

哈罗德·品特  
戏剧话语里沉默现象的  
语用文体学研究

王燕 著

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Silence in Harold  
Pinter's Dramatic Discourse  
A Pragmastylistic Perspective

中国社会科学出版社

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## Preface

Harold Pinter, the 2005 Nobel laureate in literature is widely acclaimed as “a master of silence,” who openly claims that in his drama, “There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed” ( “Writing for the Theatre” 14) . How can “a torrent of language” be silence? Moreover, silence is deemed the quintessence of the “Pinteresque” style (Carnegie) . Then what important roles does silence play in Pinter’s drama?

To answer these two questions, this book first explores the nature of silence, proves the identity of silence as an indispensable, dynamic component of language, clarifies the relations between silence and speech as well as between silence and other components of language, and ascertains the fact that silence cannot be clearly differentiated from sounds, words and noises, that the traditionally-accepted soundless, wordless state of silence is only the silence in its ideal state ( “acoustic silence” ), and that it is functional equivalence in specific contexts that turns acoustic silences and “contextual silences” into counterparts. Finally it illuminates the relations between the different varieties of silences, identifies ( ostensible ) irrelevance, indirectness and ambiguity as the three defining attributes underlying contextual silences in particular and all silences in general, and emphasizes the nonabsolute, non-essentialist nature of each attribute.

Moreover, thisbook enumerates various taxonomies of silences and concludes that, owing to the non-absoluteness of silence, it is impossible to present a neat way of categorization suitable to all, and the best way of classification can only be determined by the research goals under specific circumstances. In line

with this notion, the multifarious silences in Pinter's drama are thus divided into two categories in accordance with Pinter's own view — the acoustic and the contextual. In both categories, very detailed sub-genres are further uncovered, their statuses in and their relations with the other ingredients of Pinter's dramatic language are anatomized.

After the nature, features and norms of silence in general and silences in Pinter have been clarified, the book further investigates silences' functions in Pinter's dramatic discourse. Silences are viewed as pragmatic acts communicating ideas at two levels — the interaction among the characters and the communication from the playwright to the reader/audience. The former takes place in specific situations with the silence-rich utterances of the characters as the medium; the latter happens in broad social and cultural contexts with the silence-laden plays as the channel. The former is thus labeled as the communication at the utterance level (microscopic) within the play and the latter the communication at the discourse level (macroscopic) with the play.

At the microscopic level of communication among the characters, silences are discovered to function differently as cognitive acts facilitating thinking and reasoning, emotional acts expressing sentiments of various intensities, and intentional acts conveying illocutions of diversified natures. At the macroscopic level of communication from the playwright to the reader/audience, silences' capabilities of imparting themes, strengthening dramaticity, and generating poetic beauty are verified and exemplified. Thematically, silences convey such messages as ambiguity and mystery, menace or even atrocity, isolation and separateness. Dramatically, silences reveal character-to-character confrontations and an individual character's psychological struggles, enhance tension and suspense, and indicate the intensities of dramatic conflicts within a single play or in the oeuvre of Pinter's plays. Furthermore, silences are powerful devices in creating ambiguity and musicality, two big contributors to poetic beauty. These multiple functions of silences all testify to silences' rhetorical potential and power under Pinter's masterly deployment.

On the whole, this book is an interdisciplinary study. Its linguistic nature is displayed through the elucidation of silence's nature, attributes and forms, and the clarification of silence's position in language and relations with the other

components of language.

Moreover, with due attention to different uses of silence, this research abides by the principle of pragmatics. To theoretically account for the diversified phenomena of silences rich in associations and functions, it draws upon four theories in cognitive linguistics and pragmatics and adapts them slightly to the current needs. The Prototype Theory is used to explain the relations between language and silence, the relations between various silences, and the nature of each defining attribute of silences. The adapted Pragmatic Act Theory is utilized to serve as the theoretical framework, within which the pragmatic functions of silences in Pinter's dramatic discourse are analyzed. Moreover, the Relevance Theory is chosen as the method underlying every case of silence interpretation based on contextual clues. Furthermore, the communication model from the speaker to the hearer proposed in 1983 by Geoffrey N. Leech in *Principles of Pragmatics* is adopted and adapted to demonstrate how communication is realized through the silence-laden play text from the playwright to the reader/audience.

Additionally, to discover the occurrence pattern of silences and to verify their thematic, dramatic and poetic potentials, this research establishes a database of Pinter's complete plays, derives silences' occurrence frequencies with the aid of Microsoft Word, analyzes the interrelations between their forms, occurrences, and functions, accounts for the discrepancies between hypotheses and statistical analyses, and arrives at less impressionistic, more scientific, and thus more convincing conclusions. Moreover, a large number of figures and tables are formulated to facilitate the explications or corroborate the arguments. This kind of research approaches literary works along the linguistic axis, combines both formal and functional studies, and thus naturally falls into the realm of stylistics.

Besides, this book is also literary. The analyses are mostly confined to Pinter's dramatic discourse. The many and various silences are treated as Pinter's rhetorical strategies in fulfilling his artistic ambitions. Also, the literary trait of this research finds expression in its discussions on characterization, themes, dramatic tensions, conflicts, as well as poetic effects, and its wide-ranging references to historical backgrounds, biographical details, and critical comments. Last but not least, to validate Pinter's fame as "a master of silence" and

to accentuate Pinter's inheritance and innovation in employing silences, this book draws side-by-side comparisons and contrasts between the silences in Pinter and the silences used by other eminent playwrights.

To sum up, the current research is a product of the intermarriage of linguistics and literary criticism. In its vein flows the blood of several members from both families. Therefore, its contributions and implications are manifold:

In the realm of silence studies, it dispels the traditional misunderstanding of silence merely as the soundless, wordless state, reaffirms silence's linguistic identity, clears up its relations with the other linguistic constituents, illuminates the relations among different silences, distills the defining attributes of silence in general, manifests the specific working mechanisms of many varieties of silences with vivid tables and figures, and offers workable interpretation method and analytical paradigms for future studies of silence, especially silence in literature.

Besides, this investigation of silence in Pinter's dramatic discourse takes into account all of Pinter's dramatic works. A detailed typology of silences in Pinter is offered; investigations are conducted into the reasons for Pinter's preference to silence, the causes and effects of his stylistic changes in adopting silence, the broad and minute functions of silences at different levels of communication in his dramatic discourse, Pinter's inheritance and innovation in the art of silencing, and ultimately what makes Pinter a master of silence. In this regard, this book makes new contributions to the appreciation and interpretation of Pinter's dramaturgy and aesthetics.

Additionally, as "the neglected child", dramatic discourse has not received enough attention from literary critics and stylisticians (Culpeper, Short & Verdonk 3). Placing Pinter's drama at the focal point, this research contributes to the study of dramatic discourse. Moreover, due to the verisimilitude of Pinter's stage dialogue, this study of silence in Pinter's drama contributes not only to the studies of art and literature but also to linguistic research. To be more precise, it illuminates the understanding of silence as a communicative vehicle in real-life interpersonal interactions.

Last but not least, the current study is manifestly interdisciplinary in its investigation of the formal, semantic and functional aspects of silences in Pinter's



dramatic discourse, drawing upon some up-to-date or rarely-used theories and methods in pragmatics, stylistics and cognitive science. It is hoped that along this line it will further boost the cross-fertilization between literature and linguistics.

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# **PART ONE**

## **PRELIMINARIES**





# Chapter I Introduction

## 1.1 Research Motivations and Questions

The elements of silence can be detected more or less in every play, a written one or a live show. However, traditionally, playwrights, stressing fluency and clarity, tended to ignore or devalue silence by not marking any silence out in scripts. According to the doctrine of French classical drama, silence is destructive to a transparent language and thus is unacceptable and repelled (Loevlie 19). Some believe that “in Shakespeare’s time pauses hardly existed; the actors all spoke their lines ‘trippingly’ and didn’t observe pauses” and even in 1924 a famous actor playing Hamlet in London received “a shrewdly witty letter from Bernard Shaw, criticizing him for his many pauses” (Moore vii).

Ever since the late 19th century, however, in the Western world, the established beliefs in God, human nature, social organization, and the physical universe have been repeatedly challenged and devastatingly shaken by Darwinism, Nietzscheism, Freud’s psychological discoveries, Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, the Industrial Revolution, the Holocaust, the two World Wars, computerization, clone technology, Internet, and so on. Nothing seems to be certain, eternal, and absolute any more. Gnawed by nihilism, impermanence, alienation, bewilderment and terror, human beings are often caught short of words and, henceforward, retreat more and more to silence. Just as Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concluding remarks in *Tractatus* go, “What we can not speak about we must pass over in silence” (qtd. in Kane 17). Therefore, writers and artists increasingly resort to silence for the expression of the unclear and uncertain reality