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**A Pragmatic Analysis of  
Communicative Silence in Natural  
Interactions: 'Mona Lisa Smile'  
Movie as a Case Study**

**A B S T R A C T**

This study is mainly devoted to prove that 'silence' (in natural language interaction) is not only a mere absence of words, but it is also an act which implies a communicative meaning. It is hypothesized that silence can be used as a tool of communication in the same way that speech does. It is also hypothesized that the EFL students are unaware of the many interpretations and functions of silence. Therefore, it is important to know the main premises of this subject, and to find a way to correctly determine and interpret silence in natural interactions.

To achieve the main aim of this study, Schroter's (2013) relevance theoretic model is followed. This model is thought to be the best to exactly determine silence together with its communicative intentions and functions in the data selected. This model is based on three main criteria: intention, expectation and relevance. The data of this study is represented by natural interactions taken from the famous movie 'Mona Lisa Smile'.

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**تحليل تداولي للصمت التواصلي في المخاطبات الحية: فيلم "مونا ليزا سمايل" كدراسة حالة**

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**الخلاصة:**

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو لإثبات الخاصية التواصلية للصمت في المخاطبات الحية فهو ليس مجرد غياب للكلمات ولكن فعل يتضمن معنى تواصلي. تقترض هذه الدراسة ان الصمت يمكن ان يستخدم كوسيلة للتواصل حاله حال الكلام. وتقترض ايضا ان متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية غير مدركين للتفسير و الوظائف المتعددة للصمت. لهذا السبب توجب علينا في هذه الدراسة كشف اهم المعطيات المتوفرة حول الموضوع و ايجاد طريقة سليمة يمكن من خلالها تفسير الصمت في الكثير من المخاطبات الحية.

لإثبات الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة تم اتباع طريقة سكروتر (٢٠١٣) وهي تابعة للنظرية الارتباطية

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للمعنى. و تعتبر من اهم الطرق لتحديد الصمت التواصلي والقصد منه في المخاطبات الحية بالإضافة الى وظائفه المتعددة. تستند هذه الطريقة على ثلاثة معايير: القصد، التوقع، وارتباط المعنى بالموقف. و تتمثل مادة التحليل بمخاطبات حية من الفيلم المشهور "مونا ليزا سمايل".

## 1. A Linguistic History on Silence

Many linguistic studies reveal that 'silence' is not a new subject, but rather it has been widely discussed in terms of the different meanings this notion conveys, the different functions this notion performs, and the different forms this notion takes. Gal (1989: 28) writes that "there is a growing literature on the meanings of silence", where he dates the study of 'silence' back to the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gal admits that 'silence' is nothing than a linguistic form like any other linguistic forms. This form is of different meanings and is effective in many situations and contexts.

Cummings (2010: 33-34) concludes that silence, as a phenomenon, has been treated differently in the past. He argues that it is studied as a metaphysical issue in that "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence". Silence, according to him, was also studied in theatrical performance, art and culture, and holocaust studies. The most important "individual" articles appeared are those that consider silence as a linguistic phenomenon. Each writer was trying to give his own idea of silence as a communicative device. Silence then, "became an integral part of pragmatics, and of linguistics in general".

Jaworski (1997: 3) asserts that 'silence' is a diverse concept and requires an approach to be understood and accounted for. He writes that,

"silence is discussed as an auditory signal (pause) in linguistic theory, as a pragmatic and discursive strategy, as a realization of taboo, as a tool of manipulation, as part of listener's 'work' in interaction, and as an expression of artistic idea"

Jaworski views 'silence' as a diverse notion that tackles different communicative phenomena, such as: discursal, linguistic, literary, social, cultural, spiritual, and meta-communicative. What is important for Jaworski is that 'silence' can be represented by words. He stresses that in addition for 'silence' to be understood as a 'pause' and 'non-speaking', it can exist as an utterance with an action represented by 'sounds', an idea to go beyond the fact that silence is only the "absence of sound".

However, Jaworski (1993: 1) stresses that silence is not subject to only one branch of linguistics, but rather it is studied and investigated in different levels of linguistic usage. The position of silence in all of these branches is very important. Dinkler (2013: 11) stresses that "silence itself can be considered a kind of speech act with an illocutionary force, transmitting different meanings in

different contexts”. The idea of silence being a speech act is clarified in the following sections.

## **2. Verbal and Non-Verbal Silence**

The main question of many linguists is whether to consider ‘silence’ as a verbal phenomenon or is merely the absence of words and sounds. In talking about the semiotic aspects of silence, Jeffries and Bousfield (2007: 181) show that it can be both; silence in the broad sense is understood as “the absence of sound or the absence of verbal expression”, but it can also exist and be represented by sounds. This fact is true when resorting to the idea of intentionality and communicative meaning. Jeffries and Bousfield stress that this type of silence can be identified in contrasting silence with non-silence; a person can still be silent without producing any sound, or else he/she produces sounds but intends something that opposes and contrasts what the listener expects to hear. This is what Jeffries and Bousfield call “polar opposite” between intentional silence and “natural” silence, and is a distinguishing feature of intentional silence. Jeffries and Bousfield write that this type of silence is better called “pragmatic silence”.

In this case an approach is needed to account for such intentions, as to consult Gricean implicature theory, or any relevance theoretic account. This is because the central problem, for Jeffries and Bousfield, is to discover the meaning of silence in discourse.

Barron and Schneider (2014: 27) concentrate much on the “unsaid speech”. The unsaid speech, for them, is the verbal silence where a speaker “accompanies silence” in a communicative situation. Keeping silent is not that interesting communicative act for them, and carries less communicative power. Therefore “silence as a symbol should then be added to the scheme of the relations between verbal and non-verbal communication in what ... is termed ‘verbal’”. Therefore silence should be considered ‘verbal’ within the linguistic dimension he proposes in his system of ‘silence in interaction’.

## **3. Communicative Silence: The Case of Opposition**

Jaworski (1997: 43-44) stresses the fact that silence is an important device in communication. An intentional device which is “produced for communication purposes”. For him this definition of silence qualifies what he calls “meaningful absence of words”. He admits that silence can be considered as such, whether a speaker keeps silent without saying a word or gives an “opposition” (alternative) speech contrary to the expectations of the listener. This aspect of silence is mostly seen in interactive situations where facts about a conversation are presented, such as those inferred from the physical context. If an opposition is understood to be intentional, then it is considered as a silence of a pragmatic aspect, and hence best be described as a communicative silence and is understood as “an alternative speech for silence”. The pragmatic context plays a major role in determining the meaning of silence. There are cases in which people remain silent without giving any opposition, for example Jaworski

clarifies that “one will say nothing to a person, even a friend or relative, who passes gas has a dripping nose”. In such situations remaining silent is obligatory.

Barron and Schneider (2014: 27) write that silence is “a polyphonic phenomenon in communication and interaction”. This fact is clear when taking into consideration the difference between silence and speech, in case that there is a contrast between “meaningless speech” and “meaningful silence”. Meaningless speech is “empty” for them in that it is uttered without intention.

Meaningful silence, on the other hand must contradict the speaker’s expectations. This is what Kurzon (1998: 3) calls “the discourse of silence”. He writes that “one cannot speak and be silent at the same time”, but the idea is that there is a difference between speech and silence, if a given speech lacks a communicative meaning it is not silence, but if it does, so it is silence of a communicative function.

Jaworski (1993: xii-1) mentions that, in pragmatic terms, “silence can be accounted for by the same principles as speech”, so that it is viewed as a communicative category, “a rich and powerful tool of communication” where several theoretical communicative frameworks appear to account for it, such as the relevance theory. Jaworski continues, the most important position of silence in linguistic studies lies within those dealing with how people actually communicate with each other.

In this regard, Schroter (2013: 43-44) states that “silence depends on factors that are analytically difficult to access as such: intention, expectation and relevance”. To account for them, one should consult a pragmatic approach”. Pragmatic approaches rely on communicative intentions, this is to be considered as a way to describe why people use “alternative strategies to pursue their aims”. Their aims may appear to be the many functions of silence in discourse.

Green (2007: 216) investigated silence within the framework of Gricean conversational maxims and Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory, he found that persons who are silent usually keep communication norms but violate the maxims. This violation is seen in the “silencing of their speech”, an ‘opposite’ speech which is presupposed to be understood as a pragmatic device.

#### **4. The Communicative Functions of Silence**

Schroter (2013: 15) mentions that silence has different communicative purposes and pragmatic intentions. Whether a person keeps silence intentionally or gives the “alternative speech of its presence”, silence must be seen as having five functions. The most important communicative functions of silence agreed upon by many scholars are those of Jensen (1973). Jensen relates silence to five communicative functions: ‘linkage’, ‘affecting’, ‘revelational’, ‘judgmental’ and ‘activating’ function:

1. The linkage function: Trandafir (2018: 7) states that silence in this function is viewed as establishing connections between interlocutors, it serves to provide a link between the participants of a given conversation because it “implies collaboration”. For Huszar (2016: 61), this function of silence binds people

together and “builds community”. Schroter (2013: 15) writes that binding people together is not the only function of silence, it can also isolate them. Similarly, Huszar (2016: 61) agrees that silence can also “destroy a community”, “Silence can forge bonds between husband and wife and among friends; it can serve remembrance; and for religiously oriented individuals silence is the vehicle for linking them to God”.

2. The affecting function: Schroter (2013: 15) admits the fact that silence can affect people positively and negatively. In this regard, Huszar (2016: 61) stresses that silence “can heal and it can wound”. He argues that there are situations where silence is used as a tool to “prevent aggravating the situation”, and at the same time it can be used as a tool to stress the situation: “Silence can communicate understanding, respect, acceptance, kindness, as well as indifference, animosity, coolness, defensiveness and ruthlessness”.
3. The revelational function: Trandafir (2018: 8) clarifies that silence can reveal different personal attitudes. It can reveal that someone is hiding something. It can reveal different feelings of people. Schroter (2013: 15) admits that this function refers to the psychological state of people. Huszar (2016: 61) stresses that silence in this function can also be used to hide information. He writes that silence is used by psychotherapists as a tool to discover the information they provide. He writes: “silence can actually reveal things - for instance about ourselves and our true inner being. For that reason, many are afraid of silence and are afraid of being left alone with their thoughts and feelings”.
4. The judgmental function: for Trandafir (2018: 8), silence can show agreement or disagreement with what has been said by someone else, “maintaining the conversation flowing without expressing any disconformity”. Huszar (2016: 61) writes that silence can refer to “assent or support” and on the contrary it can “register disagreement”. Silence may indicate that a listener is agreeing with something, but as soon as he/she feels injustice, for example, he experiences that silence indicates “hostility or anger”.
5. The activating function: according to Schroter (2013: 15), silence can point to an engagement activity, whether a person is active or not within a conversation. Huszar (2016: 61) stresses that a listener is going on well and is active with the speaker, but may also show the opposite. Trandafir (2018: 8) states that “silence performs an activating function in the communicative process. In other words, speakers’ pauses marked before choosing certain words may insinuate a reflective mind searching for a specific phrasing”.

These functions are one part of the model adopted in this study. Schroter considers them as the main communicative functions of silence in that they can account for the absence of speech in a given context. This will be apparent in the following section.

## 5. Data Analysis

The data of this study is represented by natural interactions taken from the famous movie “Mona Lisa Smile”. The researcher has rendered those interactions into a written form in this study, taking into account that the realized silence of the participants has been indicated in the interactions analyzed by brackets. The researcher carefully observed the occurrence of silence of the participants through intensive watching to read whether those occurrences are communicative or not, with the aid of the physical context according to the model adopted. Five interactions are chosen for analysis, each is presented with a contextual title. In the analysis, the following model is adopted.

### 5.1 The Model Adopted

This study adopts Schroter’s (2013) relevance theoretic based model. As it appeared from the literature on silence, the only way to account for silence in natural language interaction is by following a relevance theoretic model. Schroter worked much to make use of many relevance theoretic studies in his model to determine the meaning of silence.

However, Schroter (2013: 13-42) writes (in 29 pages) that there are certain procedures to find out whether silence is to be considered as communicative or not. In his model, Schroter takes into account intention (to be silent), expectation (of speech) and relevance (of the unsaid). Those premises systematically determine whether a “silence is perceived as more or less communicative by participants in the interaction”. This triangle is implied in the following:

**1. The physical absence of speech:** Schroter asserts that communication in an interaction can be achieved with or without the existence of a signal, a clue that participants can use as a message to meaningfully interact. In any communicative situation, it is important to talk. If the talk is not presented there will be a problem. The possibility to talk provides a chance for listeners to consider silence as meaningful. But, on the other hand if the listener keeps silent and no speech (or even any sign) is presented, the meaning and interpretation of silence then will entirely depend on the context. The (physical) context is the only factor that can determine the ambiguity of silence when no speech is presented to account for its “concealment”. The context can assume a number of opposing meanings, those meanings are to be understood as any of Jensen’s (1973) functions of silence: linkage, affecting, revelation, activating and judgmental (see sec. 4 above). These are the only functions that can account for the physical absence of speech within a given context.

Schroter stresses that communicative silence possess certain characteristics. The first characteristic of communicative silence is “emptiness” which refers to the extent of filling silence with: **a.** gestures and **b.** structural empty slots. Structural empty slots represent the following: **a.** pausing, **b.** zero morphemes, **c.** ellipses, **d.** aposiopesis, and **e.** didactic fill-in-the-blank structures.

The second characteristic of silence is that it can be seen in the “semantic and logical empty slots”, such as: presupposition, implicature, connotation and allusion. This is like “talking without speaking”.

The third characteristic is that silence can take a “notorious form”. In this notorious form silence is a type of “concealment” which can be distinguished in regard to two aspects: **a.** silence can take place without words, where the concealment must be relevant for persons, that information about X is withheld. The concealment must be interesting and relevant for the participants involved in the interaction, **b.** silence can take place with words (verbal silence). In this type, Schroter writes that “sometimes many words are required to keep a secret”. In both cases, concealment must be relevant for the participants, it is considered as an indication that something is concealed (hidden), together with the duration of the concealment in more than one communicative event.

Furthermore, if persons refuse to deliver talk about X, they will do so either by: **a.** implicitly evading the topic (evading X by talking about Y and Z); **b.** offering an excuse for not fulfilling the expectations (this is such as saying “I cannot say anything about X”).

2. Making sense of the absence of speech: for Schroter, it is possible to communicate via silence in the case of absent signal when “the alternative of its presence allows for the possibility to perceive this absence as a communicative clue as well”. This can work in the light of some facts: **a.** the context: the conventional meaning of silence can only be inferred from the context by considering the alternative speech. Sometimes we cannot stay silent in situations, like funerals, but rather we give alternative speech to show our sympathy, “a situation within which talk is relevant. It is only when talk is relevant that we get conversational silence”. In this case it is obligatory to speak, keeping silent will be understood as a refusal to talk. This is evident in the case of the funeral, for example, if two persons never met before and one of them is spoken to or asked a question, the other should respond and talk. Schroter admits that there are two crucial aspects of silence: **b.** the intention to be silent (e.g., a question without an answer, a greeting without a reply) and **c.** the expectation of speech (to give alternative talk), “silence occurs and is perceived as significant and meaningful when talk is expected by the hearer and intentionally withheld by the speaker”, taking into account the role of the context. However, there are cases where silence can still be understood as silence (with no communicative value) “on the basis of a disappointed expectation of speech”. (ibid. : 31)
3. Context: the communication and the interpretation of meaning depends solely on the (physical) context. This is evident in the case of silence. Intention, expectation and relevance are considered part of the context. Different interpretations can be inferred from the context. The pragmatic function of context helps participants to produce a talk which is “appropriate to the current communicative situation”. On the other hand, it helps others to understand the appropriateness of talk. The “appropriateness” of the talk is dependent on

relevance. It lets people understand whether a given speech is relevant or not, for example, in the question: “why don’t you say anything about X?, the listener may choose the most relevant answer and say “I wasn’t aware you wanted me to” or “I thought it wouldn’t be wise to talk about X in this situation”. In both cases it is the context which determines the appropriateness of these answers and how they are perceived by the other party, i.e., whether those answers are appropriate or not. If we are not familiar with the situation where those answers are given, it would be difficult for us to decide whether they are relevant or not. Everything in the context can determine relevance of silence and silence opposite talk, even the face expressions of the participants. For that reason the meaning of silence cannot be determined in written language, including the inferred expectations and whether a given speech is intentional or unintentional.

## **5.2 Analyzing the Data**

### **Interaction (1):**

#### **(In the hostel-Katherine’s New Room)**

**Hostel Manager:** A shame you didn't come yesterday. It's so quiet before the girls arrive. Just a few rules. No holes in the walls. No pets, no loud noises, no radio or hi-fi. After on weekdays...On weekends...

**Hostel Manager:** No hot plates and no male visitors.

**Katherine:** (silent)

**Hostel Manager:** Anything wrong?

**Katherine:** I don't think I can go a year without a hot plate.

### **Discussion:**

This is the first time for Katherine to enter her new room, the Hostel Manager is giving her some rules while she is putting some books on the shelf. Katherine is listening to the rules silently until some kind of disappointment appeared in her eyes and is recognized by the Hostel Manager when she was saying: “No hot plates and no male visitors”. A sort of a different silence is recognized here, therefore a question is held by the Hostel Manager. It is clear that the Hostel Manager was expecting Katherine to say something like to thank her, but through silence she discovered something else, and it seems that Katherine intended to communicate something. This is evident in that “No hot plates and no male visitors” does not match the Hostel Manager’s question, actually the utterance would be seen like this: “No hot plates and no male visitors. Anything wrong?”. This is determined by the context only, or else ambiguity appears to be dominant. In her utterance: “I don't think I can go a year without a hot plate” Katherine gives the alternative of her silence as an opposition to the speaker’s expectations. Therefore, a communicative silence is determined here. The function of this silence is ‘judgmental’, because Katherine showed her disagreement regarding the unavailability of the ‘hot plate’ in her new room.



## **Interaction (2):**

### **(In the Dining Room)**

**Katherine:** What do you teach?

**Nancy:** Speech, elocution and poise.

**Nancy:** Dinners are communal so I'll handle that. But breakfast and lunch, you're on your own. So (silence) we each get our own shelf. I'll make your label this evening.

**Nancy:** I don't need to tell you, everything on our individual shelves are sacrosanct. I just knew when we met (silence) we will be instantly friends.

## **Discussion:**

Two occurrences of communicative silence are noticed by Nancy when she was speaking to Katherine. Nancy was talking while making some arrangements inside an open refrigerator which contains labels for the teachers' names on each shelf. She noticed that Katherine recognized the unusual inside scene of a refrigerator, so that she paused a while and stood up to explain why labels are there. It seems that Nancy's "we each get our own shelf" is an alternative talk for her silence after she noticed that it deserves giving an elaboration for the unusual scene. Relevance plays a major role here, because her utterance would not make sense if we didn't realized that she is talking while opening a refrigerator with the fact that Katherine is listening and looking. This type of silence is recognized to be of a 'linkage' function. Nancy in her alternative speech is trying to build and establish connections with Katherine (who will be her friend).

In the second silence, Nancy was finishing her arrangements inside the refrigerator when she uttered "I just knew when we met", then paused for a while to take away her glasses and to be face to face with Katherine to tell her "we will be instantly friends". The situation indicates that this utterance at that moment is to be understood as if Nancy wishes to be her friend, with a big smile. This is a 'revelational' function of silence. Nancy tried to express her positive feelings towards Katherine, it does refer to her psychological state. In both occurrences, silence is used intentionally by Nancy. Therefore, silence here is viewed to be meaningful.

It is important to mention here that Nancy's speech was continuous, Katherine was just listening to her. Katherine's silence is not to be viewed as silence for nothing, she was not, for example, watching T.V or any, but rather her silence along the interaction is meaningful. Though she did not say a word except her question at the beginning, Katherine shows that she is involved in the communicative situation with Nancy. She was doing some body gestures to reveal that she is going on well with Nancy. This is as if she is talking without speaking. It is a meaningful silence which is also revealed by the use of the context. The function of this kind of silence is an 'affecting' one, where Katherine showed her respect and acceptance regarding Nancy's rules, and her wish to be her friend.

**Interaction (3):**  
**(Before Entering the Class)**

**Katherine:** (silent)

**Amanda:** Be careful. They can smell fear.

**Katherine:** (silent)

**Discussion:**

This is before Katherine enters the class to give a lecture for the first time to the students whom she didn't know and see before. She appears here standing by the door of the class as if she is reluctant to enter, looking from the door glasses to the students with silence. In this case only the context which determines that she is afraid to enter the class because her facial expression and her delay to enter the class reveal that. Therefore, those contextual signs give a hint to her colleague Amanda that there is something wrong with Katherine. It is realized here that Amanda's advice "Be careful. They can smell fear" is the alternative speech for Katherine's silence. Amanda and Katherine really communicated by intention, i.e., Katherine is silent and Amanda gives her an idiomatic advice which can only be facilitated by the context (intentional), and Katherine responds to that advice by silence with a little gesture to show Amanda that she has received her message. This silence is considered as a type of concealment without words and is only relevant for Amanda within that context where she presupposed that inference.

The 'revelational' function seems to be prominent here for Katherine's silence. Katherine appears in this interaction as if she is hiding something, it does refer to something about herself. It refers to her psychological state and the information she tries to hide (that she was a little bit afraid to enter the class).

**Interaction (4):**  
**(On the Telephone)**

**Katherine:** Hello. It's me.

**Paul:** Hey!

**Katherine:** Call from Katherine Watson. Will you accept?

**Paul:** Yeah, sure, of course I will.

**Katherine:** (silent)

**Paul:** Hey, is everything okay?

**Katherine:** (silent) Yeah.

**Paul:** Tough, huh? Well, how are the classes? Snobs, right?

**Katherine:** (silent)

**Paul:** I hate to say I told you so.

**Katherine:** You don't have to (silent). I can't really talk right now. I'll write you tonight.

**Discussion:**

Katherine was so impressed after her first lecture, the students left her no word to say. It seems that she failed to control the class. Therefore she feels that she is in need for a close friend to talk to. That was her closest friend Paul. Katherine's silence here is full of intentions, it does seem to provide an implicature for Paul that Katherine was not right, especially if we conclude from the context that she talked to him with a very low voice, with a cry like tone. It seems that Paul told her that it would be difficult to accord with such a high level 'snobby' students. This is apparent from her first silence when Paul realized this fact, so that he forwarded her the question "Hey, is everything okay". Katherine communicated to him with silence, if we are to interpret her silence in this exact moment it would be like this: "I'm not okay". This is a 'revelational' function of her silence where she tried to express her bad feelings to Paul.

The second occurrence of silence is after Paul's question. In her replay to the question (according to what is inferred from the context), she didn't directly say "Yeah", but rather, she kept silent for a while and then uttered "Yeah" with a very low voice. This indicates that Katherine's answer is better understood as "No" instead of "Yeah". A good evidence for this implication is Paul's expectations "Tough, huh? Well, how are the classes? Snobs, right?". These expectations are forwarded to Katherine in a form of a question to decide whether they are right or not, rather she also kept silent. This silence is very meaningful to Paul, he understood it as if it is a speech which implies the answer "Yes that's right". For that reason, Paul admitted this fact in his utterance "I hate to say I told you so". A high degree of intentional silence occurs here. This silence is recognized as having a 'judgmental' function in that Katherine fully agreed with Paul in his expectations.

The last occurrence of silence indicates that Katherine feels a kind of regret that she didn't listen to Paul at the beginning, her intention is revealed through her utterance "You don't have to". This is as if she is saying "you were right" to end the call with her last utterance in a very low voice. The function of this silence is also 'judgmental', as if she is saying "I fully agree with you".

**Interaction (5):**  
**(In the House)**

**Nancy:** Come. Come in and sit down. When Lenny left for the South Pacific, it nearly broke my heart. We wrote every day until (silence). He was a great man.

**Katherine:** (silence) I'm sorry.

**Discussion:**

Nancy used this silence intentionally in order not to repeat the fact that her husband Lenny is dead. It is hard for her, as for everybody else within the same situation to admit the death of their beloved persons. By her silence, Nancy

showed how dear he was to her, and at the same time she gave an indication to Katherine that her beloved Lenny is dead. Nancy's next utterance is nothing than an alternative speech to her silence which implies the meaning of death and is directly understood by Katherine. This is evident in Katherine's utterance "I'm sorry" (after being silent for a moment) in a way to communicate Nancy's silence. This silence is of a 'revelational' function because it reveals Nancy's personal attitudes towards the death of Lenny. On the other hand, Katherine's silence is viewed as an intention to show kindness and sympathy with Nancy for losing Lenny. Therefore the function of this silence is realized to be 'affecting'.

In the situational context of the utterances of both speakers the facial expressions accompany their silence, i.e., sadness appears on the face of Katherine as soon as Nancy stops speaking after saying "until", this facial expression is realized while Katherine is listening, indicating that she expects what happened to Lenny and she is sad for that. It is like they are communicating their sadness.

### **5.3 Findings and Discussions**

On the basis of the analysis of the data, we can find that most of the occurrences of silence have intentional meanings. In most cases, the speakers appeared to have the chance to speak but they didn't. They preferred to keep silence for a purpose in their minds. It is found that this purpose is filled pragmatically either by keeping silence without saying a word, or by giving an alternative speech. Nearly all of their talk after their silence indicates that they have that pragmatic purpose, an intention that silence is presented to convey. In the five interactions no 'meaningless speech' was realized, all alternative speeches were 'meaningful'.

It is also found that context is a clear cut criterion to decide whether a given silence is intentional or not. Suppose that we have only the written form of the interactions above, then how can we decide that a speaker is in fact silent and is intending something in his silence; take an example the utterances in Interaction (1):

**Hostel Manager:** No hot plates and no male visitors.

**Hostel Manager:** Anything wrong?

The researcher realized Katherine's silence only in virtue of the context (through watching the movie) to be seen like this:

**Hostel Manager:** No hot plates and no male visitors.

**Katherine:** (silent)

**Hostel Manager:** Anything wrong?

If we depend on the written form, then Katherine's role here should be excluded and the Hostel Manager's utterance should be one part which does not make sense: "No hot plates and no male visitors. Anything wrong?". Similarly in some other analyzed interactions.

It is also important to mention that no silence occurred without a function. As soon as a given silence is determined it becomes easy to assign a communicative function to it, nearly all types of communicative functions appeared to be dominant for every silence occurred. The communicative functions realized are “linkage’, ‘revelational’ ‘affecting’ and ‘judgmental’.

## 6. General Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions of this study:

1. The absence of words does not necessarily indicate that silence has no meaning. Natural interactive situations proved that silence is fully intentional.
2. Whether to communicate silently or by using words, the same pragmatic function is achieved.
3. The degree where the decision on deciding the pragmatic intention of silence on the part of the listener depends solely on the physical context.
4. Silence is of different communicative functions which are determined according to the intention of the speaker in a given context.
5. Silence usually accompanies some signals, facial expressions, gestures, etc., which can also help to facilitate its meaning in the context.
6. In determining the different interpretations of silence, only a relevance theoretic approach should be followed.

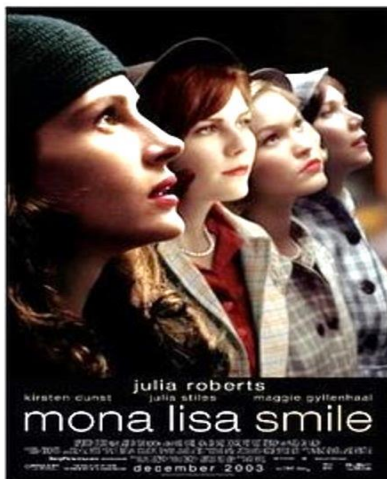
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## Appendix

### *Mona Lisa Smile*



Theatrical release poster

Production company	Revolution Studios Red Om Films Productions
Distributed by	Columbia Pictures Sony Pictures Releasing
Release date	December 19, 2003
Running time	117 minutes

