THE USE OF LANGAUGE WITH ULTERIOR MOTIVES IN HAROLD PINTER'S PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

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IN
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This thesis analyzes how Harold Pinter's characters use language with ulterior motives: making their existence felt and acknowledged, concealing the truth, avoiding conflict or confrontation, and exerting dominance. In the dissertation, stylistics, which is the analysis of texts by means of linguistic phenomena, has been used as the method of analysis. Characters' use of language with ulterior motives has been illustrated with reference to a variety of Pinter's plays.

Keywords: Pinter, Language, Concealment, Conflict, Dominance

ÖZ

HAROLD PINTER'IN OYUNLARINDA DİLİN
GİZLİ AMAÇLARLA KULLANIMI

Kocamaner, Hikmet
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Bu çalışma, Harold Pinter'ın oyunlarındaki karakterlerin varlıklarını hissettirmek ve kabul ettirmek, gerçeği gizlemek, çatışma veya tartışmadan uzak durmak ve üstünlük kurmak gibi gizli amaçlarla dili nasıl kullandıklarını incelemektedir. Çalışmada, inceleme metodu olarak, dilbilimsel kavramların yardımıyla inceleme yapmak anlamına gelen biçembilim kullanılmıştır. Karakterlerin dili gizli amaçlarla kullanmaları, Pinter'ın birçok oyunundan yararlanılarak açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Pinter, Dil, Gizleme, Çatışma, Hakimiyet

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Harold Pinter and His Use of Language

Harold Pinter (1930-) is a very prolific writer who has a wide range of interests. He has not limited himself to the theatre; he has also written plays for the radio, TV, and the cinema. In addition to being a playwright, Pinter has also worked as an actor and a director. His involvement and experience in diverse media and his different careers have contributed to the success of his work, which is as varied as his artistic interests (Sakellaridou 1).

Critics have tried to define and classify Pinter's dramatic work throughout his career. However, such definitions and classifications of his plays may not work since Pinter has written plays in very different styles: realist, surrealist, absurdist, and lyrical. His plays were defined by his earlier critics as realistic plays that could be grouped under "the kitchen sink drama", which portrays the lifestyle of the working class in a naturalistic fashion (Dukore 4). However, it was later realized by his critics that, although Pinter's plays usually seem to be naturalistic in terms of their subject and language, it is also apparent in these plays that Pinter wishes to keep away from "the conventions or restrictions of naturalism" (Regal 1). In an interview Pinter denies his roots with realism by saying: "I'd say that what goes on in my plays is realistic, but what I'm doing is not realism" (in Regal 1). Some critics have also mentioned that although they seem to have a naturalistic style, his plays have apparent similarities to the Theatre of the Absurd (Dukore 4). For instance, in the *Theatre of the Absurd* Martin Esslin classified him among the English dramatists of the absurd.

However, these critics have overlooked the fact that, "Unlike the constantly deviant movement of gestures and speech through which the absurd is stylized, Pinter's theatre is full of life-like movement and realistic dialogue" (Misra 64). Realizing that Pinter's plays share some similarities with the Absurdists, some critics also maintained that he was influenced by Beckett, and Ianesco (Dukore 5). Pinter has declared that he admires Beckett; however, it is his novels for which Pinter had a high regard (5). Moreover, Pinter said that, before he wrote a couple of his first plays, he had not known Ianesco's work (5). In short, even though Pinter's work has a surface realism, and thematically and stylistically resembles Absurd drama, it is not possible to categorize it with such labels and claim that he is a disciple of a particular writer or playwright.

Even though critics have attempted to pigeonhole his work, and despite similarities to some writers, Harold Pinter's work is very original and unique, which is why some adjectives like "Pinterish" or "Pinteresque" are used to label his distinguishing style (Sakellaridou 1). In fact, it is commonly accepted that what makes Pinter a unique and eminent playwright is his special treatment of language. He has been praised by many critics for his ability to record ordinary speech in a very naturalistic way; the dialogues of his characters are so realistically created that they seem as if they were tape-recorded (Dukore 4). Nevertheless, there are also some critics who have condemned Pinter's language for his characters' frequent use of "mumbling, repetitiveness, poor grammar, incomplete sentences, *non sequiturs*, sudden shifts of subject matter, refusal or inability to leave a subject another character has left, and the like" (4). However, these qualities, in fact, contribute to the fact that the language of Pinter's characters sounds very much daily-like. As Hayman claims, unlike other playwrights, Pinter has realized that "real-life conversations don't proceed smoothly and logically from point to point" (qtd. in Kennedy 168).

Though his characters use a very ordinarily familiar language that can easily be observed in the street, this does not mean that the language of his plays

is ordinary or banal. According to Misra, Pinter knows the poetic value of everyday words when applied to emotional circumstances, so he tries to form ordinary language in a poetic manner (63). Moreover, as Peter Hall, director of many of Pinter's plays, claims, one cannot paraphrase the utterances of Pinter's characters, the same way one cannot paraphrase the language of Shakespeare because of these playwrights' great skill in reflecting daily speech in such an originally poetic style (in Prentice 33).

In Pinter's plays, "[t]raditional action, motivation, climax, and denouement – and time and space – have been replaced by the open-ended richness of meaning inherent in the play of words, the infinite textures and colorations that develop within complex linguistic designs" (Gordon xi). However, since the language he uses in his plays does not offer any explanatory and momentous information about his characters, some critics have accused Pinter of being confusingly obscure (Sakellaridou 2). As an answer to these accusations Pinter maintained that:

> I've never willfully hidden any piece of information out of whim or mischief. I really try to attend only to what can be said. I learn about the characters from what they say. You can't force characters to say something that would be untrue to them. (qtd. in Prentice 33)

Thus, Pinter creates characters who use a language in the same way real people talk in daily life. Like ordinary language, the language of Pinter's characters does not follow a strictly organized sequence through which they make their thoughts and feelings explicit. Esslin states that language in Pinter's dramatic world has lost its informative quality (in Merrit 142). Words are, in fact, more evocative than descriptive in nature (Misra 64).

It has been a common trend in the Western theatre, especially with the advent of the Absurdist tradition, to draw attention to "the difficulty of communication" or "the lack of communication"; Pinter has objected to this view, and changed the focus of the issue to the danger of communication (Prentice 34).

Pinter states that in his plays:

> instead of any inability to communicate, there is a deliberate evasion of communication. Communication itself between people is so frightening that rather than do that there is continual crosstalk, a continual talking about other things, rather than what is at the root of their relationship. (qtd. in Esslin 2001: 244)

In other words, Pinter is concerned with how people avoid communicating with each other due to the threat verbal contact poses for the security of the characters since people become vulnerable when they reveal their true ideas, emotions, and motives through language. In addition, though he believes in the ineffectiveness of language, Pinter, unlike the Absurdists, does not condemn it by claiming that nothing can be expressed through language. "He rather tries to explore the dramatic possibilities of low-life idiom and conversational speech, in projecting the complex psychological states of modern life" (Misra 152).

The Pinter character is usually "very inarticulate, stumbling pathetically over every second word, covering a narrow area of meaning with his utterances, chattering through his life" (Almansi and Henderson 20). The reason why Pinter's characters cannot produce a coherent expression of what they think or how they feel is that, as Pinter puts it, "The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression" (Writing for the Theatre 11). Characters' true thoughts and feelings are hidden under their seemingly meaningless and disjointed utterances. While the language used by Pinter's characters sounds incoherent and limited, in fact, it "opens up unexpected depth" (Pinter in Prentice 33). Pinter explains that one has to see the underlying meaning of his characters' statements since:

> Language […] is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken. My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore. You and I, the characters which grow on a page, most of the time we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. But it's out of

> these attributes that a language arises. A language, I repeat, where under what is said, another thing is being said. (Writing for the Theatre 13-14)

Through the inarticulate and disorganized use of language Pinter's characters give the audience some clues about their hidden motives that cannot be easily perceived at first glance. As Dukore states, the language the characters use does not necessarily reflect the truth (8). The speech heard by the audience is a signal of another speech that the audience does not hear (Writing for the Theatre 14). Thus, in Pinter's plays language expresses something other than the apparent meanings of the words uttered (Quigley in Merrit 143).

In the world of Harold Pinter where characters strive to gain tactical advantage to secure their own position, language is used with ulterior motives. Pinter has observed that the language people use is seldom free from hidden intention (Gale 124); and as Esslin states, what is important in communication is more "what people are doing to each other" by using language than the content of their statements (1987: 143). Although the language used by Pinter's characters may seem to be empty chatter, it turns out to be much more meaningful when it is realized that characters use language with ulterior motives, and that certain strategies are used (Mackean 2001). What kind of ulterior motives Pinter's characters have, and how they use language to realize these motives is very crucial in understanding how these characters struggle to secure their existence in a cruel, indifferent, and hostile world.

1.2. Aim of the Study

This dissertation aims to examine how the characters in Pinter's plays use language with ulterior motives so as to make their existence felt and acknowledged, to conceal the truth, to avoid conflict or confrontation, and to exert

dominance.

1.3. The Plays Studied

The following plays have been studied for the present study:

The Room (1957)
The Birthday Party (1957)
The Hothouse (1958)
The Caretaker (1959)
A Night Out (1959)
Night School (1960)
The Collection (1961)
The Homecoming (1964)
Victoria Station (1982)
One for the Road (1984)
Mountain Language (1984)

1.4. Method

This dissertation will make use of stylistics which requires analyses of texts with the help of certain linguistic phenomena. As Culpeper (1998a: 3) states, in order to analyze a play properly and accurately, one needs "much help from areas of linguistics – notably pragmatics and discourse analysis", since dramatic texts, especially those written in the 20th century and after, are "distinct communicative acts" rather than "simply representations or expressions of something else, some other semiotic system or text" (Birch 76). Methods based

on pragmatics, discourse analysis, or conversation analysis are often made use of to explain relationships between people; as dramatic dialogue represents the relationship between characters, these linguistic methods can be of great help in analyzing the conversations in plays (Tan 166). In addition, Pinter's plays are especially noted for their success at reflecting naturally-occurring conversations. Therefore, the choice of stylistics as the method of analysis is appropriate for the main aim of this dissertation which is to explore how Pinter's characters use language in their social interactions and to show how they manipulate language by using it with ulterior motives.

1.5. Theoretical Background

The linguistic theories that will be used in this study are the Co-operative Principle, turn taking, and politeness strategies, which are the theories commonly referred to by critics, like Culpeper, Short, Birch, Herman, and Thornborrow, who propose a stylistic analysis for the study of dramatic texts.

1.5.1. The Co-operative Principle

The Co-operative Principle is a crucial concept that helps to understand the underlying processes of communication. The language philosopher Paul Grice asserts that conversation, with regard to exchange of information, is a co-operative attempt and what keeps conversation going is an assumption that speakers have purposes for talking (in Cooper 56-57). According to Grice, speakers recognize that these purposes are more liable to be accomplished if they "co-operate" (57). The purpose of each speaker may not be shared by all the other speakers in the dialogue (57). Nonetheless, speakers presume that they have a

common purpose for talking (57). According to Grice, this supposition is an imperative that people should follow to guarantee successful communication. From this idea Grice formulated his theory called "The Co-operative Principle" which maintains that speakers should "[m]ake [their] conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [they] are engaged" (Grice 45). He develops four groups of maxims from the Co-operative Principle:

> ***Quantity***
> 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
> 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
>
> ***Quality***
> 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
> 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
>
> ***Relation***
> 1. Be relevant.
>
> ***Manner***
> 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
> 2. Avoid ambiguity
> 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
> 4. Be orderly. (45-46)

Although this principle is asserted by Grice as an imperative, in daily life people may violate it quite often (Cooper 57). This is the case especially in Pinter's plays where characters do not often share goals co-operatively and mostly use language with ulterior motives. This study will examine how Pinter's characters violate Grice's maxims of speech when their purpose is to conceal the truth and avoid conflict or confrontation.

1.5.2. Turn Management

Conversation is an interaction, and one of the most vital elements in this interaction is the concept of *the turn* which can be defined as "the enactment of a speaker's right to speak by taking an opportunity to speak in a speech event or situation" (Herman 1998:19). When a speaker starts talking, he/she "takes a turn at speech", and when one speaker finishes, the turn to speak passes to another speaker (19).

The *turn-allocational component* adjusts the switch of turns (Herman 1998: 20). Generally, turn change occurs smoothly: when one speaker finishes speaking, the next speaker takes a turn; when he/she stops, another speaker starts or the previous speaker continues talking; and so on (20). Turn-allocation occurs in two ways: either the current speaker selects the next speaker, or the next speaker starts talking without being selected (Herman 1995: 81). In general, at least two people are engaged in a dialogue, and speakers do not speak at the same time (Short 206). Everyone is instinctively aware when and how they should change turns (206). Yet, there are some violations of these turn-taking rules: sometimes a person may speak ceaselessly, letting the other no opportunity to take a turn, or someone could interrupt the current speaker's turn. Some people may even let their turn lapse by giving no response when they are addressed. That these people violate the turn-taking rules is an indication of their motives. Initiating the conversation by giving a turn to another person or selecting another speaker by ignoring the other(s) can also show that the speaker who applies these strategies use them with some intentions. "Such choices bring significant elements of meaning which can condition the content and function of what is said or meant by a speaker's speech" (Herman 1998: 24). In this study, how some Pinter characters exploit the possibilities of the turn-allocational component to make their existence recognized, to stay away from conflict, and to exercise their power will be analyzed.

The *turn-constructional component* arranges the length and linguistic style of a speaker's turn (Herman 1998: 21). Long talks necessitate compromise; in conversation speakers who will talk longer than expected generally indicate the necessity, and try to get the other's/the others' consent before taking a long turn (21). Lengthy turns "place a burden of listening" on the other participant(s) in the conversation; thus, speakers should regulate the length of their turns with caution if they do not want the listeners to get bored and bothered (21). By dominating the speech, those having "[l]ong turns also block access to the floor for other potential speakers" (21). Thus, taking a long turn at a speech "can function as a ploy for dominance, exclusion or coercion" (21), or as an indication of the speaker's yearning for recognition. When a speaker gives the turn to another person, and that person's turn is short, this may imply his/her lack of concern (21-22). The linguistic texture of the speaker's turn is also significant as it gives a lot of clues to how that person feels and what his intention is during that speech (Bennison 70). Whether the speaker is repetitive or hesitant, and his/her use of terminology or jargon can also be analyzed to check the underlying meaning of a person's utterances (Bennison, Herman, and Birch). How the characters construct their turns by adjusting the length and the linguistic style of their turn in order to have their existence felt, to hide the truth, to avoid disagreement, and to wield domination will be analyzed in this study.

Another component of the conversational turn is its *topic*. Usually speakers work in harmony to "initiate, develop, close or change topics via the course of talk" (Herman, 1998: 22). For instance, when a speaker initiates talk by asking a question, the next speaker provides an answer. After that, they can go on with the same topic or the turn-holder can change the topic by asking another question or making a statement on another topic to which the next speaker will respond. However, *turn skips* are also possible when one speaker does not comply with the previous speaker's concerns, and chooses to skip the other's turn (22). Topic change may imply that the one who skips the other's turn is not co-

operative as he is more concerned with his own interests. This study will try to show how some of Pinter's characters make use of topic change as a ploy for being successful in masking the truth and staying away from clashing with others.

Herman suggests that:

> [w]hile analysing the turn in a conversation, one may take the following into consideration: a) who speaks to whom, b)who is not spoken to, c) who listens or doesn't listen, d) whether listeners are responsive in turn, or not, e) whether those who respond are those targeted by the speaker, or not, f) length of speeches, g) linguistic style and texture of a character's speech, h) how change-overs are effected, i) the use of silences, either intra- or inter-turn. (1998: 25)

The turns of Pinter's characters will be studied in the light of these suggestions to show that the characters in Harold Pinter's plays exploit language with ulterior motives.

1.5.3. Politeness

Many studies have proven that linguistic politeness can be made use of to elucidate "literary critical issues" (e.g. Leech, Simpson, and Bennison) (Culpeper 1998b: 83). Politeness is about the tactical exploitation of language and fulfilling one's motives by uttering what is "socially appropriate" (83). Because politeness is a significant feature of human communication, it is also useful for the analysis of plays since dramatic texts are representations of real-life interactions (Short 212).

Perhaps the most celebrated description of politeness is the one provided by Brown and Levinson (212). According to them, politeness is a collective phenomenon which influences "linguistic and other social behaviour" (212). Brown and Levinson explain politeness with respect to the concept of *face*. "In the everyday sense of the word, face is involved in notions such as reputation, prestige, and self-esteem" (Culpeper 1998b: 84). Brown and Levinson define

face, and differentiate between two types of face wants:

> all competent adult members of a society have (and know each other to have) 'face', the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two relating aspects:
>
> (a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition
>
> (b) positive face: the positive consistent self image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (61)

In other words, *positive face* refers to people's wish to have others recognize their existence, support their ideas, or respect them and what they say while *negative face* is their "want to be unimpeded" (Culpeper 1998b: 84).

Although people may not wish to assault the face of others, they often fail to avoid threatening the other people's face (84). "For example, requests typically threaten negative face; criticism typically threatens positive face" (84). These kinds of statements are called face threatening acts (FTAs) (84). When the speaker feels that he might be threatening the addressee's face, he/she tries to be polite in order to minimize the face threatening quality of his statement (Short 212). Although the most acceptable thing would be to give up the FTA, the speakers usually do not prefer this option since otherwise they would be less likely to realize their motives (Sell 212). Thus, they produce some politeness strategies so that they would not upset the addressee. As Herman suggests, "in general it is in everyone's best interests to respect others' 'face', which provides the reciprocity needed for face maintenance in the interests of all, everyone's face being dependent on everybody else's being respected, since face threat could result in counter-threat" (1995: 190). According to Brown and Levinson, the politest strategy is the "off-record (indirect)" strategy which veils the FTA by using "metaphor, irony, understatement, hints, and so on" so that the addressee is not affected by it so much (Sell 212). There are also "on-record (direct)"

politeness strategies through which speakers commit the FTA more directly (212). Brown and Levinson group these strategies as “positive politeness” and “negative politeness”. While positive politeness aims at securing the addressee’s positive face, that is his/her wish to be appreciated and admired, negative politeness is implemented to save his/her negative face, that is his/her wish for not being disturbed (70).

What is significant for the study of dramatic texts are the politeness strategies that are implemented to preserve or intimidate other people’s face as these tactics signify “the degree of co-operation and conflict which characters may be involved in” (Birch 60). These strategies will be of great help in realizing “how characters position themselves in relation to the other characters” (Culpeper 1998b: 83). It will be useful especially in explaining how characters ingratiate themselves with others (83). In this thesis, politeness strategies will be referred to in order to explain how some of Pinter’s characters try to avoid conflict or confrontation with others.

CHAPTER 2

MAKING ONE'S EXISTENCE FELT AND ACKNOWLEDGED

Communication allows people to interact with each other both mentally and emotionally. This interaction makes it possible for the speakers to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. In other words, communication is a crucial means of interaction through which speakers acknowledge each other's existence as human beings. In Pinter's plays, "The ability to communicate is […] equated with civilization, even the possessions of a claim to being human" (Esslin 1987: 152). In Pinter's world where characters strive to attest their existence as civilized human beings, they see verbal exchange as a powerful means to have their voice heard, thus to have their existence confirmed by another voice/other voices. How some of Pinter's characters exploit language as a means of having others acknowledge their existence will be shown in this chapter by making use of the turn management rules.

2.1. Turn Management

Analyzing a character's turn in a conversation gives a great deal of hints about the nature of that character and his/her motives (Herman 1998: 24). Conversation is a mutual exchange through which speakers maintain social contact. Some Pinter characters regard this exchange as an occasion to verify their existence as social beings. Thus, examining the way the turns of some Pinter characters are allocated and how they use language during their turns will be helpful in appreciating how these characters attempt to attract others' attention to

their existence through language.

2.1.1. Turn-allocational Component

Turn-allocational component refers to the way the turn to talk in a conversation goes from one speaker to the next. Turn-allocation occurs in two ways: either the current speaker selects the next speaker or the next speaker starts without being selected (Herman 1995: 81). Sometimes, a person who is eager to talk with another person addresses him/her so as to make a contact with that person. In addressing that person, who will be the next speaker in the exchange, the speaker may use some opening tactics such as greeting, "Good morning", "Hello", etc., or asking a question, "How are you?", "What time is it?", etc. These initial utterances do not usually require or seek for information or an opinion as a response. They rather have a "phatic function"; that is, they are used for establishing contact (Almansi and Henderson 34-5, Crystal 286). There are also some people who interrupt a conversation to be included in it. By taking the turn without being selected as the next speaker, these people aim to attract the others' attention to their presence.

Some of Pinter's characters exploit the strategy of initiating a conversation as they believe that talking to and being listened to by someone attest to their existence. As Almansi and Henderson have observed, the phatic form of conversation is a regular opening strategy used in some of Pinter's early plays, like *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*, where there is a talkative character, often a female, and a taciturn companion with whom the garrulous character strives to establish a mutual exchange (35).

The Room, Pinter's first play, depicts a woman character, Rose, who continuously talks so as to convince herself and her husband that she exists. Her incessant talk is an unconscious ploy by means of which she aims to fill the

silence caused by the insensitivity of her husband Bert, the very example of "Pinter's laconic males [who] tend to hide behind their propped-up newspapers, reading out the occasional snippet" (Almansi and Henderson 38). According to Sacks, the tendency to fill silence after one starts talking stems from one's unconscious awareness of the turn-taking rules (in Burton 78). He claims that, once a speaker starts talking, she/he may continue when no one takes the turn to speak since she/he is aware of the turn-taking rule that the next speaker should take a turn when the speaker finishes (78). When turn-allocation suffers due to the next speaker staying mute, the verbal one feels the need to fill in the silence. Silence is not wanted by the speaker who has initiated the conversation since it indicates the addressee's rejection of a contact with the speaker and thus his/her denial of the speaker's presence. So, sometimes people speak just for the sake of speaking. In fact, "[e]mpty chatting possesses an existential fullness when a comment upon the weather, or about the routine of daily life, disguises a fundamental question: 'Do you know that I exist?' or 'I do exist. What about you?'". (Almansi and Henderson 41).

So, no matter how indifferent her husband is, Rose continues talking unremittingly for fear that her very existence would be denied. Although her speech gives some insight into her personality, it can indeed be considered as mere chatter or even empty talk which only aims at sharing a bond rather than exchanging information or opinions. For example, commenting on the weather may act as an effective means of forming a social contact as the weather is a common topic about which everyone has something to say (Crystal 286). Rose exploits this tactic several times so as to engage Bert in conversation:

> It's very cold out, I can tell you. It's murder. […] It was a good [rasher], I know, but not as good as the last lot I got in. It's the weather. […] It's got ice on the roads. […] But it's cold. It's really cold today, chilly. […] You know what though? It looks a bit better. It's not so windy. (*The Room* 101, 102, 104)

Although her preoccupation with the weather may be due to her fear of the

outside world as opposed to her feeling of safety in the room, it also serves as a consistent strategy that she uses throughout her monologue in order to establish a topic on which Bert would have something to say. Yet, her attempts are futile as she never receives a response from her reticent husband.

The Birthday Party opens with silence that is soon broken by Meg's question "Is that you, Petey?" (19), which is heard offstage. This question which breaks the silence is quite significant as an opening gambit for conversation as it signals Meg's desire for contact with and her wish for recognition from her husband. That Meg's voice is heard offstage and her physical absence at the beginning of the play further highlights her absence in Petey's world. Her question is phatic rather than genuine as it does not aim at getting information or opinion from the addressee. It is rather a cry for being noticed. Nevertheless, her husband is quite indifferent to her cry and does not respond to her question. Meg does not give up her attempt to establish contact until Petey eventually replies her question, "Petey, is that you? *Pause*. Petey?" (19). However, Petey's reply is a crude one implying that he is irritated by her questioning and her presence: "What?" (19). So, Meg repeats her question one more time and finally gets the answer she is looking forward to: "Yes, it's me" (19). Soon after this answer, "*her face appears at the* [kitchen] *hatch*" (19). Her partial appearance on the stage is quite noteworthy as it signifies that her existence has now been verified as her wish for contact has been accomplished.

Nonetheless, Meg does not give up. She still insists on her game of questioning: "What? […] Are you back?" (19). Her insistence on her meaningless questions, which do not aim at getting information, in fact acts as an example of Pinter's view of verbal communication as "'a constant stratagem to cover [the] nakedness' of a vacuous existence" (Almansi and Henderson 42). When her wish for recognition is not fulfilled due to her husband's unconcern for her, she continues with her barrage of meaningless questions. As her husband starts reading the newspaper while eating his cornflakes, Meg starts to shower him with

her empty questions: “Are they nice? […] You got your paper? […] Is it good? […] What does it say? […] Will you tell me when you come to something good?”, and so on (*The Birthday Party* 19-20). Her questions are in fact “silly questions either to which one knows the answers already, or which one phrases in such a way that answers are impossible to give” (Almansi and Henderson 38). For instance, it is quite pointless to ask whether Petey has got his newspaper since, as it says in the stage directions, he has propped up his newspaper. No matter how hard Meg tries to open up the conversation, Petey cuts it short by giving terse replies:

> MEG. […] You got your paper?
> PETEY. Yes.
> MEG. Is it good?
> PETEY. Not bad.
> MEG. What does it say?
> PETEY. Nothing much. (*The Birthday Party* 19-20)

His laconic replies imply that Petey is reluctant to engage in a conversation with her and thus ignores her presence. According to Quigley, if a speaker replies against the expectations of the previous speaker, this may mean that he/she refuses to adopt his/her role in the relationship as it is expected by the first speaker (in Dukore 1982: 58). As Petey’s replies are too short to satisfy Meg’s request for contact, Meg continues her barrage of frivolous questions that act as a ploy to continue the conversation. Most of the questions are empty ones aiming at filling the void between husband and wife.

Meg also uses the same tactic Rose uses in *The Room* in an effort to create something to talk about rather than remaining silent. Her first enquiry about the weather is answered with a very abrupt reply; clearly her husband is not willing to talk to her:

> MEG. Is it nice out?
> PETEY. Very nice. (20)

Later, she asks him whether it was dark when he left home for work. This question is a good example of the ruses she uses to engage Petey in conversation

as it raises an issue that will cause disagreement, thus something to talk about:

> MEG. Was it dark?
> PETEY. No, it was light.
> MEG. […] But sometimes you go out in the morning and it's dark.
> PETEY. That's in the winter.
> MEG. Oh, in winter.
> PETEY. Yes, it gets light later in winter.
> MEG. Oh. (21)

Although it seems to serve the purpose of exchanging information, this extract is in fact an example of empty talk. Meg surely should know that it gets lighter later in winter; nonetheless, by pretending not to know this common knowledge, Meg succeeds in having a longer, though not fuller, piece of conversation. In this way, she enjoys the relief of being listened to by her husband no matter how ridiculous a situation she puts herself into.

In Pinter's early plays, male characters are also inclined to chatter for the purpose of having their presence confirmed by another voice (Almansi and Henderson 38). In *The Birthday Party,* Stanley, the lodger who stays at Meg and Pete's boarding house, uses the same tactic as Meg's in order to initiate conversation with Petey at the breakfast table. Like Meg, he also gives Petey the turn to speak by enquiring him about the weather:

> STANLEY. What's it like out today?
> PETEY. Very nice.
> STANLEY. Warm?
> PETEY. Well, there's a good breeze blowing.
> STANLEY. Cold?
> PETEY. No, no, I wouldn't say it was cold. (24)

Although there is no explicit clue to whether Stanley feels ignored by Petey, it is significant that in the entire play there are only two direct exchanges between them, both of which are initiated by Stanley. The other example is also a shallow talk. When Meg serves fried bread at breakfast, Stanley asks Petey what it is. Of course, the answer is quite self-evident: "Fried bread" (25). As this is the last piece of dialogue between Petey and Stanley, it could be assumed that Petey does

not respond to Stanley's need to be acknowledged.

Taking a turn in a conversation without being addressed as the next speaker is also used by some of Pinter's characters who yearn for having their presence felt by others. By interrupting a current conversation, these characters express their demand for recognition. In *A Night Out*, Old Man, who leans at the corner of the coffee stall where Kedge and Seeley, two colleagues, wait for their friend Albert, exploits the turn-allocation strategies so as to have others become aware of him. He joins the conversation without being selected by the current speaker(s) as the next speaker in turn. When Kedge and Seeley finish giving orders to the barman and start talking about the food to be served at the party they will attend, Old man interjects to attract their attention: "Eh! [*They turn to him*] Your mate was by here not long ago" (286). After making Kedge and Seeley notice him, Old Man does not wish to lose the opportunity to continue the conversation. Thus, he gives insufficient information about the identity of the person he has mentioned, enabling further opportunity for a turn to be given to him. He succeeds in having this chance as Seeley asks him: "Which mate?" (286). Yet, he still does not give their friend's name: "He had a cup of tea, didn't he, Fred? Sitting over there he was, on the bench. He said he was going home to change but to tell you he'd be back" (287). After he has been given another turn to speak, he selects Fred, the barman, as the next speaker by asking Fred to back him up. In this way, he would involve into the conversation another voice that would further reinforce his existence, but Barman ignores him. When Barman interrupts Old Man to hand Kedge and Seeley the change, Old Man cuts in again: "Anyway, he told me to tell you when I see you he was coming back" (287). Kedge, by thanking Old Man, signals that he wishes to stop the dialogue, and Seeley and Kedge go on with their exchange ignoring him; however, Old Man interrupts one more time since he does not wish to be excluded:

> KEDGE. Thanks very much.
> SEELEY. Well, I hope he won't be long. I don't want to miss the booze.
> KEDGE. You think there will be much there, do you?

> OLD MAN. Yes, he was sitting over there.
> KEDGE. Who was?
> OLD MAN. Your mate.
> SEELEY. Oh yes.
> OLD MAN. Yes, sitting over there he was. Took his cup of tea and went and sat down, didn't he Fred? He sat there looking very compressed with himself.
> KEDGE. Very what?
> OLD MAN. Compressed. I thought he was looking compressed, didn't you, Fred? (287)

As he does not have much to share with Kedge and Seeley, the information he has given during his turns so far is not of crucial importance. Nevertheless, this time he tries to make additional contribution into the conversation by stating his opinion about the way their friend looked. By doing so, he aims to attract their attention and thus engage them in a longer piece of exchange. However, his attempt to get into a conversation is yet again fruitless as Seeley finds the information Old Man gives unimportant, and selects Kedge as the next speaker: "No wonder. What about that game on Saturday, eh?" (287). At the end of the scene, Old Man decides to have yet another shot at drawing their attention; he jumps in without being chosen as the next speaker: "Yes, he was sitting over where you are now, wasn't he, Fred? Looking very compressed with himself. Light-haired bloke, ain't he?" (290). By asking for confirmation about the hair color of their friend, Old Man gives the turn to either of the speakers. Seeley is the one that answers him: "Yes, light-haired" (290). Although there is no clue to whether the conversation will continue, as Seeley's is the last utterance of this scene, the tactic of giving the turn to speak to another finally enables Old Man to get a reciprocal voice to confirm his presence.

2.1.2. Turn-constructional Component

The turn-constructional component focuses on the length and the linguistic style of a speaker's turn. In this context, the turn-constructional component of a character's turn in speech is significant in that it provides crucial information about that character's demand of others to acknowledge his/her presence.

The first significant aspect of the construction of a character's turn is its length. The character who wishes to maintain a social contact by opening a conversation feels frustrated when his/her effort is met with no response from the addressee. In such a situation, the character, in his/her anxiety to avoid the silence, uses a very lengthy speech pattern. As Malinowski suggests, "speech is the intimate correlate of [man's gregarious nature], for, to natural man, another man's silence is not a reassuring factor, but, on the contrary, something alarming and dangerous" (qtd. in Burton 22). Silence is alarming and dangerous because it simply means the addressee's negation of the speaker's existence. Thus, to get rid of silence and with the hope to engage the other in conversation, the character begging for recognition may talk for a very long time during his/her turn. The most significant example of a characters use of long turns is the opening scene of *The Room*. The play opens with Rose striving to have a conversation with Bert, who remains silent and does not respond to Rose even with a single word. Rose, in an attempt to prevent the silence, talks incessantly. She only stops addressing Bert when Mr. Kidd, their landlord, comes to visit. In the 1985 Methuen edition of Pinter's *Plays: One*, Rose's turn takes about three and a half pages. In spite of receiving no response from her partner, she does not give up blabbering for fear that she might get lost in silence. She tries to convince herself and her husband that she does exist due to the mere fact that she has a voice.

Characters do not always hold the floor for a long period of time only when they receive no response. They also tend to have long turns when they wish to express themselves as a result of their desire for further recognition. Lamb, in

The Hothouse, is the epitome of these loquacious characters. Lamb is introduced into the play as a character who is overjoyed to have had the chance to play table tennis with Miss Cutts, a female colleague who is superior in rank:

> I must say I got the surprise of my life, you know, when you came up to me this morning and asked me if I played table tennis. What I mean is, considering we've never spoken to each other before. […] It was really very nice of you. (212)

As a person whose job is to check the locks of the patients' rooms in the asylum, Lamb does not socialize with his co-workers very often. So, when he socializes with such a superior as Cutts, Lamb considers this an opportunity to express his very self. When he asks Cutts a mundane question about how she gets on with Mr. Roote, the head of the mental institution, her brief answer, "Oh, such a charming person. So genuine." (212) is enough to provide him with the courage to continue talking. So, he takes the floor one more time, and enjoys the opportunity of expressing his identity:

> I'm a very energetic sort of chap, you know. Tremendous mental energy. I'm the sort of chap who's always *thinking* – you know what I mean? Then, when I've thought about something, I like to put it into action. I mean, I think a lot about the patients, you see (212).

The topic of Mr. Roote is just an opening gambit; Lamb suddenly changes the focus of the talk to his likable qualities. By bragging, Lamb aims to attract Cutts's attention to the fact that he is worth to be considered as a resourceful colleague. When the size of the turns of Cutts and Lamb are compared, a relationship reminiscent of the relationship between wives and husbands in Pinter's early plays emerges; however, this time the roles are reversed. While Lamb, the male character, is the chatty one, Miss Cutts is the reticent partner who is not very interested in the talkative character. Yet, the voluble character does not leave the floor once he is given the opportunity as he wishes to exploit this chance of interaction to the fullest extent. For instance, when Cutts gives him the turn to speak by asking him whether they have seen Gibbs, he soon deviates from the

question and holds the floor for a very long time:

> I haven't.
> *Pause*.
> You know, I … I haven't really got used to this place.
> *Pause.*
> Do you know what I mean? I wouldn't say this to anyone else, but you, of course. The fact is, I haven't made much contact with any of the others. […] I mean, my job, for instance. I have to see that all the gates are locked outside the building and that all the patients' doors are locked inside the building. It gives me exercise, I'll say that. It takes me two hours and six seconds, approximately, to try every gate and every door, then I can stand still for ten minutes, then off I go again. I have the regulation breaks, of course – but in between locks – it gives me time to think, and mostly I think about the patients. I get some very good ideas while I think, honestly. As a matter of fact, I hear one receives a little token of esteem, sometimes – I mean after a certain period. I've got a feeling that mine's almost due.
> *Pause*.
> Perhaps it might even be a promotion.
> *Pause*.
> Quite frankly, I can't make much more progress with this job I was allocated. There's not enough scope. I wish I could deal with the patients – directly. I've thought out a number of schemes, you know, ideas, for a really constructive, progressive approach to the patients – in fact, I've sent them into the office. (213-215)

After briefly answering the question he has been asked, Lamb starts talking about his lack of contact with others, his duties in the institution, his wish for getting promoted, and his attempts to deal with the patients directly. All of these are issues that have an existential significance for him as an employee who does not have any direct contact with other people. By articulating these matters, Lamb desires Miss Cutts to empathize with him. In this way, he would persuade himself that he exists as a noteworthy person in his work environment. Yet, no matter how hard he tries at taking long turns to express his concerns, Cutts does not seem to be interested in them at all. Even when Lamb introduces a new topic by asking her advice on to whom he should have directed the patients, Cutts still does not respond. After looking at her watch, she stands up to leave and says: "Will you

excuse me? I'm afraid I have an appointment" (215).

The other important element of the turn-constructional component of a character's turn is its linguistic texture. What kind of words a character uses and how he/she speaks give crucial hints about that character. For instance, when a character longs for having his/her presence acknowledged, he/she is usually repetitive in terms of linguistic style. Meg, in *The Birthday Party*, who longs to be appreciated for her services as a housewife and the hostess of the boarding house, is repetitive, especially in her questions that seek praise. Her demand for praise is also a sign of her wish to have her presence and importance in the house confirmed by its other residents. The first occupant whom Meg asks for appreciation is her husband Petey. After Meg serves Petey a bowl of cornflakes, she asks him:

> MEG. […] Are they nice?
> PETEY. Very nice.
> MEG. I thought they'd be nice. (19)

When Petey states that he has finished his cornflakes, Meg repeats her question again: "Were they nice?" (21). Petey's answer is the same as in the previous occasion: "Very nice" (21). The way she repeats the question, especially the word "nice", is a clue about her hidden motive of having her importance accepted. As Brown has pointed out, "cornflakes are not likely to vary in themselves and therefore her question may sound like a challenge, asking for attention or praise, rather than a genuine inquiry" (88). Her response to Petey's answer "Very nice" verifies Brown's observation: "I thought they'd be nice" (*The Birthday Party* 19) is to verify her good choice. Petey's automatic reply implies that he has no intention of getting into a conversation; however, Meg does not realize this. Now, she wants more confirmation, this time from Stanley, their only boarder:

> MEG. What are the cornflakes like, Stan?
> STANLEY. Horrible.
> MEG. Those flakes? Those lovely flakes? You're a liar, a little liar. They're refreshing. It says so. For people when they get up late. (24)

Meg is terribly disturbed when she gets a negative response from Stanley since she perceives this as an assault to her identity as an admirable hostess.

Counting the words a character tends to repeat during his/her conversational turn helps to understand what that character is preoccupied with. For instance, the number of "I"s repeated in Rose's monologue in the opening scene of *The Room* gives significant clues about her concern for her self. Although she seems to be caring only for her husband throughout her long-winded monologue, her preoccupation with herself is obvious in her statements:

> Anyway, I haven't been out. I haven't been so well. I didn't feel up to it. Still, I'm much better today. I don't know about you though. I don't know whether you ought to go out. I mean, you shouldn't, straight after you've been laid up. Still. Don't worry, Bert. You go. You won't be long. […] It's good you were up here, I can tell you. […] Oh, I've left the tea. I've left the tea standing. […] Here you are. Drink it down. I'll wait for mine. Anyway, I'll have it a bit stronger. (102-103)

In this extract, Rose uses "I" twelve times. Rose is striving for self-expression and recognition by her silent and insensitive husband. By repeating "I" several times, she aims not only to attract Bert's attention to herself but also to express her feelings, thoughts, ideas, deeds, and preferences as an individual.

Another element that should be taken into consideration in the construction of a character's turn in a dialogue is his/her use of pauses. According to Benston, pauses are used by dramatists to show a character's attempt "to represent a self to another" or to establish a meaningful connection with his/her surrounding (112). In *The Homecoming,* the following speech by Max is constructed as a monologue with pauses at certain instances. Here, there is yet another example of the relationship between a voluble character and a silent one. This time the relationship is between a father and a son rather than a husband and a wife; the motive of the talkative character is the same: to make his presence felt. Max is a very old man ignored by his son Lenny, who despises him. When Max insists on asking Lenny about the whereabouts of the scissors since he has

received no reply previously , Lenny answers very rudely: “Why don’t you shut up, you daft prat?” (15). Having got such a retort from his son, Max first gets infuriated, but later tries to reach out to him. Although Lenny is still unresponsive, Max clings to his monologue that gives significant hints about his yearning for consideration. In his speech, each pause indicates a new move towards his intention of making his voice heard:

> Don’t you talk to me like that. I’m warning you.
> *He sits in large armchair.*
> There’s an advertisement in the paper about flannel vests. Cut price. Navy surplus. I could do with a few of them.
> *Pause*.
> I think I’ll have a fag. Give me a fag.
> *Pause*.
> I just asked you to give me a cigarette.
> *Pause*.
> Look what I’m lumbered with.
> *He takes a crumbled cigarette from his pocket*.
> I’m getting old, my word of honour. (15-16)

First, to assert his authority as his father, he warns Lenny to watch his language. Then, he tries to attract his son’s attention to his need of a vest. After a brief pause, he asks Lenny to give him a cigarette. With each new need, he is hoping to get Lenny interested in him. Yet, Lenny is indifferent to his father’s needs. Max now tries to win his son’s sympathy by stating that he is becoming an old man. Realizing that Lenny is still not interested in his concerns as an old man, Max tries to draw his attention by talking about his unruly days of youth after lighting his cigarette:

> You think I wasn’t a tearaway? I could have taken care of you, twice over. I’m still strong. You ask your Uncle Sam what I was. But at the same time I always had a kind heart. Always.
> *Pause*.
> I used to knock about with a man called MacGregor. I called him Mac. You remember Mac? Eh?
> *Pause*.
> Huhh! We were two of the worst hated men in the West End of London. I tell you, I still got the scars. We’d walk into a place, the whole room’d stand up, they’d make way to let us pass. You never

heard such silence. (16)

In order to win his son's respect, Max uses a rather ironic strategy. Being aware that his son will not comply with his needs, he reverts to talking about his infamous past deeds. Max thinks that his stories as an unruly young man would bond him to another young man, his son Lenny, so that he would finally take notice of his father.

No matter how much Pinter's characters long for asserting themselves and establishing their existence, their attempts are wasted in a world where language leads to loneliness rather than solidarity. "Isolation is the common fate of Pinter characters; it is part of the insecurity of their world that they should be alone" (Sykes qtd. in Cahn 4). When their call for recognition is not answered, the characters who hope to establish a bond through language realize that their efforts are pathetic exercises. Nevertheless, they do not give up since trying to have the others accept their presence has become the ultimate goal of their existence.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEALING THE TRUTH

Harold Pinter's plays usually depict a world where the feeling of insecurity is the ultimate fear of its inhabitants. Although it is commonly believed that communication is a mutual activity which aims at bringing the interlocutors together by forming a social bond, in Pinter, interacting with others poses a potential threat for the well-being of the characters. In order not to endanger their welfare, characters mostly tend to evade communicating with others. Yet, sometimes they cannot escape interaction. When verbal contact is inevitable, they try to find a way not to give their feelings and intentions away for fear that they will be at a great disadvantage once their motives are known (Hall 126). As Stendhal has mentioned in *The Red and the Black*, "man was gifted with speech to help him conceal his thoughts" (qtd in Hollis 15). The characters in Pinter's plays are quite aware of this gift and use it as a protective device to defend their position and as a source of avoidance to cover truth (Billington 124). How some of Pinter's characters use language with the intention of concealing the truth will be explained in this chapter by making use of some linguistic concepts, like turn management and Grice's co-operative principle.

3.1. Turn Management

Communication is maintained as each speaker takes a turn during a conversation, and analysis of a speaker's turn can give important clues about that speaker's character and his/her hidden motives (Herman 1998: 24). The characters sometimes exploit the turn management conventions to avoid revealing

their true selves.

3.1.1. Turn-constructional component

The linguistic style of a speaker's turn gives a lot of ideas about how that character feels and the underlying meaning of his/her remark (Bennison 70). How a character uses language in his/her turn is of particular significance since the linguistic texture of a character's turn comprises some qualities, such as hesitation, repetition, and association, which altogether imply that something is being covered up.

Characters' language is at times full of hesitation especially when they are confronted with an issue or question they try to avoid. Their fumbling implies that they are striving for a way to maintain their pretension (Misra 80). Their groping for a better way of expression underlies the fact that they are trying to hide the truth from the person they are supposed to respond to with an accurate remark. In Pinter's plays, hesitation is shown in the form of *three dots* within a character's utterance. According to Hall, a reputable director of Pinter plays, the use of *three dots* in Pinter's plays indicates "a search for a word, a momentary incoherence" (Hall 126). Therefore, an analysis of hesitations in the form of *three dots* will give an insight into how moments of hesitation helps the characters realize their aim of covering the truth.

A clear example of the use of fumbling as an attempt to obfuscate the truth can be seen in the utterances of Davies in *The Caretaker*. Aston admits Davies, a tramp, to his brother Mick's place to stay in for a while till Davies finds a new job after being fired. Davies always complains about the good he is offered rather than acting gratefully in return. He does not make any attempts to establish a close relationship with the two brothers; he even tries to veil his true identity. Davies claims to Aston that he is known by the pseudo-name of Bernard Jenkins,

and that he left the papers proving his real name with a man living in Sidcup. When Aston asks how long this man has had Davies's papers, his response is a hesitant one aiming at masking the truth: "Oh, must be … it was in the war … must be … about near on fifteen year ago" (19). His hesitation is, in fact, an indication of his desire to give the impression he has provided a satisfactory answer**.**

Later in the play, when Mick meets Davies, he is also curious about Davies's identity and asks about his post: "you've been in the services, haven't you?" (48). Although Davies confirms that he has, the reliability of his response is questionable since his utterance is again a hesitant one: "Oh … yes. Spent half my life there, man. Overseas … like … serving … I was" (48). When Aston inquires Davies about his nationality, he hesitates again, which is indicated in his turn in the form of three dots: "Well, I been around, you know … what I mean … I been about.…" (23). Here Davies is struggling to find a good way of obscuring his identity, yet Aston insists on uncovering the mystery about Davies and repeats the question again and again. However, Davies is again reluctant to give away his nationality and hesitant in his response: "I was … uh … oh, it's a bit hard, like, to set your mind back … see what I mean … going back … a good way … lose a bit of track, like … you know.…" (23). Because of "the way he introduces long stretches of hesitation inside an unending sentence, the listener would naturally feel too disgusted to pursue his curiosity and the conversation would go beyond the level of rational communication" (Misra 80). In other words, this is a gambit to tire the listener so that he/she gives up inquiring. Being aware of this, Davies makes use of hesitations as a consistent ploy of hiding the truth throughout the play.

As the play progresses, it becomes clear that Davies abuses Aston's offer of a shelter. Nevertheless, he tries to keep his intention undiscovered by telling that he will go to Wembley to apply for a job in a café that he learned to be "in the need of a bit of staff" when he was there (25). When Aston suspiciously asks

him "When was that?" (25), his response once more indicates that whenever Davies wants to secrete something, he tries for a more effective and subtler way of expression: "Eh? Oh, well, that was … near on … that'll be … that'll be a little while ago now" (25). After his initial hesitation, Davies starts to justify that places like cafés are always in need of staff since all the employees there are foreigners and the customers want Englishmen to pour out their tea; thus, he implies that he always has a chance to find a job being an Englishman. So, in a way he uses his hesitation as a tactic to screen his lie about a café in need of staff, and more generally to cloak his wish to exploit Aston and his hospitality as long as possible.

His attempt to cloak his reluctance to work and his desire to go on taking advantage of Aston is once more mirrored in his replies to Aston when Aston offers Davies the position of a caretaker. Instead of turning down the offer, Davies gropes for an appropriate way to express that he is not suitable for the position:

> Well I … I never done caretaking before, you know … I mean to say … I never … what I mean to say is … I never been a caretaker before […] Well, I reckon … Well, I'd have to know … you know…. […] Yes, what sort of … you know…. […] I mean, I'd have to … I'd have to…. […] That's … that's it … you see … you get my meaning? […] You see, what I mean to say … what I'm getting at is … I mean, what sort of jobs… […] But it'd be a matter … wouldn't it … it'd be a matter of a broom … isn't it? […] You'd need implements … you see … you'd need a good few implements…. (*The Caretaker* 40)

Behind Davies's stammering is his reluctance to work, his aim to take advantage of Aston further, and his fear of being thrown out of the house.

Finally, Aston asks Davies to find another place to live either because he has become aware that Davies has been exploiting him or because he cannot stand his complaints and ingratitude any longer. Davies then complains to Mick about Aston, believing that Mick will let him stay in his house; however, Mick scolds him severely and confesses his suspicion about the reliability of what Davies has told him so far: "I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak

is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies" (71). When Aston comes back home and finds Davies is still there, Davies again gropes for a pretext to disguise the true reason for his being there, that is his wish to be admitted to the house again: "I got out and … half way down I … I suddenly … found out … you see … that I hadn't got my pipe. So I come back to get it…." (73). Instead of begging Mick and Aston to take him back, Davies chooses to hide his real motive for being there, using his hesitation as a screen.

Night School is a good example of a character's concealing his/her real feelings behind a smokescreen of hesitation. The play depicts the story of Walter, a recently released convict who tries to regain his room that has been rented by his aunts to a girl called Sally. In a Pinter play, a room of one's own is "a symbol for one's place in the world" (Esslin 2001: 247), which Walter feels is jeopardized. Through the play, Walter's feelings towards Sally are not apparent: he may either love her or detest her since he thinks she has invaded his room. When Walter's aunt Annie asks him whether he fancies Sally, he pretends not to understand which girl she is asking about. When Annie wants him to confirm her observation that he did not like Sally the first time he met her, Walter's response is a staggering one through which he aims to mask his feelings towards Sally:

> ANNIE. You didn't like her, though, the first going off, did you?
> WALTER. Ah well, the first going off ... ain't anything like ... the second going off, is it? What I mean to say ... is that the second going off ... often turns out to be very different ... from what you thought it was going to be ... on the first going off. If you see what I'm saying. (216)

From his account it is not clear whether he really fancies her more now than he did the first time he met her; or if he tries to show that it is quite natural to start to like someone as time passes, having first disliked that person; or whether he fancies her at all. The problem of Walter's ambiguous feelings towards Sally pervades till the end of the play. When Sally leaves the house without any notice, it is again "impossible to determine with certainty whether he is saddened by the loss or secretly gleeful. He may in fact simply be happy to have his room back"

(Prentice 100-101).

Another linguistic device that a character uses to disguise the truth is the use of repetition. According to Esslin, Pinter uses repetition when a character is lying (in Gale 270). A character whose aim is to mask the truth is likely to repeat some of the words in his/her utterance in an attempt to persuade the listener of the authenticity of his/her account solely by the weight of the repetitions (271). The desire to evade a clear message produces "associative and equally repetitious sequences of words" (Esslin 1987: 148).

Davies, the unreliable tramp in *The Caretaker*, tends to repeat himself in his utterances. When his turn is analyzed, it becomes apparent that he especially repeats the words or phrases that are related to the things he is trying to cover up. For instance, Davies tries to suppress his true identity, including his past and even his name when Aston asks him about his real name:

> Jenkins. Bernard Jenkins. That's my name. That's the name I'm known, anyway. But it's no good me going on with that name. I got no rights. I got an insurance card here […] Under the name of Jenkins. See? Bernard Jenkins. Look. It's got four stamps on it. Four of them. But I can't go along with these. That's not my real name, they'd find out, they'd have me in the nick. Four stamps. I haven't paid out pennies. I've paid out pounds. I've paid out pounds not pennies. There's been other stamps, plenty, but they haven't put them on, the nigs, I never had enough time to go into it. (*The Caretaker* 18)

The way Davies repeats the words "name" and "Jenkins" suggests that he is trying to disguise his real name. In addition to his preoccupation with his name, Davies also seems to be obsessed with and keeps referring to the "four stamps" he has on his insurance card for which he "paid out pounds not pennies". Through repetition Davies attempts to persuade Aston that he is, in fact, a man that could afford to pay his insurance regularly when he had a job and so does not need to stay in his house for long.

However, as the play progresses it becomes apparent that Davies does not have the least intention of finding a job or leaving the house. Nevertheless, he

does all he can to conceal this fact. Throughout the play, even towards the end, Davies tries to convince Aston that he is going to get a job soon, but he has to go to Sidcup to get the papers proving his real name:

> Maybe they'll get me down to Sidcup tomorrow. If I get down there I'll be able to sort myself out.
> *Pause*.
> I've been offered a job. Man has offered it to me, he's … he's got plenty of ideas. He's got a bit of a future. But they want my papers, you see, they want my references. I'd have to get down to Sidcup before I could get hold of them. That's where they are, see. Trouble is, getting there. That's my problem. (*The Caretaker* 63)

Davies's remark is full of associative and repetitive sequence of words, especially those related to the idea of going to Sidcup which is, according to Davies, the only obstacle for him to get a job. The last two sentences in this particular account are also repetitive, though paraphrased, implying that his preoccupation with the difficulty of getting to Sidcup is a mere pretext to cover his reluctance to find a job and leave the house.

Conversational repetition and verbal association is also the mode of conversation in *The Collection,* where the problem of verification is the central theme. Informed by his wife, Stella, that she has betrayed him, James feels the need to confront Bill, the man his wife claims to have cheated him with, to confirm the validity of his wife's account and possibly to learn what kind of a person this man is. However, throughout the play whether she has cheated him or not cannot be revealed since Bill denies sleeping with her. Harry, Bill's roommate and probably his lover, gets fed up with the disturbing visits of James and comes up with the following in order to get rid of him:

> Your wife … you see … made a little tiny confession to me. I think I can use that word. […] What she confessed was … that she'd made the whole thing up. She'd made the whole damn thing up. For some odd reason of her own. They never met, you see, Bill and your wife; they never even spoke. This is what Bill says, and this is now what your wife admits. They had nothing whatever to do with each other; they don't know each other. (*The Collection* 142)

Although Stella has indeed told Harry that she did not have an affair with Bill, and that she has been unfairly accused of adultery by her husband, Harry chooses to conceal this truth; he even claims the opposite, for his and Bill's own sake. Harry tries to veil the truth by stressing certain statements over and over: Stella made the whole thing up, both Bill and she deny the affair, and they do not really know each other.

Sometimes characters may also make "an analogous use of associative linguistic structure" which also indicates that they are trying to hide the truth (Esslin 1987:149). In other words, the character's deceptive account may include a word that is uttered due to the association that particular word creates in his/her mind. The following extract from *Night School* illustrates how a character uses associative words when he is trying to cover up the truth. In this exchange, Solto is bragging about his adventures on his sea voyage to Australia, during which he claims to have killed a man:

> WALTER. How did you get to Australia from Greece?
> SOLTO. By sea. How do you think? I worked my passage. And what a trip. I was only a pubescent. I killed a man with my own hands, a six-foot-ten Lascar from Madagascar.
> ANNIE. From Madagascar?
> SOLTO. Sure. A Lascar.
> MILLY. Alaska?
> SOLTO. Madagascar. (201)

Probably, Solto has found the word Madagascar as the word Lascar has suggested it. Also, that he killed a man during his adventurous voyage to Australia is reminiscent of picaresque novels which he probably read and thus is able to make associations with. However, in this account there is one faulty collocation: a Lascar is an East Indian sailor that has nothing to do with Madagascar. From this faulty associative analogy, it becomes apparent that Solto is making up the whole story in order to disguise his identity for the sake of appearing more man of the world than Walter, who is only a petty forger.

In the same play, Walter, talking to Sally, also uses associative linguistic structures in his speech through which he adopts a deceptive identity for himself. After telling Sally that he was the best librarian in the prison, Walter tells her that the Governor told him he would recommend Walter for a position in the British Museum provided that he quits armed robbery. Moreover, he claims that he is an expert on rare manuscripts although he is indeed only a petty forger. The way he brags about his so-called exquisite skill in his so-called profession is significant in showing how one concept relates to another and how one word analogously reminds of others:

> He told me that if I'd consider giving up armed robbery he'd recommend me for a job in the British Museum. Looking after rare manuscripts. You know, writing my opinion of them. […] Well, funny enough, I've had a good bit to do with rare manuscripts in my time. I used to know a bloke who ran a business digging them up. […] Rare manuscripts. Out of tombs. I used to give him a helping hand when I was on the loose. Very well paid it was, too. You see, they were nearly always attached to a corpse, these manuscripts, you had to lift up the pelvis bone with a pair of tweezers. Big tweezers. Can't leave fingerprints on a corpse, you see. Canon law. (*Night School* 201)

Here Walter pretends to be offered a job in a museum probably because he associates a similar value to the profession of being a librarian to that of working in a museum. For an uneducated man like him both jobs are undistinguishable since each suggests for him a profession that requires a great amount of education. The word museum, for him, is suggestive of rare manuscripts which reminds him of Indiana Jones movies where archeologists dig tombs to discover ancient manuscripts. Talking of tombs brings with it the idea of a corpse which is evocative of anatomy and thus the term pelvis bone that one is supposed to lift with a pair of tweezers. Then, taking out something out of a dead body with a pair of tweezers reminds him of the criminal code that one must not leave fingerprints on a corpse. Walter again makes a free association, this time between this rule and the laws of the Christian church. His absurdly comical way of building analogies

and making conceptual and linguistic associations is an obvious clue to the fact that he is trying to cloak his true identity as an insignificant criminal and to forge a better identity for himself.

3.1.2. Topic

In a conversation, interlocutors collaborate to start, elaborate on, close, or change topics. Nevertheless, sometimes one speaker does not go along with the previous speaker's concerns and starts talking about other things. Turn-skips can be exploited by speakers as a ploy to mask the truth when they are confronted with an issue or question they evade.

In *Night School*, Walter returns to his aunts' house after being released from prison, unaware that his room is rented to a woman without his consent. His aunts try to shun the responsibility of informing Walter of the truth about his room, probably fearing his reaction. When aunt Milly asks aunt Annie, "Well? Have you told him?", Annie declares that she does not have the courage to do so (190). Naturally, Walter is curious about what they have been talking about, yet his aunts try to evade confrontation with the issue by changing the topic and thus skipping Walter's turn:

> WALTER. What's going on here? What's all this?
> *Pause*.
> ANNIE. Have a rock cake, Wally.
> WALTER. No, thanks. I'm full up.
> ANNIE. Go on, have a rock cake.
> WALTER. No, I've had enough. Honest.
> MILLY. Have a rock cake, come on.
> WALTER. I can't, I'm full up!
> ANNIE. I'll go and fill the pot. (190-191)

By changing the focus of the talk from the issue of telling him about his room to the casual ritual of serving cake and tea, the aunts try to disguise the truth for a

moment – only for a moment because Walter will sooner or later realize that his room has been occupied.

Throughout the play, the identity of Sally, the lodger occupying Walter's room, remains a mystery. Although she is known to be a teacher who also attends night school to learn foreign languages, later she is discovered to be a nightclub hostess. It is not really clear whether the aunts are aware of her other profession, yet the following exchange is quite noteworthy:

> WALTER. [...] Night School? What kind of night school?
> MILLY. She's studying foreign languages there. She's learning to speak two more languages.
> ANNIE. Yes, you can smell her up and down the house.
> WALTER. Smell her?
> ANNIE. Lovely perfumes she puts on.
> MILLY. Yes, I'll say that, it's a pleasure to smell her. (194)

When Walter starts inquiring about Sally's night school, all of a sudden, Annie shifts the focus of the talk to how lovely she smells. The aunts may have some suspicions about Sally; so it is best to avoid any complications in the house. By changing the focus of the talk to Sally's likable quality of smelling nice, the aunts succeed in evading the subject of her attending a night school. This topic shift may imply that the aunts are trying to cover up Sally's true identity for fear that her working in a night club could offend Walter further. Moreover, the aunts may also suppose that, if Sally's profession is known, Walter will have found a good reason to get rid of her.

3.2. The Co-operative Principle

According to the language philosopher Paul Grice, conversation, as a means of exchanging information, is a co-operative activity where speakers have shared purposes (in Cooper 56-57). Thus, if conversants want to fulfill each other's purpose for conversing, they have to be co-operative. Grice calls this

assumption “The Cooperative Principle” which asserts that a speaker must make his “conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (45). However, some speakers might flout some of the rules proposed by Grice for the sake of their own purposes. For instance, some of Pinter’s characters cease to be co-operative in their conversational exchanges and may violate some of Gricean maxims of speech, which are the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, for the sake of hiding the truth from the other speaker(s).

The following dialogue between Solto and Walter in *Night School* is a fine example of the violation of most of Grice’s speech maxims for the purpose of veiling the truth. Walter gives Solto, the rich landlord who is a frequent client of nightclubs, a picture of a girl asking him to find out if the girl in the picture is a nightclub hostess and where she works. In fact, it is Sally in the picture. Walter wishes to throw Sally out so as to regain his room by revealing that she is not a school teacher but a nightclub hostess. Nonetheless, he does not wish to make his intention known by others, so he deprives Solto of any information regarding the photo:

> SOLTO. Do you know the girl?
> *Pause.*
> WALTER. No.
> SOLTO. Well, where’d you get hold of the photo?
> WALTER. I got hold of it.
> SOLTO. What have you done? Fallen in love with a photo?
> WALTER. Sure. That’s right. (203)

By denying any acquaintance with the girl in the picture, Walter violates the maxim of quantity which requires speakers to be as informative as necessary. By uttering “I got hold of it” as a response to Solto’s wish to learn about where he got the picture, Walter goes against the relation maxim which demands a speaker give a relevant response. By confirming that he has fallen in love with the photo of a girl he does not know, Walter also breaches the quality maxim which insists that a

speaker should not give any false information. What he gives as a response comprises false information since first of all he does know who the girl is and secondly he may not be in love with the girl. In short, Walter is not co-operative in this particular exchange since he wishes to suppress the true motive for his desire to learn more about the girl in the picture.

In Pinter's plays communication jeopardizes the security of characters since, by interacting with others, these characters may tell them the things that put their position and well-being in danger. Usually, characters in Pinter's plays stay away from communicating with other people, especially with those whom they do not have a close relationship. Yet, when verbal interaction is unavoidable, they try their best to cover up personal issues that may be used against them, such as their identity, emotions, thoughts, or motives. This also reflects one of Pinter's major concerns as a dramatist, that of "the difficulty of verification": when a character says something, one can never be sure of the truthfulness of his/her statement (Esslin 2001: 243). Although Pinter's characters may succeed in masking the truth, they are not very successful in concealing their motive of veiling the truth. As their intention is evident in the way they use the language, these characters lose credibility. Thus, their relationships with the other character(s) are put at further risk as the other character(s) would see these characters as potential threat.

CHAPTER 4

AVOIDING CONFLICT OR CONFRONTATION

In most of Pinter's plays, characters are usually at odds with each other. The very arena where they clash with each other is verbal exchange. Nevertheless, a character sometimes may wish to avoid conflict or confrontation, especially when he/she senses that his/her existence is threatened by the more powerful character during that particular verbal exchange. In such a case, the character uses language to appease the tension between himself/herself and his/her opponent so as not to imperil his/her security and well-being. The way the Pinter character manipulates language to stay away from any conflict or confrontation with another character will be studied in this chapter within the framework of Grice's Co-operative Principle, turn management rules, and politeness strategies.

4.1. The Co-operative Principle

Grice defines communication to be a co-operative activity which the speakers perform with a purpose that is commonly shared by all parties in the exchange (45). This assumption is called the Co-operative Principle from which Grice derives his maxims of speech: quantity, quality, relation, and manner (45). However, some speakers may avoid collaborating in a conversational exchange and violate one, some, or most of the speech maxims when they wish to stay away from any conflict or confrontation that may arise. Thus, how some characters violate Grice's speech maxims will be looked into to see how they use language with the ulterior motive of avoiding conflict or confrontation.

According to Grice, the information a speaker gives during a conversation must be just enough; that is, he or she must give neither too much nor too little information (in Thornborrow 133). However, some Pinter characters can violate this maxim while conversing with a person with whom they fear to have a confrontation. In *The Caretaker*, Davies, in his exchange with Mick, flouts the maxim of quantity by giving too little information in order to meet his motive of staying away from any conflict with Mick. After being admitted by Aston to stay with him, Davies intends to invade that place and get rid of Aston. As a part of his scheme, Davies criticizes Aston while speaking to Aston's brother Mick, the real owner of the place. Although Mick also criticizes some undesirable qualities of Aston, he does not seem to let anyone insult his brother. So, when Davies calls Aston, "a bit of a funny bloke" (47), Mick suspects that there might be an underlying slur in Davies's description of his brother, and challenges Davies to make his statement clearer. Davies, who senses that Mick has been offended, tries not to let his true motive get uncovered by Mick by not informing him adequately. When Mick expresses his curiosity about why Davies finds Aston funny, Davies just repeats, "Well … he's funny" (47) rather than explaining why he finds Aston funny. Mick insists on getting an accurate answer, so he rephrases his question, "What's funny about him?" (47). After a pause, which indicates that Davies is groping for an appropriate response, Davies replies, "Not liking work" (47), which is again not informative enough since it does not explain what makes Aston's reluctance to work funny. When Mick asks, "What's funny about that?", Davies's answer is a sheer denial of information, "Nothing" (48). Davies deprives Mick of a sufficiently informative account of his opinion about Aston, fearing that it would alienate Mick and he would not be in Mick's good books. When Davies tries to avoid any conflict with Mick, he violates Grice's maxim of quantity.

Within the same exchange Davies violates another speech maxim proposed by Grice: the maxim of quality which demands that a speaker's account in a conversation should be accurate and based on evidence (in Cooper 57). When

Mick implies that he is annoyed with Davies by saying "I don't call it funny" (48), Davies rejects his former opinion and tells Mick, "Nor me" (48).

A similar instance of getting out of a conflict is also seen in *The Hothouse,* which portrays the bizarre events going on in a mental institution. Miss Cutts, one of the staff in the asylum who is having an affair with Roote, the manager, tries to get Gibbs, her secret lover, to kill Roote, and pretend that the murderer was Lush, another employee. When Gibbs explains that this is not possible as "Lush could never be taken for a murderer. He's scum but he's not a murderer" (260), Cutts bitingly states, "No, but you are" (260). When Gibbs stares at her and asks her to repeat what she has said, Cutts denies her previous utterance and thus disregards Grice's maxim of quality in order to shun any confrontation with Gibbs:

> GIBBS. What did you say?
> *Pause*.
> What did you call me?
> CUTTS. Nothing.
> GIBBS. You called me a murderer.
> CUTTS. No, I didn't call you anything –
> GIBBS *(ice)*. How dare you call me a murderer?
> CUTTS. You're not a murderer! (260)

Like Davies, Cutts also withdraws her previous accusation which may in fact be reflecting her true opinion. She backs down, perhaps because she does not want to upset him for fear that this could alienate him. By doing so, she violates the maxim of quality since her account does not reflect the truth. In brief, both Davies and Cutts seize to be truthful during their conversational exchanges for the sake of evading an issue that may cause conflict with another character whom they do not dare to challenge.

In order not to have any dispute with others, some characters may also refuse to comply with Grice's maxim of relation, which claims that a speaker's utterance should be relevant to the current run of the conversation (in Weber 168). One of these characters is again Davies, who one more time talks ill of Aston to his brother Mick. Mick is aggravated again by Davies's implication that Aston

does not have any sense; thus, Davies fumbles with his words to find a proper way to deny what he has just implied:

> MICK. You saying my brother hasn't got any sense?
> DAVIES. What? What I'm saying is, you got ideas for this place, all this … all this decorating, see? I mean, he's got no right to order me about. I take orders from you, I do my caretaking for you, I mean, you look upon me … you don't treat me like a lump of dirt … we can both … we can both see him for what he is. (*The Caretaker* 68)

Nothing Davies says has any relation to Mick's question. The conversation is not going the way he has intended; he is now in danger of turning Mick against him. So, Davies aims to evade the current topic of the talk with his irrelevant babble.

In order not to be in a conflict with another character, some characters might also breach Grice's maxim of manner, which proposes that a speaker's statements should be unequivocal, clear, to the point, and organized (in Weber 168). Davies sets a clear example of the violation of this maxim. After Mick asks Davies to have a chat with Aston, as his friend, to see if he is interested in Mick's plans about his house, Davies declares that Aston is not a friend of his since he feels uncomfortable with Aston. He also adds that he feels more at ease with Mick. Then, Mick gives a look at him, implying that he is irritated by Davies's comment about his brother. After this warning look, Davies strives to justify his previous observation as he does not dare to outrage Mick:

> I mean, you got your own ways, I'm not saying you ain't got your own ways, anyone can see that. You may have some funny ways, but that's the same with all of us, but with him it's different, see? I mean at least with you, the thing with you is you're … (*The Caretaker* 59)

His manner of expression implies a great deal about how he tries to stay away from any confrontation with Mick. First of all, his speech is full of ambiguity. The vagueness of his expressions is a clue to his reluctance to make definite statements as he is afraid to cause any offence. Moreover, his speech is not brief, which implies that he is groping for a proper explanation to justify his previous

remark about Aston. His speech also lacks any coherent organization; this may suggest that he is hesitant to utter what he thinks as he dreads this may cause Mick's animosity.

4.2. Turn Management

Analyzing a character's conversational turn will be helpful in understanding that character's hidden motive of evading an issue that may cause confrontation. To this end, how the character manages the allocation of the turns, what kind of a linguistic pattern she/he follows, and how she/he changes the topic of the talk will be analyzed.

4.2.1. Turn-allocational Component

Ideally, in order for a conversation to proceed smoothly, the turns are allocated in the following way: when a speaker stops speaking, the next speaker starts; when he or she finishes, the previous speaker or a new one continues, and so on (Herman 1995: 80). However, sometimes speakers may not be willing to speak, so they let their turn lapse. In other words, they do not respond when the turn to speak is theirs. This is the case in some of Pinter's plays where some characters wish to keep away from dealing with a matter that may annoy another character with whom they do not dare to have any disagreement.

As Herman suggests, in an ideal conversation, an answer should be given when a question is asked (1995: 84). When a speaker does not respond properly to a question, this implies that he or she deliberately wants to deprive the person asking the question of that information. The Pinter character sometimes conceals information from another character so as not to confront any issue that may

displease the inquirer. Bill, in *The Collection*, does not respond to questions properly and lets his turn lapse to avoid conflict. In the following scene, Bill is confronted by James, who is told by his wife that she has cheated on him with Bill. It is not yet certain whether Bill and James's wife have had an affair, yet it is revealed later in the play that they fantasized being together when they met at a hotel in Leeds. Thus, it is obvious that Bill does not wish to be at odds with James. So, he pretends not to have any idea about what James is asking about:

> JAMES. Did you have a good time in Leeds last week?
> BILL. What?
> JAMES. Did you have a good time in Leeds last week?
> BILL. Leeds?
> JAMES. Did you enjoy yourself?
> BILL. What makes you think I was in Leeds.
> JAMES. Tell me all about it. See much of the town? Get out to the country at all?
> BILL. What are you talking about? (118)

Here, Bill lets his turn lapse by not providing James an appropriate response. What he does when the turn passes to him is just to ask another question which helps him evade James's questions about the supposed affair.

Davies, in *The Caretaker*, also makes use of a similar tactic. Davies insults Aston by calling him "nutty" (71). Mick once more gets infuriated and bullies Davies. Davies does not have the guts to defy Mick, so he tries to find ways to avoid responding:

> MICK. What did you call my brother?
> DAVIES. When?
> MICK. He's what?
> DAVIES. I … now get this straight…. (71)

Davies first responds with an irrelevant question, then fumbles for a proper expression when Mick asks him to repeat his previous remark. These tactics serve as a ploy to shun the responsibility of providing a response which will eventually cause conflict.

4.2.2. Turn-constructional Component

The characters of Pinter who wish to keep away from conflict usually tend to repeat some of the words they use in their turn, especially those words that reinforce solidarity with and praise for the likable qualities of those with whom they do not dare to have any disagreement.

For instance, when Mick gets upset with Davies's insulting comment about Aston not having any sense, Davies tries to find a way to be reconciled with Mick whom he wishes to keep pleased:

> What I'm saying is, you got ideas for this place, all this … all this decorating, see? […] I take orders from you, I do my caretaking for you, I mean, you look upon me … you don't treat me like a lump of dirt … we can both … we can both see him for what he is. (*The Caretaker* 68)

By repeating the word "you" several times, Davies aims to show that he respects Mick's authority. Moreover, the way the repetition of "I"s and "you"s lead to "we", which is also repeated, is also significant in that it aims to imply a harmonious and unified relationship between Mick and Davies. By acknowledging his subservient position in his relation, Davies avoids confrontation with Mick.

In *The Hothouse*, Lush adopts a similar tactic so as not to be subject to Gibbs's wrath. When Lush enters Gibb's office, Gibbs avoids any communication with him and insistently asks him what he wants:

> LUSH. […] What you been doing with yourself? (*Pause*.) Mmnn? (*Pause*.) Having a nice Christmas?
> GIBBS. What do you want?
> LUSH. What do you think of the weather?
> […]
> GIBBS. You want something. What is it?
> LUSH. I don't want anything, Gibbs. I've got something to report, that's all.
> GIBBS. What's it? (224)

Gibbs is tense probably because Lush gets on his nerves. Although Lush may not be as subservient as Davies in *The Caretaker*, and whether he fears a conflict with Gibbs is not apparent, at least he wants to show that there is no reason to be in a conflict: "Don't get tense, Gibbs. After all, we're all buddies, aren't we? We're all in the game together" (224). Here, the repetition of "we" again serves to highlight solidarity and camaraderie.

The conversation between Roote and Cutts also displays repetitive turns. Cutts asks Roote whether he finds her feminine enough after Roote states that the patient who has given birth to an illegitimate child has "always been feminine" (*The Hothouse* 223). When Roote does not respond to Cutts's question, being distracted at that moment, Cutts repeats her question by rephrasing it as "You don't think I'm too masculine, do you?" (223). As Roote absently answers this question as "Yes, yes why not?" (223), Cutts gets terribly frustrated, thinking that he does not find her womanly: "But you always say I'm feminine enough!" (223). Nevertheless, Roote immediately realizes that he has offended her and tries to amend his offense: "You are feminine enough" (223). By repeating a part of Cutts's pervious complaint, he thinks he satisfies Cutts's desire to be fancied as a woman. Yet, Cutts is not satisfied with Roote's response:

> CUTTS. Then if I'm feminine enough why do you want me to be more feminine?
> ROOTE. I don't, I don't.
> CUTTS. But you just said you did!
> ROOTE. I don't, I don't!
> CUTTS. *(at a great pace).* Because it would be awful if you really thought that I was letting you down in the most important aspect of the relationship between any man and woman –
> ROOTE. You're quite feminine enough! (223)

Roote again tries to convince Cutts that he finds her feminine enough. The way he repeats "I don't" is a means to deny his previous remark which he made absentmindedly.

4.2.3. Topic

During a speech, speakers cooperatively talk on a topic, change it, and start talking on a new one (Herman, 1998: 22). Generally, topic initiation and topic change occur spontaneously, yet sometimes a speaker may change the topic of the talk intentionally; in other words, he performs a turn-skip (22). One of the reasons why a speaker does this is to avoid conflict or confrontation. By shifting the focus of the conversation to a different issue, the speaker who initiates a new topic shuns the responsibility of facing the issue raised by the other speaker(s). Some of Pinter's characters may prefer to stay away from clashing with another character or other characters by means of changing the topic of the conversation.

In *The Hothouse*, the way Roote changes the topic when Cutts complains to him that he does not find her feminine is an effective gambit for keeping away from conflict. His remark, "You're quite feminine enough!" (223), and repeating that he finds Cutts womanly enough, is supposed to act like a full stop in the conflict they have been engaged in. However, Cutts does not let go of the subject:

> CUTTS. You really mean it?
> ROOTE. Yes. (223)

Then Roote really puts an end to the subject by changing it completely: "I've had the most wearing morning. On top of everything else one of the patients has died" (223). This puts Cutts off her track of femininity, and she starts to sympathize with Roote's situation: "Oh my poor sweet, and I've been nasty to you" (223). By Roote's tactic of changing the topic of the conversation, Cutts's original question is forgotten, though not resolved. In this way, Roote stays away from any argument with his mistress.

In *The Collection,* Bill also uses the tactic of changing the topic when his friend and possibly lover, Harry, suspiciously asks about the man who visited their house: "but the fact of the matter is, old chap, that I don't like strangers coming into my house without any invitation. *(Pause.)* Who is this man and what

does he want?" (128). That man was James who wanted to meet Bill, supposedly his wife's lover. As Bill does not want Harry to know about the man's identity, fearing that this may cause a big confrontation with Harry, he prefers to leave Harry's question unanswered and change the topic: "Will you excuse me? I really think it's about time I was dressed, don't you?" (128). His flight is not only verbal but also physical as he leaves the room immediately after this.

In *The Hothouse*, when Lush openly accuses Gibbs of being involved in a patient's giving an illegitimate birth, "Are you the father, Gibbs?" (225), Gibbs gets enraged and starts insulting Lush furiously: "You know, Lush, I don't know how you've lasted here. You're incompetent, you're unwholesome and you're offensive. You're the most totally bloody useless bugger I've ever come across" (225). To quit the argument before it gets worse, Lush retreats and changes the topic: "I can see you're in one of your moods today, Gibbs, so I suppose I'd better report to you what I came to report to you" (225). What he reports is such important news that Gibbs's anger turns into curiosity:

> LUSH. The mother of 6457 came to see me today.
> GIBBS. The mother of 6457?
> LUSH. Yes, you know. The one who died. He died last Thursday. From heart failure.
> GIBBS. His mother?
> LUSH. Yes.
> GIBBS. How did she get in? (226)

Each explanation drives Gibbs into further curiosity. He becomes extremely concerned about the arrival of the recently deceased patient's mother, who has not been informed about her child's death. He probably fears that he may be held responsible for the patient's death; or maybe he is, in fact, responsible for it. Gibbs now is absorbed in this new topic. Thus, by changing the focus of their conversation, Lush has managed to ward off Gibbs's fury.

4.3. Politeness

Brown and Levinson differentiate between two kinds of face wants: positive face and negative face (in Pschaid 112). Positive face refers to people's wish to be appreciated and approved of by others while negative face refers to their desire of not being constrained or distracted by others (in Short 213). To avoid threatening the face of their addressees or to satisfy their positive or negative face wants, people develop some strategies which can be grouped as positive or negative politeness strategies (in Pschaid 112). The positive politeness strategy indicates that the speaker realizes the hearer has a wish to be respected (Brown and Levinson 70). In addition, this strategy verifies that the relationship is friendly, and expresses group reciprocity (70). The negative politeness strategy also satisfies the hearer's face (70). Yet, it also recognizes that the speaker is in a way compelling the hearer by his/her demands, and thus tries to mitigate the threat to the hearer's negative face (70). The speaker may also prefer to use an off-record (indirect) politeness strategy which, by only implying the need for help, aims at not directly imposing and thus minimizing the face threatening quality of his utterance (Herman 1995: 191). Some of Pinter's characters use politeness strategies for the purpose of preventing themselves from getting engaged in a disagreement or argument with another character or other characters. To see how these characters keep away from conflict, how they satisfy the face of their opponent(s) and mitigate the face threatening quality of their actions will be studied in this part.

In *The Collection*, Bill is quite polite towards James who has come to visit him after Stella's confession. Bill suspects that James's visit would be threatening. When James states that he would like to talk to him on a matter, Bill rejects his request: "I'm terribly sorry, I'm busy" (116). Although rejecting someone's request is a "face threatening act" which harms the positive face of the addressee (Brown and Levinson 66), Bill's refusal of talking with James is uttered

in such a way that will moderate the face threatening quality of his rejection: his sentence starts with an apology and ends with an excuse for his negative response.

Although James insists on having a brief talk, Bill again refuses this and asks for an alternative way for communication: "I'm awfully sorry. Perhaps you'd like to put it down on paper and send it to me" (116). Again his refusal is polite as it intends not to harm James's positive face. Although his request is an absurd one that places a burden on James and thus threatens his negative face, it is negatively polite. As Bill uses the hedge "Perhaps you'd like to" in front of his sentence, it looks much more like a request than a command as the hedge diminishes the face threatening value of this utterance.

Later, when James starts telling Bill about what Stella told him about the affair, Bill gets disturbed and asks him to leave his house: "Look, do you mind … just going off now" (120). Bill's request threatens James's negative face since it asks him to perform an action that he does not wish to do. It also threatens his positive face since asking someone to leave a place without his/her own consent usually harms that person's self-image. Yet, as Bill does not want to offend and exasperate James, he prefers to soften his utterance by using the hedge "Do you mind…". In short, though Bill insistently refuses James's request for a talk and later wants him to leave his house, he finds it necessary to be both positively and negatively polite in order not to seem to be threatening James's face so that they will not have any conflict or confrontation.

In *Night School,* Sally, who has rented Walter's room in his absence and without his knowledge, is polite to Walter in order to avert any clash with him. She first tries to satisfy his positive face when she meets him for the first time: "I'm so pleased to meet you. I've heard so much about you. […] You wouldn't believe all the things I've heard about you. You're the apple of your aunts' eyes" (196-197). By paying him compliments, Sally acknowledges Walter's presence as a respectable person. In this way, she makes it known that she wants to be on good terms with Walter.

Soon after this, when Walter openly declares that the room she stays in is in fact his room, Sally responds in a positively polite way: "I never … realized that. Nobody ever told me that. I'm terribly sorry. Do you want it back?" (197). Sally seems to be aware that being aggressive and rude do not solve any disagreement, so she knows how to apologize when necessary. Her politeness is in fact a very devious strategy. By boosting Walter's ego and seeming to be making a sacrifice, she aims to make Walter feel that he needs to be compassionate and generous and give his room up to Sally.

However, Sally's plan does not work. Walter is not courteous enough to be polite in return; he claims he would not mind taking back his room. Of course, Sally does not want to vacate the room: "Oh dear … this is very awkward … I must say I'm very comfortable here … I mean, where else could I sleep?" (197). Here, Sally uses an off-record (indirect) politeness strategy: rather than telling directly that she will not give the room up to Walter, she implies her intention by stating that she is very comfortable in that room and there is no vacant room in the house for her to sleep. So, by using an indirect politeness strategy, she aims at seeming not to impose anything directly. Although she uses most of the politeness strategies so as to secure her room without getting into any kind of conflict and confrontation, Walter does not surrender easily. At the end of the play, Sally is the one who leaves the house.

Pinter's plays depict a world of conflict where characters compete with each other to have the upper hand. Sometimes, they use certain linguistic tactics to make it known by the other character(s) that they are more superior. Yet, at times, they accept that they are in a weaker position, so they may have to find a way to escape the rage of the more powerful character(s). In such cases, some of Pinter's characters try to avoid conflict or confrontation with the other character(s) in the exchange. Thus, they would deliberately confuse any issue not to alienate others. At certain instances, some of these characters may be successful in their attempts to avoid disagreement or argument, but most of them

cannot usually escape conflict with the other(s) in the conversation. Moreover, those who achieve staying away from conflict can only save the day since they will sooner or later be confronted by the more dominant character(s).

CHAPTER 5

EXERTING DOMINANCE

Pinter's plays depict a universe full of distress, yet the inhabitants of this universe make every effort to maintain their welfare. When characters are safe in their power, when they are in command of others, and when they are certain that their position is assured, they feel they are secured from pain and sorrow (Cahn 5). Thus, the characters are concerned about their exerting dominance over others in order not to be in an inferior and/or insecure position. Language is a very crucial tool of establishing and maintaining power, and in his plays, "Pinter shows how language is a continuous battle-tactic: a potential weapon of domination, a defensive posture to secure one's position" (Billington 124). In fact, the tactical use of language is capable of reversing the balance of power. Through the cunning use of speech, authoritarian characters succeed in dominating the inferior ones. "[T]he potential victims fight victimization, even try to victimize their antagonists; and who is victor, who victim, is often ambiguous" (Dukore 58). How Pinter's characters use language to exercise their power will be examined in this chapter with reference to the turn management rules of conversation.

5.1. Turn Management

As Herman argues, the turn management strategies used by characters in a particular speech event "bring significant elements of meaning which can condition the content and function of what is said or meant by a speaker's speech" (1998: 24). Therefore, analysis of the characters' turns in the conversational

exchanges they are engaged in will be beneficial in understanding how they gain dominance over one another.

5.1.1. Turn-allocational Component

Turn-allocational component of the conversational turn regulates how the right to speak passes from one speaker to the next and how this turn change is allocated. The allocation of the turn may be exploited by some characters as an opportunity to dominate the other character(s) in the conversational exchange. To achieve this, the characters may let their turn lapse, select another speaker to avoid the other(s), or may not give the other(s) the turn to speak.

In an ideal conversation, turn change progresses smoothly: each speaker takes his/her turn, and at the end of each conversational unit, speakers change turns (Herman 1995: 80). In a conversation the turn is allocated in two ways: either the current speaker selects the next one or the next speaker starts without waiting to be selected (81). If the current speaker selects the next speaker, but she or he does not take the turn, the turn lapses and is included into the current conversation as a pause until another turn change occurs by the use of one of the aforementioned two options (81). Analyzing turn-lapses is of great help in understanding how a character attempts to assert himself/herself in a dominant position, since if a character's turn lapses when he/she is addressed by another character, this may give some clues about the ulterior motives of that character who is intentionally letting his turn lapse.

Victoria Station depicts the dialogue between a taxi rank controller and one of his drivers to whom the controller is making a call from his office via radio, asking him to pick a passenger up at the Victoria Station. The dialogue between Controller and Driver is presented in a very minimalist way, even without any action at all: the play consists solely of the dialogue between these

two people – one in his office, the other in his cab – who are trying to communicate via radio. Through the way they interact with each other it becomes apparent that underneath the dialogue "there is a real contest of wills going on between the two for something which is not immediately evident" (Kundert-Gibbs 151). At first glance, Controller seems to be the obvious figure of control or power; however, throughout the play Driver challenges and subverts Controller's superior position by making use of turn-lapses as a tactic.

The play opens with Controller who initiates the conversation by calling Driver on his radio: "274? Where are you?" (*Victoria Station* 345). However, his wish for contact and his request of information about Driver's location are not fulfilled by Driver. Controller makes a second start for a turn by repeating the question; there is again a turn-lapse incorporated into the current run of dialogue as a pause: "274? Where are you? *Pause*" (345). At the very beginning of the play this turn-lapse may not indicate so much about the power relationship between Controller and Driver. Turn-lapses on the side of Driver may even be thought as an indicator of the lack or the difficulty of communication between the two people. However, silence as no-response should not always be "seen as negation, or absence, of speech" since it functions as a communicative and significant ingredient in communication and a source to be made use of (Herman 1995: 98). In fact, as Pinter himself states, "It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen which keeps the other in its place" (qtd. in Benston 117).

As the play progresses, it becomes apparent that Driver constantly uses the ploy of not responding when the turn passes to him. All the attempts by Controller to establish a meaningful contact with Driver, and his requests for information and clarification from him are turned down by Driver's silence. In this considerably short play, there are thirteen instances of turn-lapses on the part of Driver, which are incorporated into the exchange as pauses: when Controller asks him, "Where are you?" (*Victoria Station* 345), "What do you mean?" (346),

"What the fuck are you cruising about for?" (347), "Can you help me on this? Can you come to my aid on this?" (348), "Are you on the driving seat?" (349), "Do you understand what I mean?" (349), "Do you have a driving wheel in front of you?" (350), "Get me?" (352), "Do I know you, 274? Have we met?" (354), "Get me?" (358), "274?" (358), "Right?" (361), "Right?" (362), Driver does not reply any of these questions.

Herman (1995: 84) states that question-answer exchange is an "adjacency pair" which is a "tied pair" of utterance that is sequenced in such a way that the use of a question by the first speaker creates the expectation that the next speaker will respond with an appropriate answer; in other words, "[t]he use of a question presupposes or requires an answer". Moreover, Sacks proposes a normative rule which he expresses as: "A person who has been asked a question properly speaks and properly replies to it" (qtd. in Burton 74). Thus, when there is no answer to a question, this is absolute negation of information. Quigley regards this lack of response as a rejection of the relationship:

> no matter how one is addressed there is an implicit demand for a particular range of response […]; to reply outside of that range is to qualify or reject the common ground of the relationship as envisaged by the first speaker. Clearly the response of silence is frequently of the latter kind. (qtd. in Dukore 1982: 58)

In *Victoria Station*, Controller assumes a dominant position as his post requires and thus demands answers to his questions. Being officially subservient to Controller, Driver is supposed to respond to a call or a request for information by his office. However, by remaining silent when a question is directed to him, Driver refuses to be seen as the subservient counterpart in the exchange as envisaged by Controller and challenges the authority and the superior position of Controller. As Herman affirms, regular turn-lapses on the part of a person who is addressed by another person can signal unconcern, antagonism, the wish to be left in tranquility, "opting out," and so on to the speaker and bring in negative tones into the communication (1998: 25). This assertion is particularly true for the

exchange that takes place between Controller and Driver where Driver's reluctance to respond signify his lack of concern for his boss's queries, his wish to be left in peace without being interrupted, and finally his avoidance of his duty.

Subsequently, Driver's indifference to Controller's demands and the lack of response to Controller's questions forces Controller to supplicate and coax Driver to act by mentioning a good tip:

> Can you help me on this? Can you come to my aid on this?
> *Pause*
> You see, 274, I've got no-one else in the area. I think. Do you follow me?
> […]
> And this is a good job, 274. He wants you to take him to Cuckfield.
> […]
> He's got an old aunt down there. I've got a funny feeling she's going to leave him all her plunder. He's going down to pay his respects. He'll be in a good mood. If you play your cards right you might come out in front. Get me? (*Victoria Station* 348, 352)

Driver's unresponsiveness is a constant gambit used for unnerving and thus challenging Controller. As most of Controller's questions are unanswered with no concern for his plea for help, Driver's superior position is reduced to subservience. Now, Controller even finds himself more subordinate than Driver who, by his carefree attitudes and mobility, symbolizes a freer and more liberated lifestyle in comparison to his cramped living conditions. Controller admits that he envies Driver, and believes that he leads a miserable life compared to that of Driver's: "I'm just talking into this machine, trying to make some sense out of our lives. That's my function […] I lead a restricted life" (350).

One for the Road, which portrays how brutally the agents of totalitarian regimes exert their power over the so-called deviants, also provides a good example of how those who seem to be in subservient positions challenge the authority of their oppressor by not responding when a question is addressed to them. The play depicts how Victor, probably a politically marginal character, his wife Gila, and his son Nicky, are tortured by an interrogator. Although the

physical torturing of each member of the family and the murder of the son take place offstage, the play shows only the verbal torture exerted by Nicolas, who is the very epitome of totalitarian power, to each member of the family in separate scenes. In this play, as in *Victoria Station*, no action is presented on stage; the focus is rather on the way language and silence are used by a character to control another one or others. The victims, especially Victor and Gila, remain silent most of the time during the interrogation. Their silence to the demands of Nicolas may be interpreted as the sign of being silenced by him; however, at certain critical moments it may act as a reaction against the way they have been treated or even as a challenge against the dominant position of their oppressor.

The opening scene where Victor is tortured verbally by Nicolas illustrates the turn-lapsing tactic used by Victor to defy Nicolas's authority. Victor, the victim who has already been tortured before the play opens, has been reduced to a catatonic state of reticence by Nicolas. Although Victor's silence may be considered to be a negative indication of his subservient state, at times he uses remaining silent as a gambit to revolt against Nicolas's authority especially when he gives the turn to Victor and requests information from him. For instance, the extract below, including Nicolas's questions, illustrates how Victor uses turn-lapses as a strategy to defy Nicolas's authority:

> Are you saying you don't respect me?
> *Pause*.
> Are you saying you would respect me if you knew me better?
> Would you like to know me better?
> *Pause*.
> Would you like to know me better? (*One for the Road* 376)

Here Nicolas asks a question the answer of which is of existential importance to him, since as an agent of totalitarian power he needs his subjects to revere his authority. However, he fails to get any response from his victim, which can be thought as a significant indication of Victor's resistance to respect his torturer's authority. When he does not get a response, Nicolas asks if Victor wishes to get to know him further, which acts as a way of trying to find out whether he is ready to

accept Nicolas's existence. Yet, one more time Victor resists answering the question, which makes Nicolas repeat the question to which Victor wisely answers: "What I would like … has no bearing on the matter" (376). Though this time Victor replies Nicolas, his response is, in fact, a challenge. With his answer, Victor makes it known to his torturer that Victor is aware he is in no position to have preferences. It seems that Victor accepts the situation; however, his response is a big slap on Nicolas's face: not only he fails to get a definite answer but also he realizes that there is part of Victor, his inner world, that Nicolas cannot control. Moreover, by answering the question, Victor succeeds in getting Nicolas to stop repeating his question again and again.

In the same play Gila, also tortured before confronting Nicolas, uses the same strategy of having her turns lapse in order to resist the irrational questions directed to her by Nicolas. The below exchange shows how Gila is reluctant to answer Nicolas's unnerving questions:

> NICOLAS. Where are you now?
> *Pause*.
> Where are you now? Do you think you are in a hospital?
> *Pause*.
> Do you think we have nuns upstairs?
> *Pause*.
> What do we have upstairs?
> GILA. No nuns.
> NICOLAS. What do we have?
> GILA. Men. (*One for the Road* 390-391)

Acknowledging her awareness of the absurdity of his questions, she remains silent as a revolt against Nicolas's demand for an answer. Though she takes the turn and responds when he asks what they have upstairs, her answer is rather a short and an indirect one, which again might show her resistance to respond. This leads Nicolas to repeat his question so that he gets the answer he is looking for: men. By asking the following questions, Nicolas now tries to remind Gila of how she has been raped in order to agitate her and erode her self-esteem:

Have they been raping you?
She stares at him.
How many times?
Pause.
How many times have you been raped?
Pause.
How many times? (391)

Gila again chooses to remain silent. The intensity of her silence is doubled with her stare at the torturer, which implies how powerful she feels against all that oppression exerted by Nicolas through his unnerving questions. Although Nicolas repeats his question several times, he fails to receive any answer. His ploy to unnerve his victim is sabotaged by Gila's counter-ploy of turn-lapsing. Now, it is Nicolas who is unnerved because he feels defeated. So, he "stands, goes to her, lifts his finger", as the stage direction says, and resorts to threats of physical violence: "This is my big finger. And this is my little finger. Look. I wave them in front of your eyes. Like this. How many times have you been raped?" (392). Esslin points out that "the silent character acts as a catalyst for the projection of the other's deepest feelings" (2001: 245). So, both Victor's and Gila's silence bring out the savage in Nicolas, which hides his growing anxiety of losing control. Yet, again he is not successful in eliciting the expected answer since Gila's answer is just "I don't know" (392).

Victoria Station and *One for the Road* portray the oscillating relationship between the superior and the inferior characters. Although there is an obviously domineering character in each play, the apparently inferior character confronts and challenges the dominant one's authority by making use of turn lapse as an intentional strategy. On the other hand, the oppressor who is agitated, as his expectation for a response is not met, may regain his dominant position by attempting to discontinue the conversation and pass the turn to another person.

In *Victoria Station*, although Controller assumes that his drivers will simply obey him because of his position, he is confronted with a resistance and even a challenge against his authority by Driver who defies the dominant position

of the Controller by his indifferent reticence and irrational or irrelevant responses. However, Controller is not ready to assume the role of a beggar though he has tried to cajole Driver into fulfilling his post of taking the passenger. Therefore, he puts up a fight to regain his superior position.

Realizing that Driver is reluctant to obey his demand, Controller decides to discontinue the conversation and begins looking for other drivers. When the turn passes to him, as the current speaker, he closes the conversation and selects another speaker for the next exchange: "All right 274. Report to the office in the morning. 135? Where are you? 135? Where are you?" (353). By doing so he explicitly declares his reaction against Driver's disobedience. The dynamics of the power situation now change, as it is now the Driver who is in a subservient position. Now Driver is the one who cajoles Controller into not leaving him rather than being the uncooperative one:

> DRIVER. Don't leave me.
> CONTROLLER. What? Who's that?
> DRIVER. It's me. 274. Please. Don't leave me.
> CONTROLLER. 135?
> DRIVER. Don't have anything to do with 135. He's not your man. He'll lead you into blind alleys by the dozen. They all will. Don't leave me. I'm your man. I'm the only one you can trust.
> […]
> CONTROLLER. 135? 135? Where are you?
> DRIVER. Don't have anything to do with 135. They are all blood-suckers. I'm the only one you can trust. (353-354, 358)

In short, Controller wins back his dominant position by deciding to discontinue the conversation with Driver and selecting another driver as the next speaker. This strategy of Controller's makes Driver feel that it is not that easy to challenge someone by ignoring him, since he can suddenly stop conversing and give the turn to speak to another person.

In addition to discontinuing the current talk and selecting another speaker for the sake of maintaining dominance, the dominant characters may also deprive

their victims of the right to speak by not giving them the turn. The turn-allocational component suggests two options for speaker selection: either the current speaker decides who is next in turn or the next speaker self-selects (Herman 1995: 81). Yet, just like Nicolas in *One for the Road*, the current speaker may be a hyperdominant one and might not pass the turn, thus the right to speak, to the subservient character. In *One for the Road* Nicolas, at the very beginning of the play, establishes his dominant position by attempting to make Victor accept the fact that Nicolas is the one to allocate the right to speak. Nicolas makes this possible by pretending to pass the turn to Victor by asking him questions, yet he either immediately answers them himself or leaves Victor no chance to take a turn to speak:

> Hello! Good morning. How are you? Let's not beat about the bush. Anything but that. *D'accord*? You're a civilised man, So am I. Sit down. [...] What do you think this is? It's my finger. [...] Do you think I'm mad? My mother did. [...]Do you think waving fingers in front of other people's eyes is silly? I can see your point. [...] Why am I obsessed with eyes? Am I obsessed with eyes? Possibly. [...] Are you a religious man? I am. (373)

The one assuming the power to allocate the right to speak is the one with the ultimate authority in a speech event. Unless the current speaker selects the following speaker or one takes the next turn without being selected, the current speaker becomes a hyperdominant character whereas the one waiting for his turn to come becomes a subservient one.

5.1.2. Turn-constructional Component

Another component of the conversational turn which deserves to be mentioned in this chapter is the *turn-constructional component* which includes the sub-components of length and linguistic style. These two sub-components of the construction of the turn may be of great significance in understanding how

characters use language to exert dominance: the length of the characters' turns in different instances have different implications about their relative position in the power relation, and the linguistic style of their turns gives some clues about how they use their linguistic ability to maintain superiority.

A character may guarantee his dominance by adjusting the length of his turn when the right to speak passes to him/her. Bennison states that "a quantitative analysis of the length" of a speaker's turn "can provide useful initial clues to a character's behaviour" such as his or her "relative power in the speech situation" (70). If a character's turn is longer than that of the other one(s), this may imply that he/she has a more dominant position in the current situation. The reason for this is that a dominant speaker holds the floor longer than the other character(s) leaving him/her (or them) little opportunity to take a turn (Herman 1995: 118). Therefore, the size of a turn can be a coercive means to gain a superior position and an indication of authority (118).

In *Victoria Station*, the length of the turns of Controller and Driver are constructed in a way that gives some clues about each character's relative position of dominance to that of the other. An overall look at the size of each character's turns shows that Controller's utterances are usually longer in size than Driver's. This may imply that Controller, as the one who has the assumed power as his position suggests and who talks longer than the other, has more authority since he holds the floor longer, leaving the other little opportunity to speak.

In the whole play there is only one instance where Driver's turns are longer than Controller's:

> DRIVER. Can I tell you a secret?
> CONTROLLER. Please do.
> DRIVER. I think I've fallen in love. For the first time in my life.
> CONTROLLER. Who have you fallen in love with?
> DRIVER. With this girl on the back seat. I think I'm going to keep her for the rest of my life. I'm going to stay in this car with her for the rest of my life. I'm going to marry her in this car. We'll die together in this car. (359-360)

The content of Driver's turns comprises of personal issues which may result in the listener's boredom. As Herman states, holding the floor for a long time "place a burden of listening on recipients and, hence, should be used judiciously" if boredom on the listener's part is likely to be encountered (1998: 21). Therefore, the one who will take a long turn should indicate his or her need for a long turn and try to get the listener's consent (21). Driver obeys this rule and signals his need for a long turn by asking if he can tell Controller a secret and subsequently takes his consent. Thus, his comparatively longer turn cannot be considered as a ploy for dominance. However, this is not the case in Controller's turns: when Controller wishes to talk long, he never notifies Driver and gets his consent, as in the following extract:

> Do you have a driving wheel in front of you?
> *Pause*
> Because I haven't, 274. I'm just talking into this machine, trying to make sense out of our lives. That's my function. God gave me this job. He asked me to do this job, personally. I'm your local monk, 274. I'm a monk. You follow? I lead a restricted life. I haven't got a choke and a gear lever in front of me. I haven't got a cooling system and four wheels. I'm not sitting here with wing mirrors and a jack in the boot. And if I did have a jack in the boot I'd stick it right up your arse.
> *Pause*
> Listen, 274. I've got every reason to believe that you're driving a Ford Cortina. I would very much like you to go to Victoria Station. *In* it. That means I don't want you to walk down there. I want you to drive down there. Right? (*Victoria Station* 350)

The turn starts with questions, asking for information from Driver, none of which is answered. Although getting no response implies something negative about the authority of the interrogator, Controller changes the situation to his advantage by holding the floor longer. The content of his turn consists only of issues concerning himself. In such a case he should have asked for Driver's permission, yet he does not. In addition, the last part of Controller's speech after the pause includes unnecessary explanations, which may mean that he is exploiting the

opportunity to hold the floor longer. For example, whether Driver is in a Ford Cortina or not obviously has nothing to do with Controller's request asking him to pick the passenger up at the station. Furthermore, Driver will, of course, drive to the station "in" his car. Therefore, Controller enjoys the extent of his turn to the full without getting an agreement prior to taking the turn, and he gives unnecessary details during his turn, which may imply that Controller sees himself as having superior power, and he does not respect Driver.

A more obvious example of the role of the turn's length in exerting dominance is the opening scene of *Mountain Language* which depicts the exchange between an officer, a sergeant, and a young woman who has come to visit her husband at the jail where he is kept. The play illustrates how the agents of a totalitarian regime abuse their authority, and how those who speak their native Mountain Language, which is forbidden by the government, suffer in their hands. When the play opens an elderly woman, the mother of a convict, has been attacked ferociously by a dog, and her finger has been bitten so badly that it is about to come off. In the following exchange, Young Woman is questioned by Officer about who is responsible for what happened to the elderly woman's finger. As he learns from Young Woman that a big dog bit it, he absurdly wants to know the name of the dog. The conversation is significant in that it shows how an agent of authority uses his rights for the floor to the full to make the others feel his dominant position:

> What was his name?
> *Pause*.
> What was his *name*?
> *Pause*.
> Every dog has a name! They answer to their name. They are given a name by their parents and that is their name. It's a formal procedure. They state their name and then they bite. What was his name? If you tell me one of our dogs bit this woman without giving his name I will have that dog shot!
> *Silence*.
> Now – attention! Silence and attention! Sergeant! (*Mountain Language* 17)

Although Officer's turn is long, it does not serve for any communicative purposes. His long speech is merely a speculation on his absurd assumption that every dog has a name and that it states its name before it bites. The meaninglessness of his lengthy speech serves for his intent of maintaining his dominant position and reducing the silent one into a subservient position. Moreover, when the length of the speeches of Officer and that of Sergeant are compared, it is seen that Officer's turns are the longer, which highlights the fact that one having a superior rank dominates the floor.

The linguistic style of a character's speech is also significant in understanding how he/she tries to have the upper hand. For instance, when a character makes use of jargon during his/her turn, this may imply that he/she is boasting of his/her superior knowledge on a certain topic so as to seem more powerful than the other character(s). In *The Homecoming*, Max, a man of seventy, strives to regain his son's respect after being ignored and scolded by him. When Lenny, Max's son who is in his early thirties, asks Max his opinion about one of the horses in the races, the father and the son engage in an argument:

> LENNY. […] What do you think of Second Wind for the three-thirty?
> MAX. Where?
> LENNY. Sandown Park.
> MAX. Don't stand a chance.
> LENNY. Sure he does.
> MAX. Not a chance.
> LENNY. He's the winner. (17)

Max sees himself more superior than his son when it comes to horses, and looks down on him. He brags about his experience with horses by using special terminology:

> He talks to me about horses.
> *Pause*.
> I used to live on the *course*. One of the loves of my life. Epsom? I knew it like the back of my hand. I was one of the best-known faces down at the *paddock*. What a marvelous open-air life.

> *Pause*.
> He talks to me about horses. You only read their names on the papers. But I've stroked their *manes*, I've held them, I've calmed them down before a big race. I was the one they used to call for. Max, they'd say, there's a horse here, he's *highly strung*, you're the only man on the course who can calm him. […] The times I've watched those animals thundering past their *post*. What an experience. Mind you, I didn't lose, I made a few bob out of it, and you know why? Because I always had the smell of a good horse. I could smell him. And not only the *colts* but the *fillies*. Because the fillies are more highly strung than the colts, they are more unreliable, did you know that? No, what do you know? Nothing. But I was always able to tell a good filly by one particular trick. I'd stand in front of her and look her straight in the eye, it was a kind of hypnotism, and by the look deep down in her eye I could tell whether she was a *stayer* or not. It was a gift. I had a gift.
> *Pause*.
> And he talks to me about horses. (17-18, *emphasis added*)

Here, Max aims at regaining his son's respect since he believes his use of terminology would make him seem more knowledgeable about horse racing. He also wishes to reestablish his authority as a father who knows more than his son.

Pinter's characters sometimes revert to jargon in their speeches to emphasize their superiority over the others. This gives them a sense of power, and acts as a form of coercion (Malkin 40). Mick, in *The Caretaker*, incorporates the jargon of furnishings into the description of his plans for redecorating his old house:

> You could have an off-white pile linen rug, a table in … afromosia teak veneer, sideboard, with matt black drawers, curved chairs with cushioned seats, armchairs in oatmeal tweed, beech-frame settee with woven sea-grass seat, white-topped heat-resistant coffee table, white tile surround. (58)

Esslin states that "[t]he use of technical terms and professional jargon […] establishes the speaker's superiority in his own chosen field" (1987: 151). Mick wants to show Davies that he is superior to Davies as he has more knowledge on the subject of redecoration. Mick also aims at excluding Davies, making him feel

that such a tramp as Davies would not deserve to live with such a sophisticated man like him.

The theme of dominance and subservience is central to most of Pinter's plays where language is used as a weapon of control. In a world where security and well-being can never be fully attained, maintaining one's position is of crucial importance. In the world of Pinter, the power balance is so brittle that it is sometimes very difficult to tell who the dominant character is since one's authority can be challenged at once by the seemingly subservient character. In the battle for dominance, characters' tactical use of language enables them to exercise power on the other(s) in order to secure their own position.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed to analyze how the characters in Harold Pinter's plays use language with the ulterior motives of having their existence felt and acknowledged, concealing the truth, avoiding conflict or confrontation, and exerting dominance. Each of these motives has been explained in separate chapters by making use of certain linguistic theories and concepts and with reference to a variety of Pinter's plays.

Some of Pinter's characters use language with the purpose of having their existence felt and acknowledged. In Pinter's world, characters that are usually ignored by others are in an existential struggle to prove the fact that they do exist. For them, verbal interaction is the very proof of life as speech is the arena where people can make a human contact. By engaging in verbal interaction with others, these characters try to convince themselves that they are individuals who are capable of being listened and responded to. To this end, usually, these characters are the ones to initiate conversation. Although they sometimes fail to engage the other(s) in conversation, these characters do not give up easily and make further attempts to start or maintain the interaction. One of the gambits they use is to ask meaningless questions one after another, hoping to get an answer and thus to involve the other(s) into the talk. Another tactic used by characters who yearn for recognition is to talk ceaselessly. By talking continually, these characters are trying to fill the silence of their addressee who, by this attitude, denies the speaker's existence. The content of these characters' speeches is also noteworthy in that their utterances usually involve trivial matters like the weather, which again serves to accomplish their attempt to establish a social contact. So as to

attract recognition, some of the characters may even start to talk without being invited into the conversation. When they succeed in attracting notice, these characters do not easily give up chatting as they see talking as a chance to voice their ideas and emotions. That is why, during their speeches, these characters tend to be repetitive, especially when they mention something of great importance to them or when they want to get the other(s) to listen and respond to them. Moreover, within their long conversational turns, these characters tend to make pauses, each of which signifies a move towards further recognition.

Some characters also use language with the intention of concealing the truth. Fearing that making their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations explicit will make them vulnerable in a world where it is not safe to trust others, Pinter's characters try to succeed in gaining advantage over the people they interact with by concealing the truth. Whenever these characters feel that it is necessary to hide something, they have a tendency to hesitate during conversation. Their fumbling, which is indicated in Pinter's plays as three dots, is a significant indication of their attempt to sustain their pretense. The characters who are trying to cover up something are also repetitive during their conversational turns. By repetitions, whether unconsciously or not, these characters attempt to stress the genuineness of their accounts. Moreover, the characters who aim at veiling the facts make use of associative words or phrases; that is, their speeches include words that are used because of the association another word/other words create(s). Especially when they are confronted with an issue they must cloak, Pinter's characters may try to change the topic of the current conversation. Also, when they are asked questions that bother them, these characters are not informative enough in their responses in order not to give the truth away. They can even be deceitful in their accounts for the sake of keeping their intentions, ideas, and emotions uncovered. Moreover, they are likely to speak irrelevantly, ambiguously, wordily, and incoherently whenever they want to obfuscate the truth.

The characters also use language with the hidden aim of avoiding conflict or confrontation. Pinter's world is an insecure one where the characters' well-beings are constantly threatened by other characters who wish to dominate them. Either because they are afraid they might be harmed or they do not want to endanger their present position, some characters wish to stay away from clashing with others. For instance, when they are asked questions the answers of which may cause unwanted reactions on the inquirers, the characters sometimes evade answering them. By not responding, they get rid of the risk of annoying the characters that threaten their position. Even if they answer the questions directed to them, they do not give sufficient information in their responses so as to escape disagreement and unpleasantness. When these characters feel that their answers might upset their addressee, they may even withdraw their statements. Especially when they are confronted with a matter they wish to evade, these characters may also choose to change the topic of the talk. To prevent themselves from the other character's rage, some characters also tend to talk irrelevantly. Moreover, their speeches may become unclear, verbose, and disorganized, which shows that they are afraid of getting into an argument. These characters also have a tendency to repeat some of the words in their statements, especially those that stress unity with and admiration of the commendable qualities of those whom they do not venture to offend. Sometimes, they also repeat their interlocutors' remarks to acknowledge them that they are ready to accept their interlocutor's assertions or demands. In their verbal exchanges with the characters they fear, some of Pinter's characters also use some politeness strategies. They reinforce their interlocutors' "positive face", that is the positive and consistent image people have of themselves, and their desire for approval. These characters also satisfy others' "negative face", which is a wish for not being disturbed by others' demands. So, by lessening the impact of the annoyance their statements could cause, these characters succeed in avoiding any conflict or confrontation that may arise.

The characters in most of Pinter's plays use language with the ulterior motive of exerting dominance. Pinter portrays a world based on power relations. Although there are apparently oppressive and submissive characters, the power balance is in fact very delicate. In other words, the one who seems to be a subservient character may turn out to be more dominant than the so-called dominant one. The very means by which these characters try to impose their supremacy over one another is the strategic use of language. The inferior character may try to gain dominance by not responding when he is asked a question by the oppressor. In this way, she/he challenges the authority of the domineering character. Nevertheless, the dominant one who is unnerved by the subservient one's unresponsiveness may recover his/her position by trying to put an end to the conversation and choosing another speaker as his/her interlocutor. In this way, the dominant one makes the other character understand that it is not easy to confront someone's authority by ignoring him/her, since he/she can, all of a sudden, decide to stop the exchange. Another way of exerting dominance during conversation is not to give the turn to speak to the other character(s). By dominating the conversation through incessant chatter, the character also makes it known that he/she is the dominant one in the relationship. So, if a character's speech is longer than the other's/others' in a particular speech, this may imply that this character is a more dominant one as he/she leaves the other/others little chance to speak.

Although the language Pinter uses in his plays has been deprecated by some of the critics and spectators as being empty, void of any meaning and artistic depth, it is, in fact, the most significant element of Pinter's success as a dramatist. It is, indeed, not easy to grasp the nature of Pinter's characters fully due to the fact that they do not explicitly voice their opinions, thoughts, and emotions. Nevertheless, character's uncommunicativeness shows a lot about how they feel. It can mean both being terrified and/or becoming dominant. The deliberate omission of an explanation or motivation for the action can also function to hide a

private self. Rather than staying silent, Pinter's characters also sometimes ramble on mostly because they do not wish to be confronted with their inner emptiness and insecurity. Thus, their talk is a pathetic search for identity, a place in the world, recognition, and acceptance. Through language, Pinter's characters reveal their uncertainties and fears about their existence, position, relationships, and the world they occupy. If Pinter used a language where everything was plainly stated, the elements of mystery and trepidation on which Pinter's drama is based would disappear. So, Pinter makes his characters use language in such a way that forces the spectator/reader to make an effort to realize characters' true motives that are hidden under their seemingly insignificant utterances.

This study has tried to draw attention to Pinter's special treatment of language by showing that language is the ultimate tool for characters' realizing their motives. The subject of a further study could be whether the fact that characters use language with ulterior motives is fully realized by the spectator/reader, and/or how this special use of language affects the spectator's/reader's interpretation of Pinter's plays.

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