

## Conversational Silence in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*: A Pragmatic Perspective

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**Abstract:** This research offers a contemporary pragmatic approach toward the analysis of conversational silence in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and fills the void in the analysis of silence as a complex Speech Act in drama. It considers different types of silence and answers the question of whether or not they obey or break Grice's maxims with regard to dialogue interactions. In extending prior work, this paper aims to explore various aspects of silence as a strategic act that has dramatic performative effects, explore their politeness effects in detail, and explore the kind of situations in which the act of silence is likely to occur. This research employs both qualitative and quantitative analysis with an additional use of text mining and statistical tools for data visualization. It is thus suggested that silence in *The Birthday Party* has other functions that are more strategic, as it is here indicated: power, in so far as it may be read as the interlocutor's power off and as a way of turning down or dodging an offer; face, as it has been shown, in so far as it entails the deployment of three different types of silence, namely: internal, interactive, and turn-const Such findings enhance the audience's understanding of Pinter's dramatic and pragmatic approach to silence and thus enrich current theoretical analysis of pragmatic speech acts on the stage.

**Keywords:** conversational rules, Harold Pinter, Grice's conversational maxims, manners of politeness

### 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that conversational silence is used actively in conversations, the significance of this kind of silence in the history of language studies has been understudied due to the strong focus on spoken and written words. Delayed models of language were the first to look at verbal aspects as the main channel of meaning, while nonverbal ones, such as silence, were ignored. However, in the case of the last several decades, silence as a phenomenon has been considered more and more not as non-communicative but as a rich and multilayered sign (Ephratt 2018; Gussow 2008). Ephratt (2014: 416) initiated reasoning about silence as a component of communication processes. Europe states that 'one cannot communicate', meaning that the lack of verbal reply in a conversation delivers intentional or unintentional signals. Following this, recent studies have discussed how the theoretical concepts of silencing have developed in communication theory

(Khaled 2024: 15). For example, Rashid (2022: 435) delves into the operations of silence by proposing requirements of silence from different cultural and situational perspectives and proposing a new possibility that silence is not only a means to ensure politeness but also a means of controlling the flow of conversation. In the same vein, Lahiri (2024: 231), writing on how power relations are constructed through the use of silence, pointed out that silence also has a variety of social meanings depending on the current cultural practices.

Silent and nonverbal communication can play diverse roles in communication between individuals and can have multiple meanings depending on different factors, such as cultural context (Hamdan and Riziq 2024). Contrary to emotions, these functions can result in possible future opaque and confusion between the two individuals (Dimitrov 2019: 78). Like any words and phrases, absence speaks in communication contexts as well since it has its role to perform. For example, consider the interaction below:

1. Child: "Mom! I want to go play outside."
2. Mother: Silence, with mashing glances of wrath.
1. Child: "Okay, I won't go."

In this case, the absence of speech, accompanied by gestures of the mother in the household symbolizes rejection. The child understands this silent rejection as the illocutionary force of the mother's action; the child's obeying is the perlocutionary effect of the silence (Almansi and Henderson 2021: 154). Batty (2001: 287) submits that silence and speech are inseparable since the interpretative processes applied to silence are products of interpretative processes used in speech analysis. In addition, Billington (2009: 67) asserted that while silence is defined and interpreted often as the lack of talk, it should be better viewed as an equal and opposite to speech. He suggests that to speak is to silence and to be silent is to speak because silence and speech are contingent definitions of one another. This interdependence is echoed by Pinter and Nightingale (2000: 122), who introduce two contrasting perspectives on silence: one owes silence a perception of a pre-Socratic entity, while the other perceives silence to be an absence of sound.

That is why today's silence as a concept has been given its proper due as one of the most effective means of communication in certain settings. It may be seen that silence is a pause, is sayable but unsaid for fear of breaking a taboo, is an act of rebellion and subversion, or is part of the tactical work that conversational partners do when speaking and listening to each other (Bonacchi 2020: 31). Consequently, the reduction of silence into merely nonverbal is inadequate; silence should be seen as a calibrated communicative process that encodes psychological attitudes, social signals, and, if necessary, purposeful meanings (Ephratt 2018: 423). Conversational silence, which Das and Choudhury (2017: 523) define, refers to a situation where, instead of speaking, one is anticipated to speak, but they do not. For example, Sorensen et al. (2024:154) explain strategic silence as intentional

non-speaking situations where speaking is expected or required. This type of silence is different as a turn at speaking is interrupted, which leads to the observer giving definite meanings to the non-speech. Mostoufi (2014: 149) also post defines his types of silences as intentional and unintentional, with the intentional silence being meant to act like a speech act in a way that it is an implication of a communicative intent even if there is no utterance. Ionescu (2007: 144) differentiates between psycho silences as being either voluntary or involuntary, where people who remain silent most of the time have a mental picture or picture script of what they would want to convey but consciously decide not to speak it out. Therefore, to address the phenomenon of silence in discursive processes, it is not sufficient to focus on the contextual signals: further reference is needed to the participants' minds and their purposes.

### **1.1 Research gap**

Although there is a well-documented body of scholarship analyzing Harold Pinter's rhetoric, few studies focus on silence as a communicative tool in his works. Much of the extant research is concerned with the analysis of dialogue and talk-in-interaction while paying relatively less attention to how silence serves as a purposefully deployed activity. Most approaches consider silence as a form of break in verbal communication or as failure to transact verbally, or at worst, a way of avoiding verbal communication instead of as a forceful tool of rejection, rejection or other forms of regulator mechanisms such as control in negotiations. The abovementioned lack of coverage confines analysis to be restricted by the meaning expounded by silence and seemingly reduces Pinter's works' semiotic and pragmatic significance. In addition, beyond investigations that compare silence with other communication activities, silence is seldom analyzed in light of specific linguistic theories, including Grice's Maxims, Speech Act Theory, and Politeness Theory. Even when silence is recognized in the literature, it is important and is frequently not evaluated in regard to character dynamics and narrative progression.

### **1.2 Research questions**

**This study seeks to answer the following questions:**

1. What are the predominant forms of conversational silence in *The Birthday Party*?
2. How do these silences align with pragmatic theories of politeness and face-saving? and
3. How does Pinter employ silence to subvert or reinforce social hierarchies within the text?

## **2. Literature review**

Studying the communicative functions of silence is an ongoing process which applies the new light to the understanding of how silence works in various social and cultural contexts, as explained by various authors (Kurzon 2013; Sienicheva 2015; Das and Choudhury 2017; Elyamany 2017; Shcherbyna and Shashkova 2019;

Griese 2022; Røgild-Müller 2022). Griese (2022:273-275) has categorized silence into three primary types: intergroup (used in group situations), interpersonal (immediate verbal communication between two persons), and subtle (employed in order to dodge a particular subject matter).

## **2.1 Model of analysis**

This paper employs an eclectic model of the analysis of conversational silence that combines the current pragmatic theories and empirical practices. This model will seek to provide a thorough exploration of the different dimensions of conversational silence with particular emphasis on forms, functions and pragmatic profiles. The distinctive types of conversational silence are further outlined in the subsequent sub-sections with respect to their specific properties and functions: interactive, internal, and turn-constituting.

### **2.1.1 Forms of silence**

The initial level of analysis is dedicated to classifying conversational silence into three main forms: four types of interactional silence to include interactive silence, internality, and turn-constituting, each being characterized by certain illocutionary force (Shcherbyna and Shashkova 2019: 80). These forms are developed based on the findings of other modern studies, which make up the basis for the study of silence as a differentiated and multilevel aspect of interpersonal communication.

### **2.1.2 Interactive silence**

The definition of interactive silence is described as inactivity in a conversation which takes place between two or more people and which has hidden interactional meaning. In line with this, the rate of current research on interactive silence has developed Kurzon (2013: 87) approach to define silence as a pause not only interrupting the flow of communication in dialogue but also shifting the course of the interaction. For example, Das and Choudhury's (2017: 430) study explains that interactive silence often happens in contexts in which the actors aim to express their disagreement, disapproval or contemplation in contrast to confrontation. Such silences are often more prolonged than typical pauses, allowing the listener time to infer the speaker's intentions and underlying emotions (Elyamany 2017: 67). Sienicheva (2015: 345) emphasize that internal silence is often used as a coping mechanism in high-stress or emotionally charged situations, where remaining silent serves to regulate the speaker's emotional state or protect their self-image Røgild-Müller (2022: 156). Recent research by Kurzon (2013: 102) further elaborates on this form of silence, noting that it frequently manifests in therapeutic settings or high-stakes conversations, where individuals may choose to remain silent to process their emotions or to avoid potential conflicts.

### **2.1.3 Translating silence into turn constituting with illocutionary force**

Micro-level turn-constituting silence refers to those silence strategies that appear intentionally during the turn-taking process or signal a change in the turn constituents' communicative aims. This form of silence is distinct in that speakers strategically employ it to signal readiness to yield a turn, express hesitation, or assert control over the interaction (Sienicheva 2015: 243). According to Elyamany (2017:78) turn-taking model, silence can turn boundaries or emphasize a particular communicative act's illocutionary force, such as agreement, disagreement, or ambiguity, thereby functioning as a subtle yet powerful component of discourse management Shcherbyna and Shashkova (2019: 80). More recent studies by Griese (2022: 281) reinforce this view, suggesting that turn-constituting silence can carry varying pragmatic implications depending on cultural norms and situational contexts.

## **2.2 Pragmatic strategies**

The second level of analysis focuses on three key pragmatic strategies that conversational silence utilizes: The Cooperative Principle by Grice, Speech Act Theory and Politeness Theory.

### **2.2.3 What Grice called the 'Cooperative Principle'**

Grice's Cooperative Principle and its associated conventional maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner form the basis of analysis as to how participants use silence to produce 'implicatures,' meaning that is suggested, although not explicitly stated, arising out of violative maxims (Davies 2007: 2310). Each of them, when violated, leads to a particular pragmatic consequence. Maxim is violated when a speaker offers suboptimal information to the conversation, thus building the opportunity for the other party to assume the absence of adequate information is deliberate (Hadi 2013: 69). In conversational silence, it might happen when a speaker doesn't provide some extra information, while the listener is to guess their interlocutor's emotions. Breaking the Quality maxim means the speaker is telling the audience something untrue or could not be proven (Herawati 2013: 45). With regard to setting up a contentious relationship, the absence of word rejection might be used to convey disbelief or skepticism to a speaker without voicing disagreement, which can save.

Participant self-selection during a group discussion could also suggest that the participant is indifferent and uncomfortable speaking or contributing if the current topic is undesirable or considered approbated (Bakoko and Pratiwi 2021: 5). Conversational impoliteness includes violation of any of the politeness strategies outlined under the Manner maxim; thus, if the speaker communicates in an unclear or disordered manner, it is considered impolite (Aliwie 2024: 149). Extended pauses may purposefully leave meaning open to interpretation and may in itself be a planned act of communication where context frames the silence as a strategy for opposite-directed communication (Pan 2012: 23). Talking about

conversational silence, therefore, these maxims point to how they can manage the flow of the conversation; they can create implicatures, and they have distinct pragmatic value in meaning making.

#### **2.2.4 Speech Act Theory**

Searle's Speech Act Theory classifies speech acts into five categories: assertives, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Similar to how conversational silence is devoid of verbal material, it can also have effects on matters of turn-taking and communicative intent (Saragi et al. 2019: 64). Modern investigations have suggested that powerful silence may convey illocutionary force, as silence means agreement, disapproval or contemplation within the conversation context (Elyamany 2019: 16). Consent could also be in the absence of reaction, as it can either affirm or deny a statement (Nakane 2003: 22). However, tactically can be directive when it implies to the other participant that he should shed more light go to another topic or provide more information (Røgild-Müller 2022: 153). In some of these cases, silence may mean selectively opting not to speak about an issue, thereby supporting a preordained position or decision without having to reemphasize it (Bakoko and Pratiwi 2021: 6) verbally. However, silence might also be used intentionally as a declaration, where silence is used in so-called 'speech act contexts,' like those of legal procedures and ceremonies, either in the courtroom or during formal proceedings, to signal for a legally binding action or decision (Hayward and Long 2024: 102-103). Hence the use of Speech Act Theory as a framework for an organized view, regarding the role of conversational silence as a motionless speech act that produces illocutionary meaning.

#### **2.2.5 Politeness Theory**

The politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson looks at how and when silence helps to minimize or maximize the effects of FTAs (Goldsmith 2007: 222). Unearthing the use of silence as the politeness strategy through which the speaker can perform actions in the conversation without threatening their face as well as the face of the listener (Sadeghghli and Niroomand 2016: 28). Recipients respond without any modification to silence when the speaker desires control or authority or when silence is an assertive/dominant act (Alabdali 2019: 75). Positive politeness can also show solidarity or support through not speaking. For instance, a friend will avoid speaking to let another person have a chance to vent anger because they care (Sapitri et al. 2019: 113). Negative politeness, on the other hand, uses communication, silence as a way of acknowledging self-organization or not intruding on the other's space.

In off-record strategy, people rely on failing to speak so that the listener can infer what the speaker's intentions are from the context (Sapitri et al. 2019: 115). Lodging an FTA can be avoided by staying mute or opting out of the discussion to save the face of both speakers (Alabdali 2019: 76). Politeness Theory helps examine the ways in which silence operates as an interactional face-claiming or face-loss-avoiding tool that is contextually dynamic with the purpose of avoiding

confrontation or establishing dominance. The use of Grice's maxims, Speech Act Theory, and Politeness Theory provides a comprehensive picture of conversational silence and its function in pragmatic communication.

### **2.3 Social roles of conversation pauses**

The third and final area of focus is the examination of pragmatic functions of conversational silence from recent studies to outline their functions. Current research indicates that conversational silence is a dynamic and idiomatic phenomenon of oral communication that is a positive and context-rich nonverbal behavior with discourse functions (Shcherbyna and Shashkova 2019: 77). For example, one can remain silent, and while doing that, they will use facial expressions and gestures to tell a person to buzz off when an offer or a request has been rejected. It is also more mannerly to say yes and then not have your proposal implemented as opposed to rejecting it outright, hence the roundabout way of doing so.

Also, they learned that silence can also indicate nonverbal negation on a specific matter, which can act as a method of verbally not approving something but not necessarily disliking it. Silence could also be the practice of power when the speakers use silence to show defiance or refusal to participate due to being against something said (Nakane 2003: 24). The ability to employ silence as a tactic is less threatening because silence re-allocates the interactional space without overtly threatening the face of either the self or the other to the point of possible loss (Marković 2020: 172). In addition, silence can turn into a request, a signal that a reaction or an action is expected, although the expectation is verbalized. This use of silence is typical in either bureaucratic or formal relationships where the silence of an authority figure is usually a polite way of getting the subordinate into speaking further and correcting themselves (Zid 2018: 1022). In such a situation, it provides social pressure or what many people call 'lead' to carry out interaction and manage the behaviour of people.

### **3. Methods of data analysis**

The model developed for this study is the means and structure by which the nature of conversational silence, its manifestations, pragmatic approaches, and roles and purposes for communication are understood. The paper uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods of data analysis to enhance the efficacy of data analysis. The approach facilitates a fine-grained understanding of how and why conversational silence occurs in light of different avenues of social and interactional experience.

Quantitatively, the study mainly entails a qualitative analysis of conversational interactions and comes up with specific cases that correspond to different pragmatic functions of silence. By analyzing these contexts, the current research provides insight into the finer aspects of silence, as used in conversation,

identifying it as a many-faceted entity (Sorensen et al. 2024:163). While the quantitative component is based on the overall frequencies of silence, the qualitative part draws from discursive analysis that gets to the bottom of intentions or even interpretations that accompany silence.

### **3.1 The play Harold Pinter writes, the Birthday Party**

Harold Pinter, an acclaimed British Playwright, was born on the 10th of October 1930 in Hackney, London. His major contributions to the theatre include a series of significant plays for the following: *Betrayal* (1978), *The Homecoming* (1964) and *The Birthday Party* (1957) (Pinter 2013: 4). His earlier practice was confined to performing arts, but by the mid-fifties, he switched over to script writing and tried his hands on playwriting, first with *What Every Woman Knows* and then *Room in 1957*. This change emphasized him as one of the Theatre of the Absurd playwrights, which places importance on the absurdity of human life (Pinter and Nightingale, 2000:132). It is also much commented upon that Pinter's drama has a very definite style of using silence and pauses that have been labelled as the "Pinter Pause."

Initially, a characteristic feature appeared in his plays, commonly now known as the 'Pause' Pinter, based his works on understatement, minimal use of words and silence as tools of drama. In recent scholarship, Pinter's silences have been argued to act as a method by which characters allow inner turmoil and pent-up feelings that counter their proclamations (Billington 2009: 69). Pinter himself highlighted this in his famous statement at the National Student Drama Festival in 1962, where he distinguished between two types of silence: one that is the absence of speech and another that floods the environments filled with words, meaning something else. He dismissed the idea of a lack of communication and called for attention to the way the characters communicate all too well through the absence of conversation, in which they overstate the message in silence (Pinter 2013: 12). Pinter stated the following in 1962 at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol, England, regarding silence:

"There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other is when maybe a flood of words is taking place". 'Failure of communication' ... and this phrase has been to my work quite consistently, and scholars have termed the "Pinter Pause." These techniques are not merely an absence of dialogue but serve to convey the unsaid complexities and unspoken tensions of interpersonal relationships (Pinter 2013: 22). The concept of the "Pinter Pause" emerged as a defining feature in his works, where understatement, silence, and reticence were used as powerful dramatic devices. According to recent research, Pinter's silences function as a tool to expose characters' inner conflicts and unexpressed thoughts, often contradicting their spoken words (Aliwie 2025: 486). Pinter himself highlighted this in his famous statement at the National Student Drama Festival in 1962, where he distinguished between two types of silence: one that is the literal absence of speech and another that permeates the spaces filled with language, implying deeper, hidden meanings. He argued against the notion of a "failure of communication," asserting

that characters communicate “all too well” through their silences, conveying more through what remains unsaid than through explicit dialogue (Batty 2001: 291-293). Pinter stated the following in 1962 at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol, England, regarding silence:

“There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other is when a torrent of language is being employed: ‘Failure of communication’ ... The Birthday Party is far, hence one of Pinter’s most famous plays that first came into the limelight in 1958 and the first full-length play that put him onto the map for authoring that type of play known as the ‘comedy of Menace’ and the play earmarks this type” (Pinter 2013: 14). Taking place in a coastal building for a residence owned by Petey and Meg Boles and comes with an emphasis on the leading character, Stanley, a mysterious and introverted lodger who tries to escape from his past. These arise when two strangers, Goldberg and McCann, appear in Kubrick’s movie to suddenly cause a series of calamities that result in a psychological twist to the movie’s supposed birthday party for Stanley (Pinter 2013: 16). Semantic density and temporal disruptions, inoperable Batinic, death, and labyrinth fire and water make Pinter’s play even more paranoid than critics have observed.

#### **4. Text analysis**

##### **Text (1)**

MEG. Is the sun shining? He moves to the window and lights a cigarette from the packet in the breast pocket of his pajamas. What are you smoking?

STANLEY. A cigarette.

##### a. Forms of silence

1. Interactive silence: It interferes with a smooth flow of communication between two or more people.

Namely Meg and Stanley.

2. Internal silence: It is a deliberate action that he carried out with a motive by Stanley. It is also internal because no one compelled him to use silence as a means of communication.

##### **Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force**

Stanley also follows his type by getting his time to talk and then purposely declines to speak anymore. Therefore, the turn-taking becomes an unusual type of stretch of talk in the conversation and is then translated into a kind of silencing, which is treated as a kind of response that acts as an utterance in an ancillary manner.

## **b. Grice's maxims**

### **1. Quantity maxim**

Stanley violates this proverb in so far as his input is not as informative as expected; speech is expected rather than the omission of words.

**2. Quality maxim:** This maxim is adhered to since Stanley's failure to speak is a failure to say something for which there isn't enough evidence.

**3. Relation maxim:** This is because silence in Stanley is nicely observed and since silence is the element that complements said.

**4. Manner maxim:** This is so because Stanley's non-garrulousness undermines that part of the maxim, which postulates that the message should be clear and direct.

### **c. Speech act: Commissive**

The illocutionary act for which an unexpected silence stands is introduced. So, the illocutionary point is refusing. Also, the perlocutionary effect of the utterance is that Meg immediately changes topic upon observing that Stanley refused.

### **d. Felicity conditions**

**1. Propositional content condition:** Stanley silences himself in order to predicate a future act to Meg's question.

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

**3. Sincerity condition:** Even though Stanley changes the subject, Meg insists on knowing the truth, so he sarcastically tells her he loves her while trying to keep from having to say the words out loud.

**4. The essential condition:** Stanley's cup is an effort to convey to Meg that he is saying, 'I do not wish to reply to your query.'

### **e. Politeness strategy: Don't do the FTA**

Since Stanley resides from the scene silent, he refrains from carrying out the FTA. Moreover, Stanley does not just reduce the possibility of the threatening act but also tries to preclude it altogether.

### **f. Function of conversational silence: Evasion**

Here, the work of conversational silence is to avoid or ride out the unpleasantness of an interaction. Stanley would like to avoid speaking to Meg. That is, he doesn't want to respond with an answer to the question she poses directly to him. That is why he decides to remain a silent person, and when he opens his mouth, he tries to be sarcastic and indifferent.

## **Text (2)**

She sits, then takes out a tiny compact to dust her nose. LULU (handing him the compact). Are you interested in seeing what you look like? Instead, the freedom mentioned above is actually equal to the threatening freedom STANLEY himself uses to pull out from the Table.

However, you could do it with a shave, don't you?

### **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 interferes with the interlocution between at least two people, Lulu and Stanley. Also, the psycholinguistic estimated value for the interactive silence shows that the length of time is longer than the psycholinguistic silence.
- 2. Internal silence:** It is internal because it is done voluntarily, and it is an act that was deliberately brought by Stanley to the series and meant to describe his emotions and opinions.
- 3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force:** It is interesting that during his turn, Stanley decides to communicate with nobody using no words. Thus, what might happen is just the regular process of transition from one speaker to another, which becomes an extended gap within the conversation and is read as a response with access to an indirect performative force.

### **b. Grice's maxims**

- 1. Quantity maxim:** This is an area Stanley does not converge to being as informative as it is needed.
- 2. Quality maxim:** This is compiled since Stanley does not say anything that makes him tell a lie.
- 3. Relation maxim:** Stanley's silence has a bearing on what Lulu is offering.
- 4. Manner maxim:** This maxim is breached because Stanley's act is obscure as well as unclear.

### **c. Speech Act: Commissive**

A pause produces an elocutionary act in the form of an unexpected silence. Furthermore, it is possible to mention that the illocutionary force is denied as well. The perlocutionary effect is that Lulu tries to convince Stanley to embrace compact, which can also be used by males, i.e. for shaving.

### **d. Felicity Conditions**

- 1. Propositional content condition:** Stanley bet its future act on Lulu's offer by not saying anything.
- 2. Preparatory condition:** Stanley does not want to take the offer Lulu is giving him.

**3. Sincerity condition:** Stanley does not stage any pretense of yielding to Lulu's sexual advances and does not want to owe her anything.

**4. The essential condition:** That is why Stanley's silence should be considered an attempt to let Lulu know that he turned down her proposal.

**e. Politeness strategy: Speaking with positive politeness.**

Stanley uses the FTA with positive redress, although on record. H's positive image is usually compromised when one refuses an offer or a request. Hence, Stanley refuses Lulu's offer of marriage. However, he moves away from the area where she is seated, signifying rejection in some way to remove the danger posed to Lulu's positive image.

**f. Function of conversational silence: Rejection**

In this text, silence = rejection. The lack of response to an offer is considered a non-favorable reaction with the connotation that a lack of response means rejection.

Text (3)

MEG. Goldberg.

STANLEY. Goldberg?

MEG. That's right. That was one of them.

Standing up, STANLEY starts pacing towards the tableful left, indicating that he has slowly sat on it.

Do you know them?

STANLEY does not answer.

Stan, it's okay, they won't wake you up, I assure you that. I'll tell them they should be silent.

STANLEY sits still.

Richard Harrison, they won't be here long, Stan. I will still wake up early in the morning and bring it to you.

**a. Forms of silence**

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

1. Interactive silence: It interferes with a sequence between two or more individuals: Meg and Stanley, in this case.
2. **Internal silence:** Own purposely by Stanley, an intentional act deliberately fabricated.
3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force: Stanley also gets his play in the conversation and then proceeds to shut up on purpose.

**b. Grice's maxims**

1. Quantity maxim: This is breached since the information given by Stanley is not as informative as it should best be befitting the situation. For example, talking is anticipated other than being a mum.
2. Quality maxim: Stanley needs to follow this rule because when he doesn't say anything, it is because there is not enough material to communicate something.
3. Relation maxim: This maxim is also observed because Stanley's silence is pertinent to what is said.
4. Manner maxim: Stanley's act is hard to understand and interpret.

**c. Speech act: Commissive**

An act of speaking, or in the more general sense of the term, elocution, is represented by a conversational silence. Apart from that, the illocutionary point is salvation as a refusal. The perlocutionary effect is that Meg immediately continues her speaking without reformulating the question as she interprets his denial.

**d. Felicity conditions**

1. Propositional content condition: Stanley affirms a future act to Meg's question while not making any movement and not uttering a word.
2. Preparatory condition: Stanley does not want to make an answer to this question of Meg.
3. Sincerity condition: Stanley can hardly lie, and thus, he genuinely declines to answer Meg's question, not wanting to be put on the spot.
4. The essential condition: Stanley's lack of an answer is his way of telling Meg that he is not going to answer her question.

**e. Politeness strategy: Don't do the FTA**

In fact, Stanley decided not to execute the FTA and chose silence, which is where politeness theory comes into the picture. Moreover, Stanley tried to stop the possibly threatening act in the first place, not just to minimize it.

**f. Function of conversational silence: Evasion**

Conversational silence in this text is meant for evasion. Oh no, Stanley does not want Meg to know this is Goldberg, although there is no real reason why he shouldn't. In other words, he does not want to answer the question directly that she just posed. As a result, he simply does not respond and makes every effort to avoid answering Meg.

**Text (4)**

STANLEY. Could I have my glasses?

GOLDBERG. Ah yes. (He holds his hand out to MCCANN. MCCANN holds out his glasses to him.) Here they are. He offers them out to STANLEY, who stretches out 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" interlocutes or breaks the conversation among the people of two or more, in this case, Meg, Stanley, and McCann. Also, the estimated length of silent breaking of the interaction is more than the psycholinguistic pause, which is indicated by hesitation and self-corrections during the sentence constructions.
- 2. Internal silence:** This is an act done deliberately with a goal in mind 'Goldberg.' Also, it is internal because no one compelled him to do the act of request silently. Thus, the force is not external.
- 3. Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force:** Stanley's turn with Goldberg is another turn addressed to McCann, and, towards the end of it, Goldberg elects to be purposely non-communicative. In this way, turn-taking is reshaped into an elongated absence from the conversation proper and is considered to function as a speech act in its own silent right.

**b. Grice's Maxims**

- 1. Quantity maxim:** It is still not as informative as Goldberg's contribution. Especially if one expects a conversation, talk is expected each time an individual demands something other than silence.
- 2. Quality maxim:** The quality maxim complies because Goldberg maintains his silence not to relay a message that he does not believe to be true.
- 3. Relation maxim:** Goldberg's failure to speak is also part of what is said.
- 4. Manner maxim:** This is breached since Goldberg ambiguously cites the act.

**c. Speech act: Directive**

The visual presentation of the elocutionary act is intentionally marked by a trivial conversational silence accompanied by an invocation of a Body-Related Sign. The illocutionary force is phonic requesting. The perlocutionary effect is that as soon as McCann receives the impression of Goldberg's request, he hands out the glasses in the video.

**d. Felicity conditions**

- 1. Propositional content condition:** McCann, i.e., H., performs the act of requesting.
- 2. Preparatory condition:** Goldberg is confident that McCann is capable of providing him with the glasses.

**3. Sincerity condition:** Perhaps there is nothing that Goldberg honestly and sincerely wants more than for the “McCann” character to give him the glasses. Besides, it isn’t clear that McCann was going to hand over the glasses to ‘Goldberg’ without asking for them.

**4. The essential condition:** Goldberg’s silence should be regarded as an effort to force McCann to give the glasses.

**e. Politeness Strategy:** Off-Record: With his palm outstretched in McCann’s direction but without directly pointing at him, Goldberg requests the glasses without speaking.

**f. Function of conversational silence:** Request Throughout the play, Goldberg calls his associate, McCann, and orders him around, but he does this off-stage or in the presence of the other characters. He does not have to speak and may just point to the other person. Whereas in the presence of different people, they mimic a partnership between “Goldberg” and “McCann.” Consequently, in this text, the conversational silence is being transformed into a request.

## 5. Statistical analysis

Pinter employs conversational silence as a mode of communication between the characters in all four of the selected texts. The data’s acts of silence are confirmed as conversational because they take the following forms at the same time: (a) interactive, (b) internal, and (c) turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force. The three types (a, b, and c) of silence are used equally in the chosen play. In “The Birthday Party,” each type of silence is used four times, for a total of 100 percent. Table (1) and Figure (1) show the frequency and rate of the forms of silence:

Table 1. Forms of silence with frequency and percentages.

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

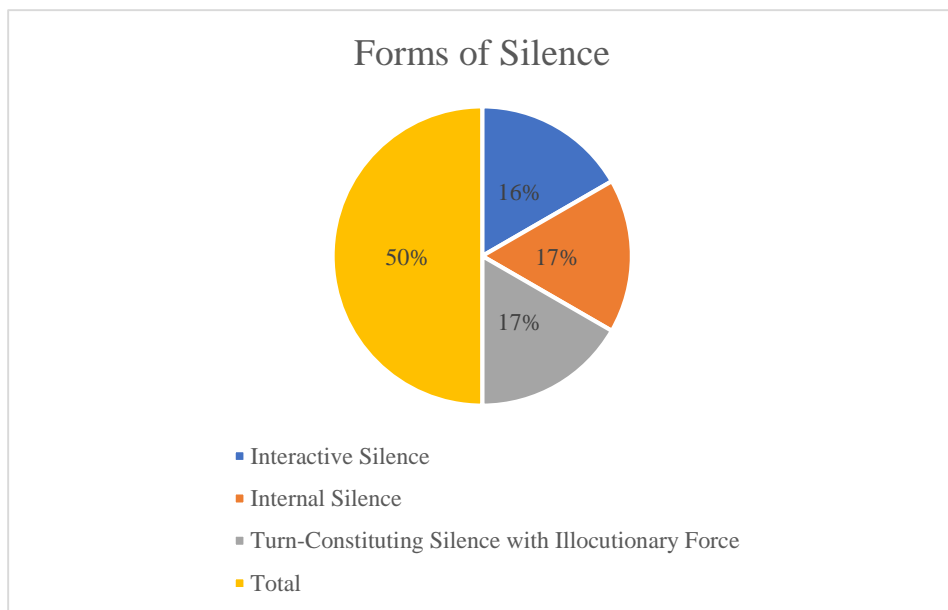


Figure 1. Rates of the forms of silence

## 5.1 Grice's maxims

In the four selected texts, silence, as used by Pinter, demonstrates a clear trend in the manner in which characters conduct themselves and communicate. Every silence in the texts is functional and of a certain structure, and every text has at least one silence with the same identification. Based on the analysis, the forms of silence can be categorized as follows (Table 2 Figure 2):

### 5.1.1 Interactive silence

Present in all four texts. This kind of silence interrupts the communication between the characters momentarily, in a way that implies there is a gestured or unspoken message.

### 5.1.2 Internal silence

Each of them is planned and purposefully made by the character, which means that it is the inner desire of the character not to reply on the verbal level. This form of silence is present throughout the texts and thus seems to be used deliberately.

**5.1.3 Turn-constituting silence with illocutionary force**

Self, temporary, controlled, designed for each text, it breaks and builds the turn in a conversation while staying silent. This non-speaking is also seen to be an act of para-speaking in equal measure; it has the force of an illocution in its own right.

Table 2. Gricean maxims utilization in the Birthday Party with percentages

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

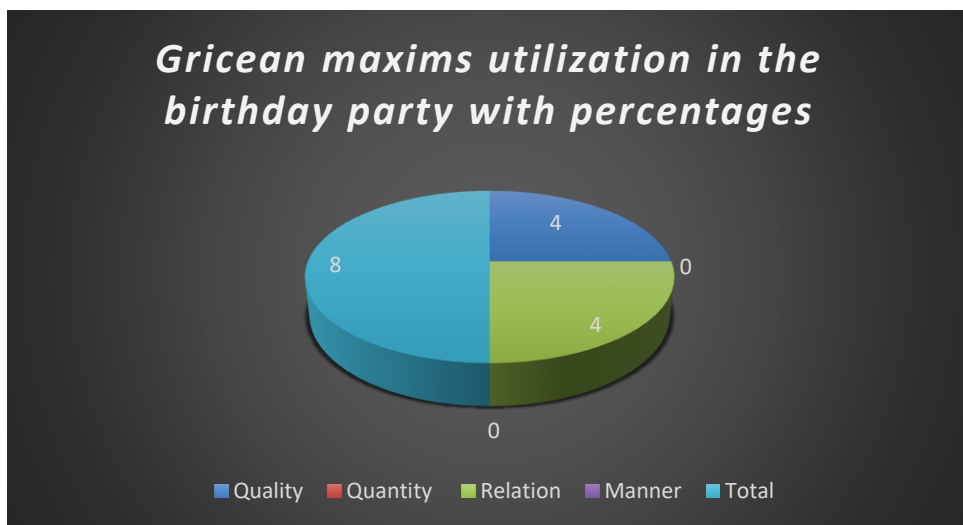


Figure 2. Rates of the violated Gricean maxims

Quantity maxim: All four texts violate this maxim in one way or the other. Instead of a word contribution, the characters are mute, and therefore, they do not bring the much-needed response.

Quality maxim: Observed in all texts. It is important to note that the lack of speaking does not convey deceit or give out misleading information.

Relation maxim: Present in all texts because this silence is related to the subject matter of the conversation.

Manner maxim: Breached in all four texts. The pars begin but they are usually not clear and explicit.

From this analysis, it can be deduced that though characters employ silence in their endeavor to ensure that their responses remain true and pertinent, their responses are often disregarding the imperative of clarity.

## 5.2 Speech acts

Table (3) and Figure (3) show the frequency and percentages of the illocutionary force of conversational silence in Pinter's chosen play. The Table and figure show that the sub-speech act of refusing is the most common illocutionary force in the chosen play. Furthermore, it is used twice in *The Birthday Party* and has a percentage score of 50 percent. It implies that Pinter primarily employs conversational silence with the illocutionary force of refusal (Table 4). Furthermore, Pinter employs the illocutionary force of rejection once through conversational silence in the data, amounting to 25 percent. Overall, commissives (both refusing and rejecting) are used three times in *The Birthday Party*, accounting for 75 percent. Furthermore, Pinter employs a directive speech act only once, achieving the illocutionary force of requesting via conversational silence (25%). Finally, Pinter does not use representatives, expressives, or declarations in any of his plays.

Table 3. Illocutionary forces conveyed by conversational silence with frequency and percentages

Grice's Maxims	Sub-Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage %
Representatives	-	0	0
Directives	Requesting	1	25
Commissives	Refusing	2	50
Expressives	Rejecting	1	25
Declarations	-	0	0
Total		4	100



Figure 3. The illocutionary forces conveyed by conversational silence

The speech acts associated with the characters’ silence are categorized as follows:

Table 4. Speech act

Text	Locutionary Act	Illocutionary Force	Perlocutionary Effect
Text 1	Unexpected silence	Refusal	Meg changes the topic
Text 2	Unexpected silence	Rejection	Lulu attempts to persuade Stanley
Text 3	Conversational silence	Refusal	Meg continues speaking
Text 4	Conversational silence + gesture	Request	McCann hands the glasses

### 5.3 Politeness

As indicated by the percentage scores in Table 5 and Figure 4, Pinter primarily uses conversational silence to implement the “don’t perform the FTA” strategy (Table 6). This strategy is used twice in the data under scrutiny, totaling 50 percent. It means that the characters in Pinter’s chosen play do not just mitigate the potentially threatening act but completely avoid it. In terms of other common

strategies, Pinter uses conversational silence to perform an act (on record with positive politeness) once in the play, amounting to 25 percent. Moreover, Pinter frequently employs the off-the-record politeness strategy, utilizing it only once (25%). Finally, neither the (bald-on-record) nor the (on-record with negative politeness) strategies were used in the selected data.

Table 5. Politeness strategies performed by Pinter's utilization of conversational silence with percentages.

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
Do not perform the FTA	2	50
Total	4	100

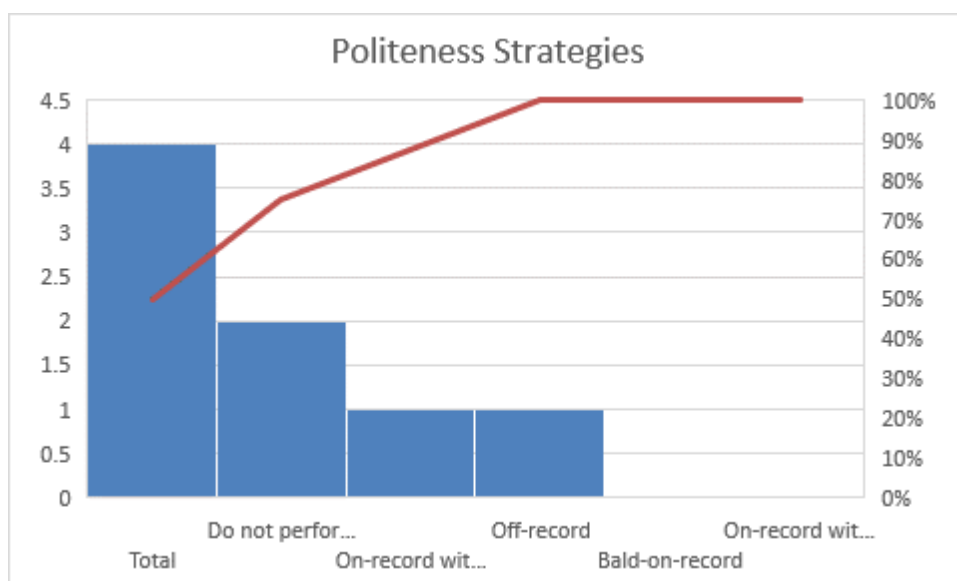


Figure 4. Histogram of the politeness strategies used in Pinter's "The Birthday Party"

The politeness strategies applied through silence vary depending on the context:

Table 6. Politeness Strategy

Text	Politeness Strategy	Description
Text 1	Don't Do the FTA	Stanley avoids performing the FTA by remaining silent.
Text 2	On-Record with Positive Politeness	Stanley indirectly rejects Lulu's offer, using positive redress.
Text 3	Don't Do the FTA	Stanley prevents the FTA by remaining silent.
Text 4	Off-Record	Goldberg indirectly requests the glasses using silence and gestures.

#### 5.4 Functions of conversational silence

To accomplish the evasion function, Pinter primarily implements conversational silence, as evidenced by the percentage scores in Table (7) and Figure (5). Pinter implements this function twice in the selected play, which accounts for fifty percent of the total. Thus, the characters of the chosen play endeavour to avoid one another by maintaining silence. Another function of conversational silence is rejection, which is employed only once in the play and accounts for 25 percent of the total (Table 8). This function is the rejection of offers, requests, or demands. In addition, conversational silence serves as a request only once, with a value of 25 percent. In addition, Pinter does not utilize conversational silence in the selected texts to convey disagreements. The Table and the Figure below illustrate the frequency and percentages of the functions of conversational silence in the selected play of Pinter:

Table 7. Functions of conversational silence with frequency and percentage.

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

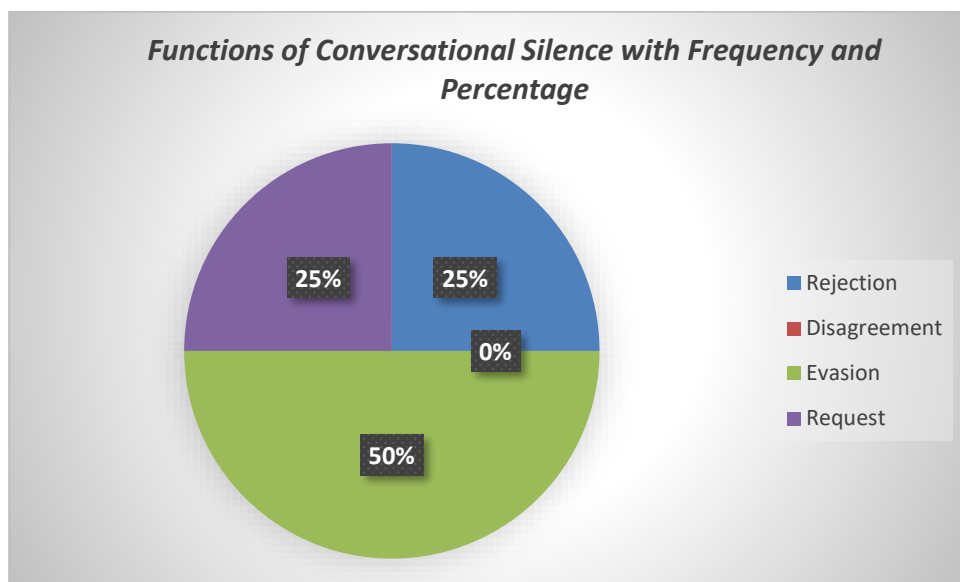


Figure 5. Rates of the functions of conversational silence

Table 8. The function of the conversational silence

Text	Function	Explanation
Text 1	Evasion	Stanley avoids answering Meg's question.
Text 2	Rejection	Stanley rejects Lulu's offer to use the compact.
Text 3	Evasion	Stanley avoids disclosing his relationship with Goldberg.
Text 4	Request	Goldberg silently requests McCann to give the glasses.

## 6. Discussion: Analyzing conversational silence and politeness in Pinter's dialogue

In the analyzed texts, Harold Pinter uses the manipulation of silence as an essential key to interpersonal communication and relationships. One-on-one silence, on conversational pauses that are generally disregarded in the conventional approaches of dialogue analysis, is explored in this work to reveal how much silence has a bearing of similar weight in displaying the occasion of feelings, power relations and strategy of conversational moves (Garcés-Báez and López-López 2020: 68). Any of the tables sketched above offers a multiple-perspective view of how silence plays out in relation to the speech acts, felicity conditions, and politeness strategies.

### **6.1 Braithwaite and Lawler's forms of silence: Exploring the connection between power and one African American woman's experience**

Classification into interactively secured silence, self-silencing, and turn-constructing silence with performative force show how the participants manipulate the conversation turn-taking. For example, the silences that Stanley produced in Text 1 and Text 3 can be analyzed as refusals, thereby changing the pattern of turn-taking. Rather than refusing the other character verbally, he uses silence as an offshoot of his spoken authority over other characters to lack interlocutors who struggle with his refusal to answer them (Pinter 2013: 13). The given case illustrates turn-constituting silence, which means that the absence of turn shifts the existing discourse into silences filled with meaning.

Moreover, in Text 4, Goldberg never speaks to McCann but offers him a nod in what can be interpreted as a kind of negative interrogative because the absence of Prosody looms large and makes the reader focus on a gesture toward the interrogated character. These manipulations of silence support the view that psychological nuances and ambivalences in conversations are constructed.

### **6.2 The principal language cooperation or cooperation: Grice's maxims and the functionality of silence**

Applying Grice's Cooperative Principle to the texts, one realizes that silences violate the Maxim of Quantity, as they do not disclose a sufficient amount of information. This intentional breach negates the communicative norms, thereby putting an accent on the psychosomatic aspects of the dialogue (Das and Choudhury 2017: 412-413). Nevertheless, these legal silences fit into this framework because they are contextually correct and, therefore, adhere to the Maxim of Relation. For instance, in text 2, Stanley's failure to respond to Lulu's offer other than 'Yes' is pragmatically valid irrespective of the dearth of information it possesses; it saves face for Stanley lest he turn off Lulu by blunt rejection.

Such a state is unveiled in the aspect of silencing, realized as the characters' accurate technique of manipulation through psychological distancing as much as distancing, as perceived by the other characters and the audience (Pinter 2013: 12). Therefore, silence itself in these interactions acts with the purpose of raising the context of spoken words to a qualitatively new level at the level of non-verbal communication.

### **6.3 Speech acts and illocutionary force: The first principle is called performing actions without words.**

The use of the theory here, known as the speech act, unveils that Pinter's silences are as effective as illocutionary speech. In Text 1, the absence of language enacted by Stanley serves as a negative of the refusal at work in an act without words to say it. This kind of void produces illocutionary storytelling in which Meg immediately changes the topic since the lack of response from him is a kind of rejection. These

are the silences without performative verbs, but they are just as sophisticated as knowing, wanting, counting, declaring, asserting or denying something.

Nowhere is such positive politeness more observable than in Text 4, where Goldberg does not speak at all, use negative politeness, or even issue a direct request. Rooting out verbal language, the character's intention is not clear, and it is on this that the whole perlocutionary effect of McCann depends (Pan 2012: 22). It underscores why Pinter can well be described as a playwright of silence – silence is a complex signifying system that intervened in the relationship between intention and interpretation.

#### **6.4 Politeness strategies: Managing face and social rank**

Pinter's characters use a number of politeness strategies, such as silence in face-threatening acts (FTAs). Looking at Texts 1 and 3, Stanley uses the Don't Do the FTA strategy very often, which avoids confrontation in the first place. It keeps his effort/milieu negatively apart or out of your way, which enables him to maintain his wish for autonomy while imposing little or no pressure upon him.

On the other hand, in Text 2, Stanley does not accept Lulu's offer on record but accepts the offer by saying that he can also give her some money. He does this in response to her offer, which is an on-record strategy, which indicates to Lulu that he is not interested in her offer, but he is polite enough not to reject her offer directly. Their strategy shows that despite the lack of clear possibilities in defining one's position and adherence to polite language when direct speech can be considered rude (Sorensen et al. 2024: 177). The off-record performances constructing Text 4: As in previous texts, Goldberg's failure to speak works face-to-face and saves face for McCann, who does not need to be reminded of his many commitments. Goldberg's silence is an example of Eminem's portrayal of stating what needs to be done without saying it and making McCann move without saying a word. Therefore, while practice remains the most used statement power strategy, silence remains the most assertive method of keeping peace and exercising power.

#### **6.5 Felicity conditions: On the nature and success of the non-verbal speech acts**

When analyzing the felicity conditions, the examined data indicate that Pinter's silences meet all the requirements of proper speech acts even though the content of such speech acts is inexpressible in words. For instance, in Text 1, silence on the part of the caller Stanley fulfils the preparatory condition (Stanley has a right to refuse to answer), the sincerity of the wish not to respond, and finally, the essential condition in Meg's understanding of his nonresponse as his refusal. An understanding of speech acts in this manner is skeptical towards the claim that linguistic enunciation is a precondition for the performance of a speech act (Sorensen et al. 2024: 182). Goldberg's failure to speak in Text 4 does the same, thus making it fulfil the felicity conditions for a request. Even McCann's act of recognition and reaction (he hands the glasses) guarantees that this silence transmits

the corresponding illocutionary force. This finding cements the role of silence as a means of communication that is fully suitable as a performative act, as all requirements are met.

### **6.6 Function of conversational silence: Psychological and pragmatic effects**

For this paper, a functional analysis of the play depicts that Pinter's use of silence extends beyond mere nonverbal communication. In Text 1, Stanley disappears, which helps him not answer questions and avoid pledging. In Text 2, his lack of response serves as him rejecting her and turning her down without having to say no directly. This kind of silence contributes to creating suspense because the audience is forced to misinterpret thoughts and characters, thus causing psychological unease (Das and Choudhury 2017: 435). In Text 4, the resistance of Goldberg's silence can switch into a pragmatic function as the request. His non-verbal cues, such as staring and posture, consequently inform McCann's next move in the commercial advertisement. Thus, the contrast of psychological and pragmatic roles can explain the multiplicity of uses of silence in the conversation.

## **7. Conclusion**

The paper has demonstrated that silence in Harold Pinter's drama is an intentional, manipulative and assertive communication tool that engages a different kind of syntax to non-silence. Interactive, internal, and turn-constituting forms of silence that Pinter uses disrupt the presuppositions about conversation and performance by presenting silence as a power that is communicative and capable of expressing actions, feelings, and interactions.

Understanding the use of Grice's Maxims, Speech Act Theory, and Politeness Strategies has provided the way through which Pinter's characters use silence in performing illocutionary acts, handling face-threatening acts, and exercising social power. In Pinter *StrMatch*, as a direct negative response, a negative response with silencing, a negative request, or a form of psychological distancing, silence is highly charged and purposeful. Thus, the felicity conditions and pragmatic functions illustrate that, even when there are no sounds and no words ever spoken, silence in these texts really is a successful speech act and often does more than words could achieve.

Therefore, the paper underscores the explication of the fact that silence is not a void of talking; it is an action that has the potential to change the direction of speaking perceptions and convey layers of messages. In this way, dialogue can be seen as one of Pinter's great miracles, not only in the choice of words but also in the choice of restraint and the original, highly effective dramatic means – silence. Analyzing silence in this respect proves helpful for the appreciation of his characters' relationships and provides essential knowledge about the strategy of speech, domination or concealed agenda.

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