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## Silence for health and learning – a phenomenological reflection

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**Abstract** “*Silence is a 2 on a 10 grade scale*” one student pointed out when describing the silence needed in order to be a good learning environment. This is one way to experience silence and we can assume that silence means different things to different people, in different situations. We can, for example, elect to be silent, silence can be imposed as one cannot find words to respond, or we can be silenced.

According to Polanyi every human being has silent and unexpressed dimensions within themselves, which acknowledge situations where we recognise that we know more than we can explain. This is also stressed by Merleau-Ponty, who argued that something exists beyond what can be communicated orally – a silent and implicit language. To be able to be silent, one must have something to say – the loss of voice is not the same as to keep silent according to Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger claimed that silence is constitutive of discourse, and Bateson emphasised that a non-message is also a message – the silence tells us something. Within this paper we will highlight and discuss different aspects of silence, as well as different expressions of silence in connection to health and learning.

One way to approach these dimensions, from a scientific perspective, is to take the phenomenological movement as a point of departure. To be more precise – this paper will discuss silence using a phenomenological life-world approach.