A Pragmatic Study of Conversational Silence in Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party

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Abstract

The present study investigates, pragmatically, Pinter's employment of conversational silence in his selected play, namely (The Birthday Party). Moreover, it aims at identifying the forms of silence that manifest conversational silence, specifying the mainly breached Grice's maxims, finding out the most common illocutionary force, manifesting the performed politeness strategies, and pinpointing the most common functions of conversational silence used in the selected play. For the sake of analysing the data, this study develops a model of analysis. Depending on the model, a qualitative and quantitative analysis is conducted for investigating the forms of silence that manifest conversational silence, the pragmatic strategies, and the functions. Based on the data analysis, conclusions are drawn. The most crucial of which are that the manifestation of conversational silence depends fundamentally on three forms of silence, i.e. interactive, internal, and extended silence with illocutionary force, which occur simultaneously in conversation, and, therefore, the forms used are equally common.

Key words: Conversational Silence, Harold Pinter, Politeness, Speech Acts, Pragmatics

المستخلص

تَبحث الدِراسة الحالية، بحثًا تداوليًا، في توظيف هارولد بنتر للصَمت الحِواري في مَسرحيته المختارة، وهي (حفلة عيد الميلاد). عَلاوةً عَلى ذلك، تَهدُف الدِراسة إلى تَحديدِ أشكال الصَمت التي تُظهر الصمت الحِواري، فَضلًا عن تَحديد أكثر الأشكال المُستخدمة شيوعًا في مَسرحية بنتر المُختارة. كَما تُحاول هَذه الدِراسة أيضًا تَحديدَ قَواعد جرايس الَّتي تم مُخالفتها بِشكل أساسي، وكَذلِكَ مَعرفة المَغزى الكَلامي الأكثَر شِيوعًا، وإظهار إستراتيجيات التأدب المؤداة. إضافةً لذلك، تَهدُف إلى تَحديد أكثر وظائف الصمت الحِواري شيوعًا في المَسرَحية المُختارة. تُطوُر هذه الدراسة أنموذجًا لتحليل البيانات المختارة. وبالإعتماد على هذا الأنموذج، تُجري الدراسة تحليلاً نوعياً وكمِّياً للتحقيق في أشكال الصمت التي تُظهِر الصمت الحِواري وإستراتيجيات التداولية ووظائف الصمت الحِواري. إستُخلِصت الإستنتاجات بِناءً عَلى التحليل الذي أجراهُ الباحث، ومن أهمها يعتمد تجلي الصَمت الحِواري في الأساس على ثَلاثة أشكال مِن الصمت التي تَحدُث آنياً في المحادثة، أي الصمت التَفاعلي والذاتي والمُمتد ذو المَغزى الكَلامي، لذلك فإن جميع الأشكالِ المُستخدمة شائعةٌ بشكلٍ متساوٍ.

1. Introduction

Conversational silence and its communicative role did not receive much attention. Rather, throughout the history of linguistic studies, linguists have focused much more on spoken and written speech. That is to say, words (or sound) were considered the ideal communicators. However, interests in conversational silence began to increase later on in the 20th century and it started to be a subject of different scientific studies such as linguistics, psychology, and anthropology.

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In 1967, the American-Austrian psychologist Paul Watzlawick and his co-authors were the first ever who talked about communicative silence. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967: 49) state that "one cannot not communicate." That is, "activity or inactivity, words or silence, all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot not respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating." Every interactional situation (i.e. behaviour) is a form of communication. Conversational silence by its nature is interactional and intentional behaviour because it only occurs during conversations. Hence this asserts that even conversational silence carries a lot of messages and, of course, these messages can be interpreted by people as having certain meanings. Moreover, Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson say that even "the mere absence of talking" is also included and has message value (ibid). Bruneau (1973: 17) also affirmed that absolute silence is impossible, and "silence does not exist in the physical absolute." Humans communicate even if they are totally silent. In other words, even the unintentional type of silence is a form of communication. To give an example, a commuter in a train who sits with his eyes half closed is communicating that he or anyone she does not want to speak to or be spoken to (Bruneau, 1973: 17).

Consequently, studies on silence became more prevalent and scholars started to give attention to such a significant phenomenon, as it exists in nearly every human interaction, especially in conversation. Sharpley (1997: 244) acknowledges that "certainly clear is the fact that silence deserves attention," and "silence also warrants further research attention than it has received during the past 30 years."

Silence and speech alternate each other and accordingly they complete each other. Johannesen (1974: 26) states the following:

Silence is the necessary substructure or background which gives meaning to speech communication. Silence simply is a primary reality. "Silence can exist without speech," … "but speech cannot exist without silence." In addition, sound and silence define each other. Silence takes on meaning only in a surrounding context of verbal and nonverbal symbols. And language becomes meaningful for people partially in contrast to related silences.

Johannesen says that a human being innately attaches meaning to the silence of another human because thought processes are assumed to be occurring during the period of silence, and thus "human silence is pregnant with meaning" (1974: 25). Therefore, it is pivotal to explain the functions and meanings of silence in communication because silence has many meanings. Hence, without understanding these functions and meanings during communication, there will be lots of possibilities for opacity and misinterpretation between people (Tannen, 1985: 93). Like any type of non-verbal communication, silence delivers a linguistic message just as words do. For example:

(1)   Child: Mom! I will go to play outside.

Mother: [Silence] (gazing angrily at him)
Child: Ok, I will not go.

The silence in this example carries a meaning and an intention. The mother's silence indicates the illocutionary force of rejecting her child's request to go out. Whereas the child's response signifies the perlocutionary effect (Saville-Troike, 1985: 6-7).

Jaworski (1993: 3) says that silence and speech are interrelated and "the main common link between speech and silence is that the same interpretive processes apply to someone's remaining meaningfully silent in discourse as to their speaking." That is, the same principles that account for speech can account for silence too. The interpretation of silence is ambiguous, and it relies on the context of the situation as well as on cultural backgrounds, this makes silence a complex linguistic phenomenon. Moreover, Schmitz (1994: 3) confirms that "no silence without speech, no speech without silence". This does not imply that silence is a dependent phenomenon and it only exists when speech is removed. Rather, silence is an independent and autonomous phenomenon, but in communication silence and speech are inseparable. Schmitz (1994: 3) adds that the contrast between speech and silence makes meaning and understanding possible.

Blimes (1994: 73) presents two ideas about the concept of silence, the first one is that "silence is what is between sounds and before sound", and it exists by its own. In fact, by saying "before sound" this implies that silence is there from the beginning, and nothing comes before. Whereas the second idea refutes the first, and states that silence does not exist by itself but rather it is an absence of another entity (i.e. sound). That is to say, the existence of silence depends heavily on the production of the sound. Then, Blimes refers to a paradoxical issue of which comes first, silence or sound? He states the following:

Silence only comes to existence with the occurrence of the first sound, so we may say that sound precedes silence. On the other hand, on the occurrence of the first, we may say that silence is what preceded it. That is, the first sound created the silence that preceded it.

(ibid)

Nevertheless, Blimes ends this discussion and asserts that "neither sound nor silence exists without a hearer". In other words, regardless of which comes first and which concept depends on which, both depends on "the existence of a conceptualizer" (ibid).

Silence, as a broad concept, can be defined as the absence of sounds or any type of noises, or in communication means the process of refraining from speech. But that is not enough, because silence is a diverse concept that carries many forms and functions. For example, silence may be shown as a pause, as realization of a taboo, as a tool used in manipulation, or as a part of a hearer (H henceforth) in turn-taking interaction. Hence, the concept of silence covers an extensive range. So it is appropriate to regard this concept as a tool of communication. Hence, if silence is treated as a tool of communication, it is easy to use it to define many cases in communication. For example, a pause in discourse, a question left without an answer, a refusal in greetings, or an avoidance of a topic in a conversation are all different manifestations of silence (Jaworski, 1997: 3).

Additionally, Kurzon (1998: 11) states that silence and speech are on the same level of importance. Actually in dyadic interactions, speech and silence have an either\or relationship, i.e. in conversations they alternate with each other; a person cannot speak and be silent simultaneously. All types of non-verbal devices are usually used by individuals while speaking such as raising eyebrows and other facial expressions, and body gestures. In other words, non-verbal devices co-occur with speech. Although silence is non-verbal in essence, but it has a function different from other devices and it cannot co-occur with speech. Furthermore, non-verbal devices of communication that co-occur with speech, can also co-occur with silence.

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2. Concept and Definitions of Conversational silence

Conversational Silence is the meaningful silence that carries a message and is produced by a speaker (S henceforth) intentionally when talk is expected by H (Brummett, 1980: 289). Tannen (1985: 97) asserts that "silence can be a matter of saying nothing and meaning something". Further, Jaworski's (1993: 66-79) definition of conversational silence is kind of similar to Brummett's (1980), Jaworski emphasises that it is the "meaningful absence of speech". Sobkowiak (1997: 44) defines conversational silence as "that which is deliberately produced for communicative purposes in what is perceived by both parties as a communicative situation." Likewise, Ephratt (2008: 1913) states that conversational silence is a tool chosen by S to communicate his or her message. Scholars use different, perhaps interchangeable, terms for this type of silence: communicative silence (Bruneau, 1973), strategic silence (Brummett, 1980), propositional-verbal silence (Saville-Troike, 1985), conversational silence (Blimes, 1994), intentional silence (Kurzon, 1998), interactive silence (Poyatos, 2002), and eloquent silence (Ephratt, 2008).

Brummett (1980: 289) states that not all of silences are conversational. Silence becomes conversational only when talk is expected. Silence is conversational when someone has an urgent reason to speak but does not. Further, conversational silence "violates expectations" and prompt the attribution of specific meanings. Silence must be directional and intentional to be conversational. Brummett suggests some examples of silences that might be considered as, in his terms, strategic silences, i.e. conversational silences. The first example is the "failure to say anything consequential over an extended period of time despite opportunities or duties to speak." While the second example is the "abrupt cancellation of an expected discourse or of an expected short-term verbal interaction" (1980: 295).

Blimes (1994: 80) asserts that conversational silence differs from pauses that mark the end of a turn in a conversation. Neither S who ends his turn with a pause, nor H who is not speaking temporarily and waiting his turn are instances of conversational silence. Conversational silence is interpreted as an "event-in-the-conversation" rather than in its boundaries, and done by simply falling silent. Also, conversational silence "would be analyzed for actions being accomplished in the conversation," for example, anger, and rudeness.

Kurzon (1998: 37) distinguishes intentional silence, unintentional silence, and the pause in a normal everyday conversation by the attempt of glossing silence by a model verb as in the following examples:

(2)   He has something to say but will/must not say it.
(3)   He has something to say but cannot say it.
(4)   He has something to say, and will eventually say it.

The modal verbs, 'will/must' in (2) and 'can' in (3), make a difference in deciding the type of silence. In spite of the verb 'say' in the examples above, the assumed context of these examples is that the silent person refuses to reveal the information whether in speaking or writing. Therefore, the contrast is between 'will' which denotes that the person in intentionally silent, and between 'can' which denotes ability (i.e. able to). Whereas the silence of (4) is not an act of silence, but a common pause in conversation. Kurzon (1998: 41-2) adds that:

The interpretation of intentional silence could be said to be the speech act implied by the silence, but the interpretation of unintentional silence is the one offered by the observer

and not by the silent addressee him or herself. S/he is silent not because of his or her own conscious choosing.

Berger (2004: 162-3) says that choosing to remain silent for strategic conversational purposes differs from "involuntary speechlessness". Individuals who remain silent intentionally are more likely to form the conceptual and grammatical representations of a message than those who are unintentionally silent. Individuals whose silence is intentional know what they want to say but don't say it. Conversely, individuals whose silence is unintentional cannot find the words of what they should say, and they have difficulty in "formulating mental representations of messages."

Kurzon (2007: 1676) remarks that conversational silence encompasses the phenomena of the silent answer to a question, and "the case of not participating in a conversation even when one is physically present." This type often occurs in conversations of only two participants, namely S and H. Conversational silence is considered equivalent to a speech act, but its illocutionary force and text are difficult to be known.

Garcés-Báez and López-López (2020: 68) suggest three motives for the occurrence of the intentional silence:

- "**In group**. This silence occurs when several people are involved in a situation or interaction and is not dialogic."
- "**Face to face**. This silence is dialogical, i.e. between agents, and intentional silence is understood as Yes, No, …"
- "**Evasive**. Characteristic of politicians who prefer to talk about anything else, instead of answering directly a question."

3. Model of Analysis

The developed eclectic model of this study is mainly based on the findings arrived at through surveying the literature related to Conversational Silence and three pragmatic theories. It aims at analysing three aspects of conversational silence: forms of conversational silence, pragmatic strategies, and functions of conversational silence. The following subsections make clear the levels of the model.

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3.1 Three Forms of Silence

The first level of the analysis involves three forms of silence that are taken from different studies. These three forms are interactive, internal, and turn-constituting with an illocutionary force.

3.1.1 Interactive Silence

In fact, Bruneau (1973: 23-8) proposes three forms of silence: psycholinguistic, interactive, and sociocultural. Psycholinguistic silence is ideally manifested by hesitations. Thus, conversational silence cannot take such a form because it is intentional and not related to cases of inability to speak or other speech disorders. Nor it can take the sociocultural form because this form of silence is manifested in particular religious rituals. Therefore, out of Bruneau's proposed forms, interactive form is best associated with conversational silence. According to Bruneau (1973: 28), interactive silence is a pause that interrupts the flow of conversation. It is called interactive because it's related to interpersonal associations and relationships between people. The estimated length of interactive silence is normally longer than usual. Such a length allow participants to draw inferences and interpret the meaning behind silence.

3.1.2 Internal Silence

The second form that manifests conversational silence is internal silence, which is an intentional act created by people themselves to express their feelings, thoughts, and emotions when words fail to express so. The word 'internal' means that silence is issued from interlocutors themselves because they choose, and want, to be silent. Also, it means that there is no external power that imposes, obliges, and prevents interlocutors from speaking, such as a teacher who orders his students to keep silent or a judge who orders the court attendees. The aforementioned instances do not belong to conversational silence because such acts are not internal, personal, and intentional acts of silence. Rather, they are considered external (or oppressed) acts of silence (Alerby and Alerby, 2003: 49).

3.1.3 Turn-Constituting Silence with Illocutionary Force

This form of conversational silence is a micro-level switching pause, namely, an extended gap within conversation. It occurs when participants intentionally take and end their turns simultaneously without uttering a single word. Micro-level forms of silence encompass 'intra-turn' pauses that occur within the turn of a single S, and 'inter-turn' pauses that occur at the margins of an S turn in conversation. When the duration of an 'inter-turn' pause extends, it becomes a gap within an interaction. Such a gap is called an extended and intended silence, and it is interpreted as a silent response that performs an indirect speech act of rejecting, accepting, or disagreeing (Nakane, 2007: 6).

3.2 Pragmatic Strategies

The second level of the analysis is composed of three pragmatic strategies employed by participants through using conversational silence: Grice's maxim, Speech Act Theory, and Politeness Theory. First, Grice's maxims of the Cooperative Principle are investigated to show which of them is breached to produce an implicature that successfully achieves an intended pragmatic function by only keeping silent. These include Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The general function of the cooperative principle is that it enables an interlocutor in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that the other interlocutor is being cooperative. Therefore, to breach a maxim is to deviate from the norm and, hence, gives rise to pragmatic functions. According to Grice (1989: 26), the quantity maxim is breached when a participant's contribution is not as informative as is required; while the quality maxim is breached when an S

says something which s/he believes to be false or something that lacks adequate evidence; whereas the relation maxim is breached when an utterance is irrelevant to the context; and the manner maxim is breached when an S's contribution is not clear, brief and orderly. Concerning conversational silence, Grice's maxims are conducted to explore the pragmatic functions generated by Pinter's employment of conversational silence in the selected play.

Secondly, this study adopts Searle's (1976) categorisation of speech acts. Searle categorisation includes: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Unlike speech, conversational silence lacks the form (locution) but has a content (illocution). However, the locutionary act is represented by an intentional, unexpected, silent response. Since it is a form of communication, conversational silence conveys several illocutionary forces in an indirect way. The felicity conditions are also adopted to investigate whether or not the speech acts communicated by conversational silence are felicitous. The felicity conditions are: the propositional content conditions, the preparatory conditions, the sincerity conditions, and the essential conditions. Concerning the last component of speech acts, the perlocutionary acts are also investigated to find out to perlocutionary effects that result from the illocutionary forces.

Finally, regarding Politeness theory, Brown and Levinson's (1987) five strategies for doing face threatening acts (FTA henceforth) are examined: Bald-on-record without redress, on-record with positive politeness redress, on-record with negative politeness redress, off-record, and don't perform the FTA. Interlocutors' conversational silence performs various strategies of politeness, each strategy is identified according to particular contextual factors.

3.3 Functions of Conversational Silence

The third level of the model deals with analysing the pragmatic functions of conversational silence. The selected functions are taken from different studies. Nakane (2003: 21-2) states that conversational silence may function as a rejection, to reject an offer or request; a disagreement, to disagree indirectly about a certain issue; and a request, to request something from someone. All of the aforementioned functions are usually done with the assistance of various paralinguistic cues and facial expression. Moreover, conversational silence may function as an evasive strategy used by a participant who has the motive to do so in some situations. An evasive act during a conversation could perhaps be represented by avoiding confrontation or avoiding an answer about a sensitive topic (Garcés-Báez and López-López, 2020: 68). These functions are examined according to Grice's Maxims, Speech Act Theory, and Politeness. The following fig. shows the developed model of the current study.
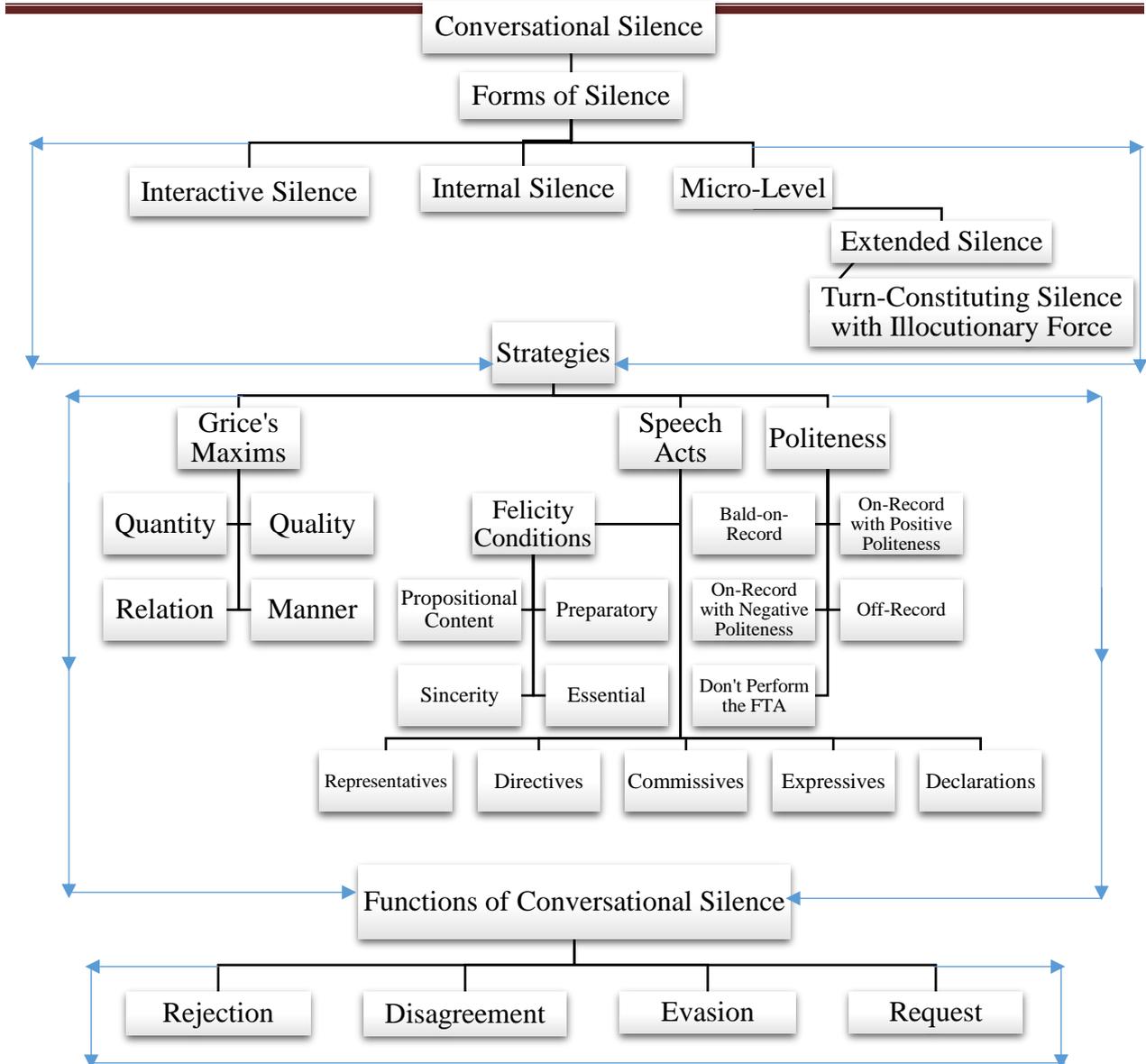
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Figure (2): The Developed Eclectic Model for Analysing Conversational Silence in Pinter's Selected Play

4. Methods of Data Analysis

The model developed by this study is the main tool used in the analysis of conversational silence. It includes examining conversational silence forms, pragmatic strategies and functions. Besides, the percentage equation is employed as a statistical tool for the analysis, represented by bar charts. Therefore, the current study conducts both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis.

5. Harold Pinter and (The Birthday Party)

Harold Pinter is a British dramatist who was born on 10 October 1930 in Hackney, London. His well-known major plays are *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Homecoming* (1964), and *Betrayal* (1978) (Dukore, 1988: 13-23). Pinter started his career as a professional actor in the UK. However, after several years of acting, Pinter decided to shift his career to a playwright in the mid-fifties by writing his first ever play, which is *The Room* (1957). Since then, he became one of the most crucial dramatists associated with the Theater of the Absurd (Website 1). His plays are characterised for their use of some devices such as understatement, small talk, reticence, and silence, which is known as the "Pinter Pause" or the "Pinter Silence". Pinter silence was mainly used to "convey the substance of a character's thought, which often lies several layers beneath, and contradicts his speech." In 2005, namely, before three years of death, Pinter won the Nobel Prize in literature (Website 2). Concerning silence, Pinter, at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol, England, in 1962, says:

There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. … We have heard many time that tired, grimy phrase: 'Failure of communication' … and this phrase has been fixed to my work quiet consistently. I believe the contrary. I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid.

(Pinter, 1976)

The Birthday Party is a drama written by Harold Pinter in 1957 and first performed in 1958. It consists of three acts. It is Pinter's first full-length play that established his trademark "comedy of menace". The play is set in a boarding house, ran by Petey and Meg Boles, in a seaside town. The Boles have only one boarder: Stanley, a reclusive and lazy young who is hiding away from his past and the outside world. All changes when two mysterious men arrive, Goldberg and McCann, who proceed to punish Stanley for crimes that remain undisclosed. A birthday party, thrown by Meg, turns into an uncontrolled exhibition of violence and terror. Pinter's vision of paranoia is reinforced by his use of dialogue which includes incoherent conversations and frequent silence (Website 3, Website 4).

6. Text Analysis

Text (1)

MEG. Is the sun shining? **(He crosses to the window, takes a cigarette and matches from his pyjama jacket, and lights his cigarette.)** What are you smoking?

STANLEY. A cigarette.

a. Forms of Silence

1. **Interactive silence:** It interrupts the flow of conversation between two or more people, namely, *Meg* and *Stanley*.

2. **Internal silence:** It is an intentional act done with purpose by *Stanley*. Also, it is internal because no one forced him to employ silence to express himself.

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3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force: *Stanley* simultaneously takes his turn in the conversation and ends it by, intentionally, keeping silent. Thus, the process of turn-taking is transformed into an extended gap within the conversation and interpreted as a silent response that performs as a speech act in an indirect way.

b. Grice's Maxims

1. Quantity maxim: *Stanley* breaches this maxim since his contribution is not as informative as is required; talk is anticipated instead of silence.

2. Quality maxim: This maxim is observed since *Stanley's* silence doesn't communicate something that lacks adequate evidence.

3. Relation maxim: This maxim is also observed because *Stanley's* silence is relevant to what is said.

4. Manner maxim: The maxim is breached because *Stanley's* silence is neither clear nor direct.

c. Speech Act: Commissive

The locutionary act is represented by an unexpected silence. The illocutionary force is refusing. Also, the perlocutionary effect is that *Meg* instantly changes the topic as she perceives *Stanley's* refusal.

d. Felicity Conditions

1. Propositional content condition: *Stanley* predicates a future act to *Meg's* question by keeping silent.

2. Preparatory condition: *Stanley* does not wish to answer *Meg's* question.

3. Sincerity condition: *Stanley* sincerely refuses to answer *Meg's* question, and does not want to be obliged to answer.

4. The Essential condition: *Stanley's* silence is an attempt to inform *Meg* that he refuses to answer her question.

e. Politeness Strategy: Don't Do the FTA

By remaining silent, *Stanley* chooses not to perform the FTA. In addition, *Stanley* does not only mitigate the potential threatening act but attempts to avoid it altogether.

f. Function of Conversational Silence: Evasion

In this text, the function of conversational silence is evasion. *Stanley* does not wish to communicate with *Meg*. In other words, he doesn't wish to answer her question directly. Thus, he chooses silence, and when he speaks, he usually attempts to be sarcastic and indifferent.

Text (2)

She sits, takes out a compact and powders her nose.
LULU (offering him the compact). Do you want to have a look at your face?
(STANLEY withdraws from the table.) You could do with a shave, do you know that?

a. Forms of Silence

The act of silence in the bold text is a conversational silence since it is:

1. Interactive silence: *Stanley's* silence interrupts the flow of conversation between two or more people, namely, *Lulu* and himself. As well, the estimated length of interactive silence is longer than the psycholinguistic silence.

2. Internal silence: It is internal since it is an intentional act created willingly by *Stanley* to express his feelings and thoughts.

3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force: It is *Stanley's* choice to express himself using silence during his turn. Thus, the process of turn-taking is transformed into an extended gap within the conversation and interpreted as a silent response with an indirect illocutionary force.

b. Grice's Maxims

1. Quantity maxim: *Stanley's* contribution is not as informative as is required.

2. Quality maxim: This maxim is observed since *Stanley's* silence doesn't convey a lie.

3. Relation maxim: *Stanley's* silence is relevant to *Lulu's* offer.

4. Manner maxim: This maxim is breached because *Stanley's* act is obscure and unclear.

c. Speech Act: Commissive

The locutionary act is represented by an unexpected silence. Also, the illocutionary force is rejecting. The perlocutionary effect is that *Lulu* attempts to persuade *Stanley* to take to compact by saying that it can also be used by males, i.e. for shaving purposes.

d. Felicity Conditions

1. Propositional content condition: *Stanley* predicates a future act to *Lulu's* offer by remaining silent.

2. Preparatory condition: *Stanley* does not wish to accept *Lulu's* offer.

3. Sincerity condition: *Stanley* sincerely rejects *Lulu's* offer to take the compact, and does not want to be obliged to do so.

4. The Essential condition: *Stanley's* silence counts as an attempt to inform *Lulu* that he rejects her offer.

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e. Politeness Strategy: On-Record with Positive Politeness

Stanley performs the FTA on-record with positive redress. Rejecting an offer or a request usually poses a threat to H's positive face. Thus, *Stanley* doesn't respond to *Lulu's* offer. Instead, he withdraws from where she sits, hinting at an indirect rejection to mitigate the threat to *Lulu's* positive face.

f. Function of Conversational Silence: Rejection

In this text, the conversational silence functions as rejection. A silent response that follows an offer is considered not a preferred response, and interpreted as a rejection.

Text (3)

MEG. Goldberg.
STANLEY. Goldberg?
MEG. That's right. That was one of them.
STANLEY slowly sits at the table, left.
Do you know them?
STANLEY **does not answer**.
Stan, they won't wake you up, I promise. I'll tell them they must be quiet.
STANLEY sits still.
They won't be here long, Stan. I'll still bring you up your early morning tea.

a. Forms of Silence

The act of silence in the bold text is a conversational silence since it is:

1. Interactive silence: It interrupts the flow of conversation between two or more people, namely, *Meg* and *Stanley*.

2. Internal silence: An intentional act created willingly by *Stanley*.

3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force: *Stanley* simultaneously takes his turn in the conversation and ends it by, intentionally, keeping silent.

b. Grice's Maxims

1. Quantity maxim: This maxim is breached since *Stanley's* contribution is not as informative as is required. Namely, talk is expected rather than silence.

2. Quality maxim: *Stanley* observes this maxim since his silence doesn't communicate something that lacks adequate evidence.

3. Relation maxim: This maxim is also observed because *Stanley's* silence is relevant to what is said.

4. Manner maxim: *Stanley's* act is ambiguous and unclear.

c. Speech Act: Commissive

The locutionary act is represented by a conversational silence. Besides, the illocutionary force is refusing. The perlocutionary effect is that *Meg* instantly carries on speaking without repeating her question as she perceives *Stanley's* refusal.

d. Felicity Conditions

1. Propositional content condition: *Stanley* affirms a future act to *Meg's* question by keeping silent without making any movement.

2. Preparatory condition: *Stanley* does not wish to answer *Meg's* question.

3. Sincerity condition: *Stanley* sincerely refuses to answer *Meg's* question, and does not want to be obliged to answer.

4. The Essential condition: *Stanley's* silence is an attempt to communicate with *Meg* that he refuses to answer her question.

e. Politeness Strategy: Don't Do the FTA

About politeness theory, by remaining silent, *Stanley* chooses not to perform the FTA. Additionally, *Stanley* does not only mitigate the potential threatening act but attempts to avoid it altogether.

f. Function of Conversational Silence: Evasion

In this text, the function of conversational silence is evasion. *Stanley* does not wish to declare his relationship with *Goldberg* to *Meg*. In other words, he doesn't wish to answer her question directly. Therefore, he chooses silence and tries to avoid *Meg's* intrusive question.

Text (4)

STANLEY. Could I have my glasses?
GOLDBERG. Ah yes. **(He holds his hand out to MCCANN. MCCANN passes him his glasses.)** Here they are. (He holds them out for STANLEY, who reaches for them.) Here they are.

a. Forms of Silence

The act of silence in the bold text is a conversational silence since it is:

1. Interactive silence: *Goldberg's* silence interrupts the flow of conversation between two or more people, namely, *Meg*, *Stanley*, and *McCann*. As well, the estimated length of interactive silence is longer than the psycholinguistic silence, which is represented by hesitations and sentence self-corrections.

2. Internal silence: It is an intentional act done with purpose by *Goldberg*. Also, it is internal because no one forced him to do the act of request silently.

3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force: *Goldberg*, within his turn with *Stanley*, constitutes another turn directed to *McCann* and ends it by, intentionally, remaining silent. Thus,

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the process of turn-taking is transformed into an extended gap within the conversation and interpreted as a silent response that performs as a speech act in an indirect way.

b. Grice's Maxims

1. Quantity maxim: *Goldberg's* contribution is not as informative as is required. Namely, talk is expected, when someone requests something, instead of silence.

2. Quality maxim: The quality maxim is observed since *Goldberg's* silence doesn't convey something that he believes to be false.

3. Relation maxim: *Goldberg's* silence is relevant to what is said.

4. Manner maxim: This maxim is breached since *Goldberg's* act is not clear enough.

c. Speech Act: Directive

The locutionary act is represented by a conversational silence aided by a hand gesture.
The illocutionary force is requesting. The perlocutionary effect is that *McCann* immediately gives away the glasses as he perceives *Goldberg's* request.

d. Felicity Conditions

1. Propositional content condition: The act of requesting is carried out by *McCann*, i.e. H.

2. Preparatory condition: *Goldberg* is sure that *McCann* is able to give him the glasses.

3. Sincerity condition: *Goldberg* truly and sincerely wants *McCann* to hand him the glasses. Besides, it's not obvious that *McCann* would have handed the glasses to *Goldberg* without a request.

4. The Essential condition: *Goldberg's* silence counts as an attempt to get *McCann* to hand the glasses.

e. Politeness Strategy: Off-Record

By silently holding his hand out towards *McCann*, *Goldberg* asks for the glasses indirectly.

f. Function of Conversational Silence: Request

Throughout the play, *Goldberg* gives commands to his associate, *McCann*, but not in front of the other characters. Whereas in the presence of others, *Goldberg* and *McCann* pretend they are equal partners. Accordingly, in this text, the conversational silence functions as a request.

7. Statistical Analysis

7.1 Forms of Silence

In all of the four texts of the selected data, conversational silence is employed by Pinter as a form of communication between the characters. The acts of silence in the data are confirmed as conversational acts of silence since they take the following forms simultaneously: (a) interactive, (b) internal, and (c) turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force. These three forms (a, b, and c) of silence are used equally in the selected play. That is, each form of silence is used 4 times, amounting (100%) for each, in *The Birthday Party*. Table (1) and fig. (2) below illustrate the frequency and the rate of the forms of silence:

Table (1): The Frequency and Percentages of the Forms of Silence

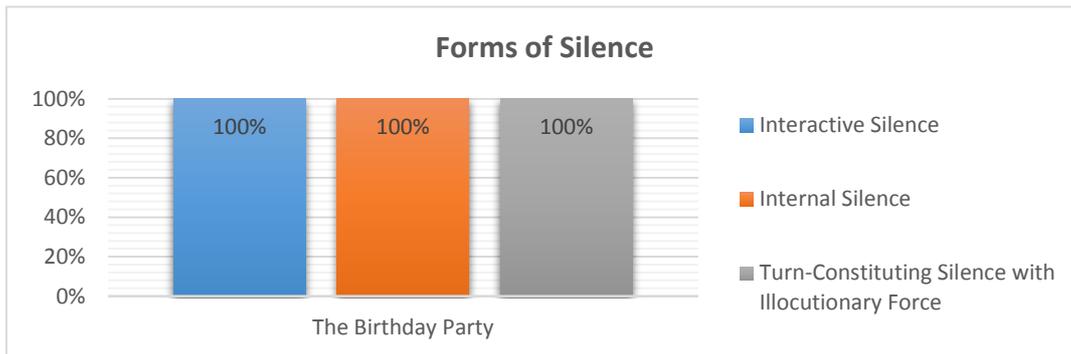| Forms of silence	Frequency	Percentage %
Interactive Silence	4	100%
Internal Silence	4	100%
Turn-Constituting Silence with Illocutionary Force	4	100%
Total	12	100%

Figure (2): Rates of the Forms of Silence

7.2 Grice's Maxims

Regarding Grice's maxims, the following table and the figure show that the quantity and the quality maxims are the only maxims breached in the selected play:

Table (2): The Frequency and Percentages of the Breached Grice's Maxims

Grice's Maxims	Frequency	Percentage %
Quantity	4	100%
Quality	0	0%
Relation	0	0%
Manner	4	100%
Total	8	100%

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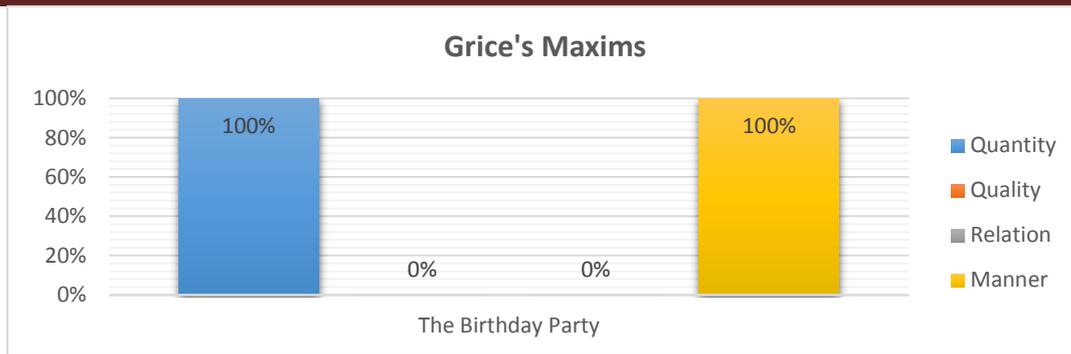Jaafar Hasan Jasim - Prof. Dr. Qasim Abbas Dhayef

Figure (3): Rates of the Breached Grice's Maxims

Concerning the quantity maxim, conversational silence occurs only in situations in which talk is anticipated by H rather than silence. That is, conversational silence is not as informative as is required. Thus, table (2) and fig. (3) above show that the quantity maxim is breached in all the texts (4 times), amounting (100%). Moreover, the manner maxim is also breached in all the texts (4 times), amounting (100%). This signifies that all the acts of conversational silence in Pinter's selected play are ambiguous and unclear. Further, the quality maxim is always observed in all the texts. This indicates that the characters of Pinter's selected play do not employ conversational silence that conveys lies and false information. Furthermore, the relation maxim is also never breached in all the (4) texts. Namely, all the acts of conversational silence in the selected play are relevant to the purpose of the conversation.

7.3 Speech Acts

Table (3) and fig. (4) below indicate the frequency and percentages of the illocutionary force of the acts of conversational silence in Pinter's selected play. The table and figure in question confirm that the sub-speech act of refusing is the most common illocutionary force in the selected play. Moreover, it is used (2) times in *The Birthday Party* and its percentage score is (50%). This means that Pinter mainly uses conversational silence with the illocutionary force of refusing. Besides, the illocutionary force of rejecting is used once by Pinter through conversational silence in the data, amounting (25%). Overall, commissives (i.e. both refusing and rejecting) are used (3) times in *The Birthday Party*, amounting (75%). Further, Pinter uses a directive speech act only once, achieving the illocutionary force of requesting through conversational silence, amounting (25%). Finally, representatives, expressives and declarations are not used whatsoever by Pinter in his selected play.

Table (3): The Frequency and Percentages of the Illocutionary Force Conveyed by Conversational Silence

Speech Acts	Sub-Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage %
Representatives	———	0	0%
Directives	Requesting	1	25%
Commissives	Refusing	2	50%
	Rejecting	1	25%
Expressives	———	0	0%
Declarations	———	0	0%
Total		4	100%

Figure (4): Rates of the Illocutionary Force Conveyed by Conversational Silence

7.4 Politeness

As illustrated by the percentage scores in table (4) and figure (5), Pinter mainly utilises conversational silence to perform the (Don't perform the FTA) strategy. This strategy is used (2) times in the data under scrutiny, amounting (50%). This means that the characters of Pinter's selected play tend not just to mitigate the potential threatening act but avoid it altogether.
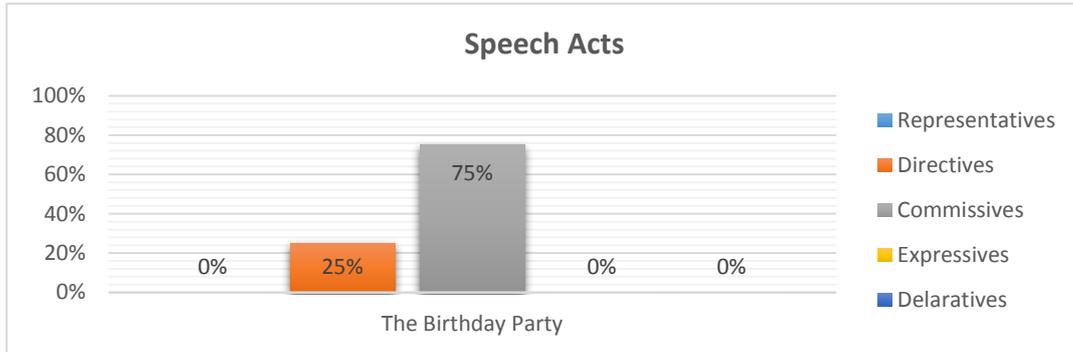
Concerning other frequent strategies, Pinter employs conversational silence to perform an act (On-record with positive politeness) once only in the play, amounting (25%). Furthermore, the (Off-record) politeness strategy is also frequent, and it is used once, amounting (25%). Finally, both of the (Bald-on-record) and (On-record with negative politeness) strategies are not used in the selected data at all.

Table (4): The Frequency and Percentages of Politeness Strategies Performed by Pinter's Utilisation of Conversational Silence

Politeness Strategies	Frequency	Percentage %
Bald-on-Record	0	0%
On-Record with Positive Politeness	1	25%
On-Record with Negative Politeness	0	0%
Off-Record	1	25%
Don't Perform the FTA	2	50%
Total	4	100%

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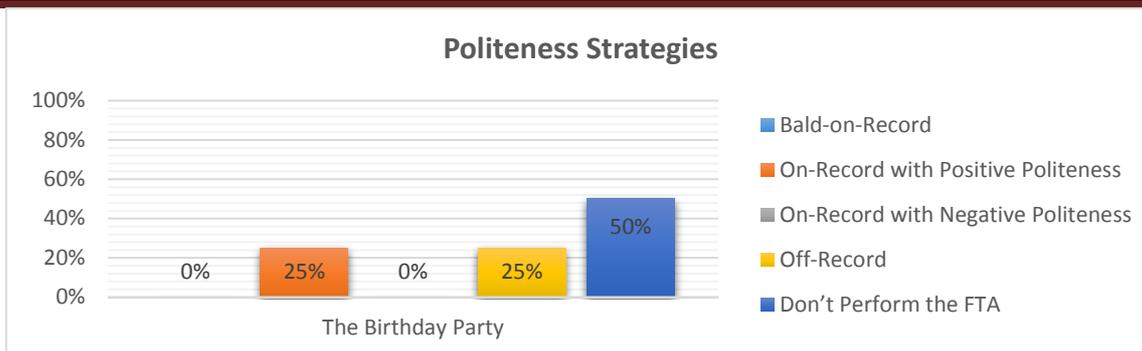**Jaafar Hasan Jasim - Prof. Dr. Qasim Abbas Dhayef**

Figure (5): Rates of Politeness Strategies Performed by Pinter's Utilisation of Conversational Silence

7.5 Functions of Conversational Silence

As elucidated by the percentage scores in table (5) and figure (6), Pinter mainly employs conversational silence to achieve the evasion function. This function is used (2) times by Pinter in the selected play, amounting (50%). This means that the characters of the selected play attempt to evade each other by remaining silent. Another function of conversational silence is rejection — i.e. to reject offers, requests, or demands — which is used once in the play, amounting (25%). Also, conversational silence functions as a request only once, amounting (25%). Further, Pinter does not employ conversational silence in the selected texts to express disagreements. The table, and the figure, below show the frequency and percentages of the functions of conversational silence in Pinter's selected play:

Table (5): The Frequency and Percentages of the Functions of Conversational Silence

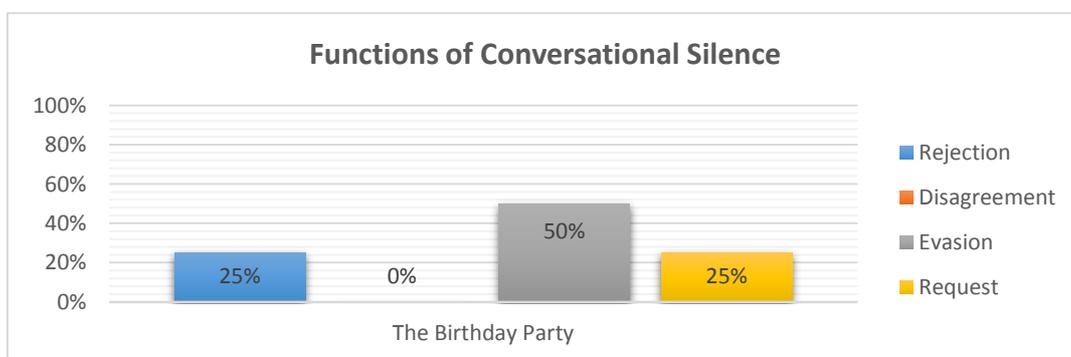| Functions	Frequency	Percentage %
Rejection	1	25%
Disagreement	0	0%
Evasion	2	50%
Request	1	25%
Total	4	100%

Figure (6): Rates of the Functions of Conversational Silence

8. Conclusions

Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The manifestation of conversational silence depends fundamentally on three forms of silence, which occur simultaneously in conversation. These forms are interactive, internal, and turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force. This is further confirmed by the statistical analysis, in which the frequency of occurrence of each of the three forms of silence is (100%) in the data.

2. To generate an implicature by keeping silent, only the quantity and the manner maxims are breached in the selected play. Throughout the play, participants in conversational interaction assume that other participants are being cooperative. Thus, when S suddenly ceases to cooperate, H draws inferences. That is, participants expect others to communicate rather than to fall silent intentionally and unexpectedly. Pinter breaches each of the aforementioned maxims (4) times in the four selected texts to convey the implied messages behind conversational silence.

3. The quality maxim is always observed. This signals that the conversational silence does not convey lies or something the participants believe to be false. Besides, conversational silence is always related to the topic being talked about, and, therefore, the relation maxim is never breached.

4. The characters of Pinter's selected play employ conversational silence mainly with the illocutionary force of refusing to indicate that they don't wish to answer some unwanted questions. In addition, the statistics of the data analysis show that the illocutionary force in question is the most common one, amounting (50%).

5. Conversational silence also performs as a commissive speech act with the illocutionary force of rejecting, to reject requests and offers, and a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of requesting.

6. As far as politeness is concerned, Pinter utilises conversational silence mostly to perform the (Don't perform the FTA) strategy in the selected play. This strategy is closely related to conversational silence since it means not only minimising the damage to others' face but avoiding it altogether.

7. Other strategies such as (Off-record) and (On-record with positive politeness) are also performed by conversational silence in the data.

8. Pinter employs conversational silence in (The Birthday Party) chiefly for evasion. The characters of both of the selected plays prefer to remain silent than to refuse explicitly to answer questions. This is supported by the statistics, which illustrate that its percentage of frequency of occurrence is the highest in the data, amounting (50%).

9. Pinter also employs conversational silence to achieve functions such as rejections and requests.

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