the globe and ...” (p. 449)

The three participants' reflective writings give a glimpse of their inner voices that Leena and I had been looking for. The importance of transparency and authenticity that both Leena and I emphasised and embodied in our joint plenary were not merely transmitted as Maria and Christian describe, but more importantly, it was mutually shared at least with the three participants. Reading their writings, I came to think that the Kobe silence may have been a sign of our collaborative and reflective moment and endeavour. The audience would have been engaged in the "parallel process," going back and forth between the present and the past in pace with our wandering stories. They may have looked back on their own personal and professional histories related to teaching and learning, and explored critical incidents as they gradually emerged as the "fellow passengers" in our collaborative journey. So, perhaps the silence was one of both individual and collaborative reflection.

As you said Leena, in Kobe I also truly felt that we were bound more tightly with the magic drink (coffee!) and we already started talking about Helsinki as our next destination. To my surprise, I landed in Helsinki airport just one year after our joint plenary. It was September 2nd, 2019—a sunny but a bit chilly afternoon for me.

2. From ILA to Finland: Puzzles, New Encounters and New Challenges

Leena: I, too, read the texts in *Learning Learning* and *Self-Access Learning Journal* with a refreshed understanding about the silence. Our audience had been travelling with us with their own personal memories, histories, experiences, their whole autobiographies. Our individual professional and personal stories and, as Elizabeth Schlingman writes, our virtually and textually shared, and thus entangled, story had resonated with them. Thinking back to our need to look for "the missing piece", Chika, I feel very strongly and palpably how fragile our stories of teaching and learning always are. It is, however, this vulnerability as the tellers that also gives positive hope: there are always listeners with whom the story will resonate.

And a year later you landed in Helsinki and our virtual story continued as a live story. For me it was so enjoyable to introduce my colleagues, the Language Centre and, in particular, ALMS counsellors and students to you. And Hetti, my dog, who loved you from the very first moment.

It was great to have you sit in my ALMS Opening Session with my theology students. I don't always wholeheartedly enjoy having visitors in my classroom because I also tend to feel a bit nervous. Now, it was different. I felt my shy and silent students and I were safe with you. The group you were observing, like any faculty group, is always very diverse in terms of language skills and potential anxieties: not everyone is feeling comfortable in the session when it starts. Some bring a lot of baggage with them. A lot of pedagogical sensitivity is needed and observation can make this a bit problematic. Not with you, Chika!

Your visit to my Opening session was the beginning for a small project which we also planned to write about one day. At the moment, May 2020, I am struggling with an article that is a rewrite of something I had already finished writing when you came to Helsinki. It was the educational story I had referred to in the Kobe plenary:

"My current research work is happening round the ideas of arts-based language, using poetic language, mindful and attentive listening in narrative inquiry, and how an *ethical know-how* can be developed using these as inspirations in *research writing* (Reed & Speedy, 2011). This is work in progress that is at a beginning stage with a text with the working title *Laura*, the girl who wrote the fear. Laura is a diarist, a creative writer, an explorer and experimenter with writing in English, the girl who suffered from language anxiety but found her *voice* and used it as an expression of her *autonomy*."

The text, written along the lines in the above paragraph, was not accepted for publication by a particular journal on the basis of it being too experimental and "not interesting to our readers." I am now trying to rewrite it for another journal. At the moment, I am pondering about (non-native) academic writing, about narrative educational stories, and what kind of qualitative writing is considered "interesting", acceptable, and publishable in academia. Chika, am I making sense when I bring up writing for publication? We wanted to write together about our students' Japanese-Finnish DIY. What are your passions and concerns as an academic writer?

Chika: My first visit to Helsinki was memorable, enjoyable and informative! Prior to my departure, you kindly arranged everything for me, asking what I would like to do in terms of my academic (and personal) interests and needs. You may not have realised this, or this may be your natural manner, but I felt that you were carefully listening to my inner voice. I also thought that this is your way of approaching students ahead of and during your counselling sessions.

Getting a sense of your educational approach, I was welcomed to your first session with your theology students on my second day in Helsinki.

It was the first encounter for all of us, but as you have described, Leena, I was not nervous either and felt safety in the classroom. I think I was an observer, but I felt as if I were auditing your first lesson. Do you remember that one of your students asked about your learning history? I think you didn't expect to be asked such a personal question at the very beginning of the first lesson. But you answered when and how you started to learn English in a friendly but sincere attitude, which I believe sent an implicit and explicit message to your students about you as a practitioner, counsellor, and person. Also, another magic item (not coffee but chocolates this time!) that you prepared for your students helped to establish a trusting relationship between you and your students as well as among students! Again, it reminds me of Silverstein's (2006) *The Missing Piece*. By having one chocolate and sharing parts of it, some of them might have thought that each member is an important part of the team. Smiling at this "sweet" story and taking a note of teaching strategies and critical incidents in the class, I began envisaging a new English course starting from April 2020.

Yes, not only your students, but also your wonderful colleagues kindly welcomed me in a friendly manner! I immediately felt a warm and caring environment that both you and your colleagues co-constructed—Yes, it was a lively community bound together with strong ties. I enjoyed observing some of your colleagues' classes and also talking about their classes over coffee and lunch. I really appreciate that you kindly connected me to your colleagues!

We also talked about our potential Do-it-Yourself project when I visited your home! I was trying to expand our interactive process to a much wider context and wondering if it would be possible to involve our students somehow. Moreover, I had chances to talk with some of your students after the classes I observed. The feeling I had in talking with the students made me realise that there are some commonalities between your Finnish students and my Japanese students. I have no intention to make a sweeping generalisation, but students in both countries are kind of modest but they have their own ideas and opinions which are probably not expressed or shared so often. I immediately thought that these similarities would work effectively because students would be able to naturally establish an equal and healthy relationship for their mutual learning without one student dominating.

With lovely Hetti sitting next to us (probably carefully listening to us and hoping for success), we opened our notebooks and started to make a concrete plan. I soon realised that we were heading in the same direction even if we didn't say anything directly. We were also naturally trying to leave some space for our students to make decisions and also negotiate with each other about how to proceed with the project. Like you, I also invited my students to join the Do-It-Yourself project in exactly the same way as you.

So, our interests in learners' voices including emotions and feelings face challenges. It is often the case that texts related to learners' voices are as a simple record of their learning processes and get judged as "not academic" as you say, Leena. This is a big challenge for us indeed. With a careful choice of appropriate research methods and techniques such as interviews, diaries and drawings, we are able to step into an internal aspect of individual learners' minds. We understand that those are the keys for us to approach and see learners' internal voices and establish a symbiotic relationship, which is an important basis for learner counselling, advising and teaching.

I think this is similar to the reading theory that "reading is an interactive process." As a reader of students' inner voices, we activate our schemata and connect their stories narrated verbally and through drawings to our own learning experiences, several theories, some tips we got in conferences, our former students' failures and successes and other academic papers to find the best practice in a specific context and case. There may be a gap between research and practice. I've just remembered Stevick's (1980) observation that "Success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom." (p. 4)

Leena: The beautiful analysis in your latest entry, Chika, very strongly resonates with what I am struggling to write about, or touch upon, in the article that is on my computer screen right now. We teachers, advisers, counsellors "as readers of our students' inner voices" indeed struggle with how to show, not only tell about, the internal *voices* in our papers. The challenge is how to "convert" into academic text our research done using research tools and methods like diaries, drawings, letters, stories, creative writing, counselling notes and recordings, research discussions, "dream data." When we re-story, we should be brave and stick with evocative storytelling ourselves and this still, amazingly often, seems to be a problem for journals. But we'll keep trying!

I have to confess that all my energy has gone into rewriting the article I keep referring to. In fact, I've been "writing" it for two years now. And I do not think I'm ever going to finish and send it off to be (not) published! In fact, it is turning into a text about "different" academic writing and the voice is now mainly a practitioner-researcher's voice, which she uses as an expression of her own autonomy as a counsellor, as a non-native academic writer. The first version was telling the parallel stories of two writers, myself and Laura, the girl who wrote the fear. I talked about her in Kobe as you might remember. I haven't yet given up on student voices but have to ponder further on how Laura and potentially another student could be written into this "new" story. Writing is a huge struggle and I might be missing a focus and a point but seem to keep going back to the file, like a cat scratching a sore spot.

Chika: It is obvious that we are always with our learners. As you describe, Leena, we need to analyse and interpret the data to share it with readers without distorting the learner voices expressed in their "products." In a sense, we are a mediator between participants (learners) and readers and take responsibility for all the "interactive" processes. However, as you said, we also need to convert the data into academic text. Those who engage with learner voices face the same challenges and dilemmas but both of us dare to choose to devote ourselves to understanding learner voices and move forward together with whatever voices learners have!

Leena, I was thinking about "learner voices in this COVID-19 pandemic." Due to this unprecedented situation, we have been struggling to adjust ourselves not only to the new normal but also to the new teaching/learning environment. Likewise, we also need to change or transform our ways of approaching our learners. In my case, I've been conducting online lessons using Zoom since the middle of April. To be honest Leena, I cannot really feel the presence of my students during the classes although I was aware that our interaction should be clearly different from what we used to have before. I cannot physically feel or touch students or directly interact with students.

Any assignments related to their learning are perfectly typed and sent to a Learning Management System as digital data. Unlike the previous years, I cannot receive their assignments directly from my students, which equally and sadly means to me that I cannot really feel their authentic feelings and emotions. It is my first time in my teaching career that I feel I'm away from my students. All the perfectly typed documents I receive from my students every week are a set of simple, artificial and monotonous documents to me; I cannot feel their particularity even if the assignments are related to their own learning history or their opinions about certain topics. Of course, I know that students put so much effort and time into their assignments and I appreciate their contributions during this difficult time though. I cannot really see how they work on each assignment, but I can imagine that they rewrite their sentences, carefully choosing more appropriate words as they type.

It is a very natural thing, but this means to me that their spontaneous and authentic voices are easily altered to something different or even erased completely. The strength of their hand writings, their use of space, their choice of colour pens and drawings are what I'm missing. I'm missing even dirt like coffee or sweets on some papers I received from my former students, which gave a glimpse of their personality and personal lifestyle. That kind of small but significant "trace" tells me something which is not explicitly expressed but implicitly shared through each student's product. As for my feedback, I myself typed my comments in the same Word file and sent it back to each student, strongly feeling that some important things are really missing ...

Struggling with this challenging situation and pursuing alternative ways, last week I decided to print out all the documents that students had sent to me. I then wrote my comments manually using various color pens. Yes, I decided to be transparent myself in this small way and share my own voice not verbally but visibly. I'm wondering whether and how it will work...

3. What is Writing?

Leena: Chika, I simply love your new angle, the effects of COVID-19 on our students' and our own embodied being in the world and our (written/Inner) voices! It's so very tangible to me, the whole destruction and loss of teaching and counselling as meetings of minds and bodies. I love the way you write about the "perfectly typed" texts with no traces of life in or on them (the dirt, the lovely dirt, the wonderful messes are missing). "Simple, artificial and monotonous," yes, that's what writing can become when we make it possible for writers to use templates, models, when they can just "copy and paste" in their minds, if not in reality, when they never leave an Other's influence, when the whole English-

speaking and English–writing world is writing on their screens, when “help”, when “inspiration” is only a click away. When the product becomes more important than the process, again this happens but for different reasons than before.

In my own work, I got more and more interested in asking the students to freewrite, to write in order to think, to claim their voice, enriched with the native language, but authentic, not copied (Karlsson, 2006; 2017). More and more I was inspiring writing that would be messy and colourful and could be worked with endlessly and “improved” but not immediately, but with time, first reflecting and then “editing”, first generating and then polishing, first making a mess and then cleaning up. This writing approach makes use of pictures and coloured pens and scrap books and glittery pictures.

Do you remember the ALMS Diaries in the session I had with my students when you visited? And you have been getting those kinds of spontaneous texts and drawings back from your students! And we have both enjoyed the reading! We have been reading and thinking with their stories, living their stories in the pictures and colours and handwriting, the scribbles. I think we need to print these pages soon and both take pictures of how we handle them, what visible traces we leave (I can promise footprints of coffee mugs and other dirt!). In fact, could this be the next phase: printing what we have and taking time to READ, UNDERSTAND, BE SURPRISED and DIGEST and do our handwork? Will we see what inner voices are expressed in our entries? Will we be able to spot and mark each other’s *feeling* voices (a lovely term I came across again just now by Elbaz-Luwisch, 2014)? In my email I said this, right? On 24 May I wrote:

We both need to print out this diary, read it with a pen (or many coloured ones) in hand in order to understand and feel what's going on in the text, what (inner) voices are being expressed. When we do it, taking our time, I'm sure we will know what to do with our dialogic diary, themes will emerge...

As I am (almost) retired now and not active in teaching, I can see how these times of upheaval in our lives and in education make me stop and sigh, but not necessarily think of immediate solutions to the problems. I also want to attach a bit of text from my article to this email, the one I’m struggling with, just to hear your immediate reaction. The thing to know is that the article is experimental and I am including my own writing exercises from a course in creative academic writing I took in the research story, using my own writing as data. This bit might be of interest because it is about voice, although a spontaneous writing exercise. I ponder on unique voices in educational stories, how we can keep our own unique, although incomplete, voices as practitioner-researchers and also allow our students to keep theirs. I write how previous student stories always echo in our texts and how it’s always a chorus of voices in narrative inquiry that the readers will hear. You’ll see that I worry about silence, I truly worry about how to write about it in my text and also about not hearing the sound of Laura’s silence, perhaps even silencing her story.

Chika: I was thinking about Freire’s (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He demonstrates the dichotomous relationship between teachers and students and defines it as “the banking model of education.” In that model, the expected roles of students in a traditional classroom are clearly described in contrast to those of teachers. One of them is that students are expected to listen to teachers. This means that the student role is to be silent and their voices are not expected to be heard. Then I came up with an idea of two types of silence: *intentional silence* and *oppressive silence*. In the former case, we are supposed to read between lines and keep quiet so as to maintain harmony. For example, students who believe that “the nail that sticks out gets hammered down” would choose not to express their opinions so as not to stand out or to be isolated from others in a group or class. On the other hand, in the latter case, people are forced to keep quiet to play a role imposed on them like Freire’s example of students described above. Whatever types of silence it is, silence includes (un)intentionally unspoken messages and implicit or explicit meanings, and appear and disappear any decisions a learner makes and a sign of autonomy behind their authenticity.

Leena: *Permission to write*, that’s the name I decided to give to my article! I think that what you and I are talking about now is about the right to write, the right to write academic texts, too, “differently”, in a more human language. I did send my article and will hear in due time if this journal, if these reviewers, might consider that some of their readers might be interested. I’ll keep you posted, Chika! But even to be given a vague permission is not enough; one needs to be able to call oneself a writer by claiming one’s voice and right to write. There are always multiple social and cultural norms that won’t allow a writer writing against them to quite use her voice because there’s always the possibility to be rejected. I guess that somebody from the margins of academia, like myself, a non-native writer, a practitioner-

researcher, not a real researcher, will always hear the nagging internal censor's voice in her head: *"This is not going to be accepted, and for a good reason!"*

So what can we do? Keep writing and sending our papers to different journals. Live with the rejections and suggestions of re-writing and editing. There are also different rejections: rejections for a good reason and for the wrong reasons. The wrong reasons often have to do with strong expectations of conventional and conforming writing only. I believe that the world of education needs experimental writings, texts emerging from experience; it needs narrative and stories, memories and dreams, the use of imagination and creativity. I think it needs *feeling* voices (Elbaz-Luwish, 2014). It needs practitioners who listen to the inner voices of their students and have micro-dialogues with their own inner voices. If we write in our feeling voices arising out of our inner dialogues, perhaps the readers will hear our inner voice, and perhaps they will also hear our students' inner voices in our re-storying. Perhaps it's about a resonance of experiential stories (Conle, 2000) in the world of learning and teaching (advising/counselling for) foreign languages?

Chika, it is a perfect point to bring in Freire! Silence indeed is about power. And here it is learner autonomy that gives me hope! A student who has autonomy, a permission to act autonomously, can choose to be silent and we teachers/counsellors have to have the skill and sensitivity to listen to that silence. Granger (2011) writes about silence as *"a presence rather than a lack, as a methodology rather than a pathology."* Isn't it also a permission to be (autonomously) silent that students need to have in classrooms and counselling offices? We are the ones who can give that permission. But we are also the ones who can reject and refuse silence, force our thinking, our meaning and power on students.

Silence is an ethical question in education, in practice and research. Giving thought to and exploring how we listened to a certain silence might be the starting point to understand it, the slippery and obscure meanings of silences in different contexts, our own prejudices included. Which takes us back to the beginning, to Kobe, and the moment at the end of our plenary.

4. Collaborative Reflection After Writing ...

Leena: I'm looking at a printed version of our dialogue so far. Colours, underlinings, circles and words are trying to tell a story of a collaborative writing project, a project which is experimental in terms of what form the end product, an article will/could/might/should take. Writing has many meanings here, writing is the inquiry in the project. Our writing takes the form of a dialogue, consistently so. And yet, there are fragments, episodes, small stories by Chika and yet others by Leena inside the big story called Silence. Because I am not a particularly visual person, my use of colour is very modest and pragmatic, I go for words, this time I used a red pen to write my words/reactions/ideas/interpretations, which is very interesting as I don't use red as a teacher at all!

We both seem to have an agenda, or an underlying silence/passion/issue wanting to find a form in words; these are not exactly the same but they do emerge from the dialogue for both of us. For me, it's definitely writing, academic and personal, students' and practitioners', writing as written voices, feeling voices. I do not venture to say what's yours, Chika, perhaps you disagree with the whole idea of agendas (a negative word but I mean it as a neutral way of saying we want to focus on certain issues). For me, the other issue, which also gets coloured in yellow (=hope) or orange (=vitality), is minds and bodies, learning as a bodily process, embodied encounters in counselling/teaching, which we might not have in the future. No colours, pens, handwritten texts, breathing the same air, smelling each other. I guess I'm not alone here...

Chika: Our collaborative writing is an explorative process of our own and collaborative voices. We have spent so many years exploring our common interests, students' inner voices, but we may not have been so conscious of the presence of our own voices or we simply didn't have any chances to express or share our own voices at least in a written form and even didn't expect our voices would go across oceans and continents, but we have still continued our dialogue even if we didn't know what our end product would be like.

The dialogue started with my voice and included the emotions I had in Kobe. In response to that, your voice also included your real voice of the negative feeling you had after our plenary session. In this way, our monologue gradually turned into dialogue, expanding it with the others' voices like Elizabeth, Giovanna, and Christian, who had shared the same space and time with us in Kobe. As researchers, we understand the importance of triangulation, so we might have tried to explore the meaning of silence, which is our main concern, from various perspectives. However, it might have

been simply out of our curiosity as human beings that we wished to understand how the audience felt about our plenary.

As the dialogue goes on, not only voices of ourselves as plenary speakers, but also various voices emerge, such as practitioner-researchers, counsellors, writers, teachers, and human beings. It was like a soap opera and each player appeared one after another and expressed their own emotions and feelings from their own perspectives. Their struggles, challenges, passions and hopes are well reflected in our collaborative dialogue. As we responded, repeated, paraphrased and summarised what they expressed, we reflected on our specific teaching/learning environments like a mirror image. In this way, multilevel voices are echoed, mingled and resonated.

Leena: Thank you for the great insights into silence, Chika. I've read your reflections with interest. You don't mention colours at all, this is the only thing I'm surprised about. These months, even years, that we've spent with first the idea of *silence* and now the writing project are indeed a rich story of professional and personal development. I can see and feel a web of experiences forming and resonating and I can hear a chorus of voices joining in, speaking and at other times listening, silently pondering. Voices in us and around us.

The starting point for us was indeed the need for "triangulation" as researchers and plenarists but also human curiosity or perhaps both? For me, this dialogue has given a peace of mind about the original Silence of Kobe. It has provided me a space for reflecting and critically looking back at the silence and its repercussions. During our dialoguing I've written three papers and been engaged in inquiries about themes that are not directly related to silence but also with one that has to do with being "silenced" as a writer. This silencing, or more accurately, the feeling of being silenced has to do both with my inner voice and my written voice as an expression of my autonomy as a practitioner-researcher. Our text as a "soap opera" is a telling metaphor, Chika!

Because we've shared our feelings and opinions and ever-evolving ideas about silence and its meaning, I've started to hear novel echoes of voices having to do with English as an academic lingua franca and writing as a non-native practitioner. During this time, I wrote one text in Finnish about (learning) diaries in ALMS and felt much more expressive and playful in writing it than I do when I use English. Ideas emerging from our "dialogic diary via emails" have written themselves, in deliberately reformed ways, in the other texts and papers I have been writing and vice versa. Two of them have now been published and one is still "becoming" an article. The article I mention struggling with will be published soon and the one in Finnish has just come out. There is a writing story (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) or a story about writing here that I'd be interested to pursue now that as a "third age" teacher, or rather a third-age practitioner- researcher, I have all the time in the world.

5. Closure

Chika: Like our joint plenary at ILA 2018, this piece of writing reflects our authentic voice narrated from the multidimensional aspects of ourselves: teachers, counsellors, researchers and human beings. Whatever aspects it is, we have been constantly pondering, wondering and facing issues, but we are surely moving forward. In my research study (Hayashi, 2010), one of the participants (a 15-year-old junior high school student) drew rock climbing on a sheet of a paper and explained that rock climbing is closely related to English language learning. If we need to climb a rock by ourselves, it would be very challenging and hectic; we might easily give up on the way to the top unless we do not have a strong motivation and can maintain it. However, if we do that with someone with similar interests and goals, the whole process will be more dynamic, motivating and more importantly enjoyable! Likewise, our second piece of writing demonstrates the power of dialogic inquiry between Leena and me, which always empowers me both professionally and personally even under the unprecedented circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic!

Leena: The experience of writing this text with you, Chika, and our whole two-year-process, reminds me of a project we did in ALMS and reported on in Bradley et al. (2015). This was an exploration of our (possible) counsellor selves, of our beliefs and attitudes but also a way of visioning our professional futures. Most importantly, we wanted to explore how a scholarship of language counselling (Vieira, 2010) could be developed via professional discussions and collaborative writing. The way the two of us have worked together since we started preparing the plenary has been a similar effort in developing our scholarships of teaching and pedagogies for autonomy across the oceans and continents. It has been a project of sharing and caring, of peer mentoring, or learning together: learning about ourselves, about teaching, about autonomy, about writing, and about life, both our personal and academic lives.

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