A Socio-pragmatic Interpretation of the Communicative Silence in Asong Linus’ “The Crown of Thorns”

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Author’s contribution

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ABSTRACT

The current consensus is that speech is an innate human capability, and in essence, provides instances by which speakers of a language use different speech acts to perform a variety of communicative functions. Where verbal language is often used, the non-verbal silence is regarded as inarticulate and uncommunicative. However, Asong Linus, for the most part in his novel ‘The Crown of Thorns’ [1], makes effective use of various forms of silence as a more powerful style of expression than words. Few writers have succeeded to use this technique of communicative silence effectively the way Asong Linus does in this novel, developing the plot, characters and his craftsmanship around this theme. In this paper, it is aimed to shed light on the significance of silence as an effective tool in communication that is no less powerful than speech or writing. The attempt is to show how verbal language sometimes fails as a means of communication in conveying the relevant message. Silence, therefore, is an important and complementary alternative for verbal language. How can one say a lot by not uttering a word and, yet create a greater impact is the objective of this investigation. To achieve this, various forms of silence elicited from the narration were collected after several readings of the novel, classified as different instances and analyzed.
Particular attention is given to such instances as silence, short and long pauses employed by some major characters. To analyse the data, a combination of the critical Discourse analysis, Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory, and socio-pragmatics proved adequate and useful tools capable of highlighting on how speakers use these non-verbal signals to effectively communicate meaningfully within the Nweh social and cultural contexts. After the analysis, several findings were made; two major categories of silences were discovered, namely; the destructive or negative silences styled awkward, appalling, embarrassing, defensive, and fearful silences associated with deep feelings of frustration, barriers that shuts down communication, and constructive or positive silences that are golden, and which moves the conversational objectives forward establishing confidence, comfort, is reflective, peaceful, respectful, self-mastery. In conclusion, communicative silence is a helpful tool to enhance intentionality, by being silent, a speaker is expressing real deep intentions and emotional thoughts; indicate empathy, promote and maintain the existing social relationship. It further reveals that faced with a new challenge, silence is the first response that gives you a chance to reflect before you speak, increasing the likelihood that what you say and do will be on target, intelligent, and useful. In this text, silence is more powerful than words.

Keywords: Socio-pragmatics; performative act; communicative; silence; The Crown of Thorns.

1. INTRODUCTION

All forms of communication has been categorized into verbal, non-verbal or written language. One may have also come across a lot of research and books on the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication. One commonly neglected aspect of non-verbal communication is the use of silence in conversational discourse. However, rarely has one discussed, read or pondered upon the power of silence as a tool for effective communication.

Whereas verbal communication concerns the way people use utterances to send and receive messages in different speech situations, non-verbal language is often regarded as subjective and inarticulate. Some people have considered that silence is a non-verbal means of conveying a message without the use of verbal language as a grossly misconceived and vastly underutilized methods by many. Few writers have succeeded to use silence as an effective communicative technique as Asong Linus’ in the novel ‘The Crown of Thorns’ [1]. With rare dexterity, the author succeeds to craft the plot, character development around the non-verbal communicative act of silence throughout the narrative. However, silence is a performative act effectively used to communicate hidden ideas, emotions and feelings. It can express awkwardness, avoidance, face-saving, self-control, or wisdom. It is commonly used in abusive relationships. It can serve to withhold information, withdraw from social interaction.

Silence is defined by Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary as “the absence of sound or noise: stillness.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as ‘the state of being silent (as when no one is speaking), uncommunicativeness; cause to be quiet or not talk; the trait of keeping things secret, etc. Note, however, that while silence is one’s deliberate intention not to talk, quietness is often conditioned either by a situation or someone else. It is the act to keep away from expression, for example, by threats or pressure. Many people erroneously take silence and being quiet for synonyms. While silence is communicative, to be quiet is characterized by an absence or near absence of agitation or activity. There are people who argue that silence is not even communication at all. In reality, silence can be a very effective communication tool. Silent communication is about conveying a message without the use of words, and sometimes, silence can do that better than any words, admits Smith Kurt [2].

Silence is often considered as the absence of sound, noise, speech, or communication. It has been considered a time of such abstention, or a lack of ideas, a mental blockage, and often taken as a weakness. ‘Silence’ occurs within a given period of time when a person deliberately and strategically decides to abstain from talking. The problem with speech is that many people talk too much. Occasionally, we are guilty of over-talking a subject to the extent that the point is missed. Silence forces us to shut up and get our message across in fewer words. Ironically, fewer words sometimes result in a clearer, stronger message. Statistics reveal that ninety-three percent of communication is non-verbal, and that words convey only seven percent of our messages. In addition to the verbal and non-
verbal signals, effective communication occurs in our tone, volume, facial expressions, gestures, posture and the like. Other forms of non-verbal communication include Emails left unanswered, unreturned phone calls and avoidance of meeting someone. These are other subtle instances in which silence occurs. Unfortunately, absence of meaningful words and an inability or unwillingness to communicate only cause division and separation, creating dysfunction in all relationships. It is no wonder that “communication breakdown” is the top problem of contemporary society. There are moments and situations where being silence is the right attitude needed in social interaction. It does take some courage to use silence as a communication tool, but for many people, it is not always easy to do that. Ironically, people do feel more comfortable and safer to keep talking and not listen. But there is more power in listening silently.

This paper aims to shed greater light on the significance of silence as an effective tool in communication in the hands of the novelist that is no less powerful than speech or writing. The paper is to show that verbal language sometimes fails as a means of communication in conveying the relevant message. Silence, therefore, is an important and complementary alternative for verbal communication. As a result, the paper highlights on the different uses of silence as a communicative act in “The Crown of Thorns” [1] by Asong Linus. The investigation set out to collect data on different instances of silence in this narrative, classify and examine their various forms and significance in order to describe the extent to which the writer succeeds to treat silence as effective communicative techniques to develop the plot, characters and themes in the novel. It illustrates that silence and culture are related in the same way language use and literature are inseparable.

The focus here is to establish a correlation between the written text and the unspoken word by studying the various forms of silence used as communicative strategies in different situations. Over the years, sociolinguistics studies have been concerned with exploring the relationship between a language, its users, and the context of use including the social and linguistic factors that influence the choice of words and manner of speech.

The primary objective of the investigation is to interpret the significance of this sublime linguistic attitude called silence as a complex communicative act and further, to demonstrate that besides silence being a linguistic phenomenon, different forms of silence and culture are inseparable highlighted in the Nkonoko Small Monje village community described by Asong Linus [1] in his novel. Here, the major characters extensively believe that silence is more communicative than the use of words. But in communication, it is seen as the absence of speech. So, absence of speech does not mean that the person is not communicating with the other person. During a speech, if the speaker pauses at the beginning, in between turns, or at the end, he is trying to mean something.

Ibrahim Abu-Shihab [3] cites Sultan [4] who states that “silence is the most impressive element that complements, enhances and even sublimes the meaning” (ibid: 683), adding that “silence takes various manifestations such as pauses, speech/easiness or dumbness which activate the expressiveness of the dramatic act.”

To effect this, interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis study how people use language in face-to-face interactional situations and how these people manage social identities status, and social relationships. Interactional sociolinguistics is based on concepts of contextualization and conversational inferences concerned with how speakers signal and interpret meaning in different speech situations. It is grounded in the work of Gumperz [5] who blends insights and tools from anthropology, linguistics, interactional pragmatics, and conversation analysis into an interpretive framework for analyzing meaning in language. This approach attempts to bridge the gulf between empirical communicative forms—for example, words, prosody, register shifts, and non-verbal language, and the meanings speakers and listeners create and interpret through such forms. Showing systematic ways in which sociocultural knowledge and communicative forms are intertwined in the constitution and interpretation of meaning, the distinction between message form and context—has been its greatest theoretical contribution. Interactional Sociolinguists focus on language in its social and/or cultural context by closely observing certain “speech events” in a particular community and in this case, the Nweh community described by Asong Linus [1] in his novel, remains the reference from this perspective with particular interest on various forms of silence as communicative acts.
Therefore, rather than consider it an absence of communication, silence should be viewed as an intentional act of communication carrying subtle messages. It is an effective non-verbal strategy used by Asong Linus's [1] characters enact in critical situations of interpersonal communication. However, other accompanying facial expressions, gestures and non-verbal forms of communication significantly contribute to the meaning of the words used, the interest of the present concern, worthy of a critical linguistic inquiry. To understand language use in society, it is necessary to consider the social context in which it occurs: the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction. This involves dealing with the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse. Only in a full context of this kind can judgments be made on the appropriateness of a particular utterance.

The scope of this study falls within pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); better named Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). Pragmatics is a relatively new discipline whose nature of inquiry intersects with that of a number of other social sciences including linguistics, applied linguistics, (critical) discourse analysis, semantics, sociolinguistics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. Pragmatics does not have a methodology of its own but draws upon the methodology employed in other social sciences like linguistics, anthropology and sociology, for example. The field of pragmatics covers a variety of strands, from the study of (contextualized) sentence meaning (Fraser, 1998) to the study of meaning in interaction (Thomas, 1995), the way in which data are collected and analyzed depends on the pragmatic perspective adopted by the researcher, as well as the object of study. This study focuses on socio-pragmatics; namely, on the underlying norms of speaker and hearer meaning as reflected in the (appropriate) realization of speech acts, the organization of conversation, politeness manifestations and socio-pragmatic variation.

According to Kieran [7], critical discourse analysis, on the other hand, is also an interdisciplinary study of issues of language manipulation, and explores the interpretation stage of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in areas such as English language, media studies and applied linguistics. It offers a new way forward for highlighting manipulative language, accomplishing this through the innovation of an original synthesis of elements within cognitive linguistics, and the relevance theory when faced with the structures of context, text, or talk. The socio-pragmatic and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) deal with multidisciplinary discourse approaches which make use of different relevant methods in the humanities and social sciences capable of addressing important linguistic and social problems. While reading Asong Linus's [1] narrative, both verbal and non-verbal cues of silence would easily arrest a reader's attention as the use of certain grammatical, lexical or non-speech features arouse his interest. Mete [8] views silence as a communicative act and value which can be realized in one or several forms with the following lexical and grammatical means,-words that have the very meaning of 'silence', 'silent', 'still', 'pause', etc.; -a combination of a simple verb of speaking with a negative particle or a (pro)noun, e.g. to say (tell, answer, etc.) nothing (no more); not to speak (say, tell, pronounce, etc.); neither (nobody) to speak (say, tell, etc.); to make no answer; to do something without speaking (talking, telling, replying, answering, etc.); to be about to say (tell, answer, etc.), but; to pause; -verbs that “colour” the silence, e.g. to demur, to hold back, to ignore saying (telling, answering, etc.), to fail (about voice) and many others: -kinetic means, e.g. 'silent tears', 'mute look', 'soundless cry', etc. Graphically, non-verbal silence can be represented with dots or a dash, e. g., “I'm sorry", he said, "it was only for the afternoon. I did not really need you but I wanted to...” He paused. I smiled back at him. “I know”. She sat down again" Mete [8].

Analyzing language use in longer stretches as discourse examines text and talk in context. Linguists, sociolinguists, anthropologists and psychologists have developed adequate theoretical frames to study language use in its social context. Contextualisation of language is meant to establish the relationship between a text in association with its users and other surrounding elements. Teun Van Dijk [9] was particularly interested in the concepts of text and talk including the discourse and society, critical discourse analysis, narrative inquiry, pragmatics, and research on language and social interaction. In recent years, interest within the scope of pragmatics has engulfed academic disciplines such as discourse and communication, gender and language, language and politics etc. The proliferation of interrelated domains testify to the upsurge of interest in communication, discourse analysis, and its many incarnations. Work in
discourse analysis is now so diverse that “discourse” is almost a synonym for “language.” The fact is that linguistics does add rigour and respectability to the analysis of face-to-face interaction.

Studies in non-verbal communicative behaviour now range across a number of different fields, including, linguistics, semiotics and social psychology. Pioneer studies in non-verbal communication concentrated on paralanguage, proxemics, gestures and body movements or patterns called ‘kinesics’ and estimated that the average person actually speaks words for a total of about ten or eleven minutes a day and that the average sentence takes only about 2.5 seconds. Reports hold that man can make and recognize around 250,000 facial expressions. Interest in non-verbal communication was restricted to the process of communication among individuals through gestures, body language, facial expressions, and eye contact. Nevertheless, Chomsky [10] came up to stress the importance of silence as an energizing and respectability to the analysis of face-to-face interaction.

Silence as communicative acts deals with how people’s social identity affect the way they speak and create their identity as well as it affects and is affected by social relations, in other words, how language varieties differ between groups separated by certain social variables as ethnicity, religion, status, gender, and age. The study of language use in literature attempts to establish the direct link between what people say or do not say and how certain non-linguistic items contribute to ex-ray the linguistic behaviour of people with particular reference to Asong Linus’ [1] treatment of communicative silence in the Nweh speech community. Although linguists believe that understanding social interaction is important, sociolinguistics is an energizing mixture of fieldwork, urban ethnography, variation analysis and narrative analysis Labov [11], one reason for which the present paper examines silence as a communicative act in Asong Linus’ [1] novel from a discourse analytical perspective with the view to relate non-verbal use of language to literature, an approach that has not yet been described. A pioneer work in this light is that of Darwin in the expression of the emotions in man and animals. He argues that all mammals reliably show emotion in their faces and so does man. To date, many other similar studies have been conducted on emotional response of man, notably that of Panksepp [12], who opines that emotions arise ultimately from hard-wired neural circuits in the visceral-limbic brain that facilitate diverse and adaptive behavioural and physiological responses to major classes of environmental challenges. Generally speaking, silence has different meaning in different cultures.

To what extent is silence more communicative than speech? What are its various forms of manifestations, and to what extent does silence develop plot, character and themes in this narrative? How can silence be more powerful than words? How does the writer combine his artistic ingenuity with language effectively? These questions and several others constitute the objective of the present investigation

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several researchers have examined the subject of silence. Mete [10], for example, has examined how silence is interpreted in Turkish culture in various communication contexts and holds that keeping silent may have different meanings depending on the situation. Therefore, rather than an absence of communication, silence should be viewed as an intentional act of communication. It is an effective non-verbal strategy in critical situations of interpersonal communication. He views silence as a cultural value associated with dignity and wisdom. In many cases, silence can be more expressive than speech.

In his paper on communicative silence in Jordan, Ibrahim Abu-Shahib [3] throws light on the significance of silence as an effective means of communication in conveying the right message. He goes on to list different forms and functions of communicative silence in Jordan. Communicative silence in Jordan expresses different emotions and shows respect, kindness, and acceptance of the other. It may also imply scorn, hate, and disagreement where words fail to do so. Ibrahim Abu Shahib [3] further points out that while abundant speech is discouraged, silence is encouraged believing that the effective message of truthfulness is better conveyed via silence and not through talking much. In other instances, silence is associated with truthfulness. Ibrahim Abu Shahib [3] also examined different types of silence acts including some proverbs in Jordan. Defiant silence may be used in connection with other non-verbal gestures like facial expressions. In such situations, the Jordanians tend not to use language as a hint of appreciating the value of being silent. Silence is
considered as wisdom, as it is obvious from the following Jordanian proverb "iđa tama al-qal naqasa al-kalam" "less talk more wisdom, but more talk less wisdom" or "when reasoning becomes perfect, speech lessens" Ibrahim Abu Shahib [3] citing the Jordanian proverb "ruwa rašsin hasiida lisan" "a head may be the price for a slip of the tongue" which advice people to be careful when speaking and to keep silent most of the time. To sum up, silence functions as conveying emotions, showing respect, asking questions, giving answers, and above all it is good for avoiding conflict among people, so “iđa kaان al-kalam min fid ahalsukut min dahab” Ibrahim Abu Shahib [3] “Talking is silver and silence is gold” is true in Jordan. Silence has the same value as gold, demonstrating the great appreciation Jordanians have towards the act of silence. Silence then does not mean the absence of communication. This view is shared by Jaworski [13] who states that "the absence of speech does not imply the absence of communications." Understanding the social and cultural implication of language, he says that silence and culture are related and interrelated. Culture norms determine where and how to use silence as a means of communication. In some cultures, it is used more abundantly than others. He cites Erkman [14], who claims that “every culture has a set of symbolic gestures familiar to most of its members and may have different meanings in different cultures.” The following question is interpreted in different ways based on the culture. “Do you like to visit London?” Silence as a response to this question means uncertainty in English. In contrast, for Japanese, silence may be used as an acceptance, whereas, in Jordan, it can be considered a denial or acceptance depending on the context. Americans tend to use silence to express sorrow, regret and embarrassment. Japanese, in turn, consider silence as a key of success, and tend to keep silent most of the time. They follow their own proverb which says “silence is also speech”. People may use gestures and silence to convey the message in their communication which is linked with social differentiations. Silence, he concludes, could be regarded as an important and complementary alternative for language.

From another point of view, silence is not simply an absence of noise or does not mean ‘nothing,’ but constitutes a part of communication as important as speech, Farida [15]. Therefore, rather than consider it an absence of communication, silence should be viewed as an intentional act of communication which gives a message. Yet, in another study, Nuray Alagözül and Sevgi Sahin [16], on their part, explore pragmatic functions of silence specific to Turkish political discourse. According to them, it carries various meanings depending on the topic, participants, setting and culture. Silence can serve many functions in a conversation. He claims that silence is an effective non-verbal strategy in critical situations of interpersonal communication. Silence is often associated with dignity and wisdom; “Among the wise of secret knowledge, I am their silence.” citing the Bhagavad-Gita in Chapter X. In many cases, cultural silence is an imposed attitude more influential than speech. Silence can be categorized into the constructive and destructive forms, Farida [15]. Constructive silence moves a conversation or discussion forward and destructive silence, on the other hand, shuts down communication and creates barriers that discourage speakers from expressing their thoughts. Thus, silences can be ‘leaden’ and they can also be ‘golden’. We have all experienced various negative silences that could be called awkward, appalled, embarrassed, defensive, and fearful silences. These could be termed as leaden silences. However, there are also silences that are golden, such as confident, comfortable, reflective, peaceful, or respectful silences. Silence is a helpful tool for information processing as well as promoting and maintaining existing relationships.

Specifically on the aspect of non-verbal communication, silence in Wimbumb culture is considered a form of non-verbal behaviour similar to smiles which are used as social communicators,’ Mushing [17]. A younger person is required to stay quiet when adults are talking as a sign of politeness and respect. Smiles in Wimbumb society indicate satisfaction, respect, acceptance, scorn or refusal depending on the context of the situation. Similarly, in most grassland cultures, the opinions of young girls ready for marriage were never sought for and in a similar way, a child is expected to remain quiet when elders are speaking, as a sign of respect.

Eastern cultures value silence more than the use of words, while in western culture, sometimes the opposite is true. In ‘Communication between cultures (Samovar et al, 2012) elaborate on the interpretation of silence: in response to the question: ‘Will you marry me?’ for example, silence in English would be interpreted as consent or uncertainty, in Japanese it would be interpreted as acceptance, in Igbo (Southeastern
Nigeria) it would be considered as a denial if the woman was to continue to stand there and acceptance if she ran away.” Note that the analysis of linguistic interaction takes into account the element of culture as well as other social factors. The influence of culture on communication are normative and states that the rules of speaking in a society are always related to the cultural values of that society. For example, in Malay society, one important aspect of culture is being indirect which, according to Brown and Levinson [18], helps “to avoid those acts that would possibly threaten either the speakers or the addressee’s face. Here, “face” means “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself”.

Recent studies further show the possible relationships between language, the user, and the society. Language forms vary as its functions vary. No doubt, the analysis of face-to-face interpersonal communication relies very heavily not only on the forms used, nor substance, but most importantly on other non-linguistic factors such as space, time, social and linguistic context including kinesics features. Thus, any complete and comprehensive description of language accounts for language utterances and the relationship between the form and the situation in which the utterances occur. Language, whether verbal or non-verbal, animal or human, is a particular form of social behaviour, a certain way of thinking and expressing varying ideas, reasoning, emotions and feelings.

The point is that speakers can soften the blow of a negative answer by being silent as the best response. There is an implied “no” without using any harsh words or too many words that might do more harm than good. When silent, the speaker sends a powerful message that communicates he or she does not agree or is not going along with what someone is saying. In this study, silence is an indication of empathy. When we are really tuning in to how the other person is feeling about what is said, we are listening more to the tone of their voice, cadence and speed rather than the actual words, and so replying with words may not be the attuned response. Silence forces us to shut up and get our message across in fewer words. Ironically, fewer words can result in a clearer, stronger message. Non-verbal communication is the process of communication through sending and receiving of wordless (mostly auditory and visual) cues between people. Messages can be communicated through gestures and touch by body language or posture, facial expressions and eye contact or silence. Speech contains non-verbal elements known as paralanguage, voice quality, rate, and pitch, volume, speaking style as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Likewise, written texts have non-verbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words, or the physical layout of a page. However, much of the study of non-verbal communication has focused on face-to-face interaction, and classified into three principal areas: environmental conditions where communication takes place, physical appearance of the communicators, and the behaviour of participants during social interaction.

The selected text for study is Asong Linus’ [1] ‘The Crown of Thorns’, a narrative, set in an imaginary village called Nkoboko Small Monje, situated somewhere in Lebialem in the South west region of Cameroon. He describes a one-time stable traditional society witnessing transmutation as a result of power struggle at the advent of democracy. This otherwise traditional community has been under the yoke of an imperialist administration, they soon understood that they have the right to choose their legitimate leader and freedoms of speech, and not succumb to dictatorship. It opens with the disappearance of the people’s deity, Akekeur, the god of the tribe, who, as a result of corruption and connivance with Achiebefouo, the kingsman and the senior divisional officer, succeed to deconsecrate the tradition. The same people tele-guide and arrange to install an unrightful person as village chief for self-interest. However, the natives end up in a revolution against the administrative authority or ‘goment’, staging an uprising and chasing away the perpetrators. A society plagued by corruption, intrigues and mistrust creates an atmosphere in which silence is a better option. To develop the plot, keeping silent communicates different meanings depending on the situation. Silence in Asong Linus’ [1] narrative is a dramatization of Nweh culture that conveys a variety of information including other non-verbal gestures like facial expressions and posture. In such situations, the social status of certain people, notably chiefs and nobles, use language sparingly for most of the time and appreciate the value of being silent.

Before we proceed any further, some important key terms used in this study as socio-pragmatics, communicative acts, performative, silence and ‘The Crown of Thorns’ need to be defined.
The word *pragmatics*, derived via Latin *pragmaticus* from the Greek πράγματικός (pragmaticos), "fit for action", comes from πράγμα (pragma) "deed, act" (in modern Greek πτήμα/pragma to designate "an object, a thing that can be perceived by the senses"), from the verb πταίνω (ptaino) "to do, to act, to pass over, to practise, to achieve" to signify matters of fact than theories and ideals. Pragmatism developed as a philosophical method with concrete or practical consequences associated with linguistic philosophers. Thus, socio-pragmatics studies social reality in terms of the ways speakers in a given speech community use language, and in this particular case, the communicative silent act in different social situations. It examines the underlying meanings of these acts as communicative social acts. According to Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas & Jackson, [19], and Beavin Bavelas [20] in interpersonal communication, it lays the groundwork for understanding social linguistics and context-based approaches. Pragmatics study how social and linguistic contexts affect meaning, and how sentences are interpreted in their various situations or the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context. Pragmatics emerged as a reaction to structural linguistics outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure [21] rejecting the notion that all meaning comes from signs existing purely in the abstract space as langue.

Speech acts are communicative acts used as "performative utterances" referring to what speakers do with words to "perform", or get a certain action done, Austin [22], for example, when someone says "I promise to do so and so", they are generating the action of making a promise. In this case, without any flaw (the promise is flawlessly fulfilled), the "performative utterance" is "happy", or to use Austin's word, "felicitous"; if on the other hand, one fails to do what he or she promised, it can be "unhappy", or "infelicitous". Notice that a performative utterance is not truth-valuable, which means nothing said can be judged based on the said as truth or falsity, Austin describes four major types of performatives utterances: explicit, implicit, primitive, and inexplicit, Austin [22]. For explicit performative, he mentioned "I apologize", "I criticize", which are so explicit to receivers that it would not make sense for someone to ask "Does he really mean that?". Inexplicit performatives are the opposite, where the receiver will have understandable doubts. For a primary performative, "I shall be there". Compared with explicit performatives, there is uncertainty in implicit performatives. People might ask if he or she is promising to be there with primary performatives. However, this uncertainty is not strong enough as in explicit performatives. Most examples given are explicit because they are easy to observe, and identifying performatives require comparison and contrast with explicit performatives. As an example, Austin examines the word 'real' and contrasts the ordinary meanings of that word based on everyday language and the ways it is used by sense-data theorists. In order to determine the meaning of word 'real', we have to consider, case by case, the ways and contexts in which it is used.

In interactional sociolinguistics the term 'communicative' signifies 'the act of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviours to express or to transmit to someone else different types of information, thoughts, emotions, and feelings. According to Mushing [17], 'a conversation can be understood as the joint efforts of the participants, the setting and purpose.' The content and structure of the talk may not be given beforehand, but the interlocutors make it, orientate it while they are talking. He notes that successful conversations must be based on such principles as cooperation, reciprocity, politeness, turn-taking and relevance. The principle of Co-operation does not imply that participants in an interaction help each other or agree with each other continually. 'Co-operation', notes Mushing [17] implies that participants need to co-operate and apply the same rules for expressing and interpreting speech acts. Participants may not have equal social status, class or power, and this will be expressed in the interaction. Therefore, if interlocutors do not co-operate, the principle may be flouted leading to communication breakdown and unsuccessful interaction, i.e., meanings and intentions will not be understood. Sociolinguistics involves the study of social and linguistic influence of specific linguistic features though pragmatics examines the meaning behind language use as silence and pauses. The fundamental issue is what people do with verbal and non-verbal language in real life situations.

Most linguists agree that there are at least four major levels of studying language organisation—phonology, grammar, discourse and non-linguistic. The structure of each level can be expressed in terms of small units combining with other small units to form larger units. While within phonology and grammar the categories and labels are well-established, within discourse...
nothing is certain as so far there are no agreed labels and few agreed structures.

From one point of view, semantic analysis is unable to handle such meanings. Whereas to understand what is said and meant in larger texts one needs to approach whole discourse and their underlying meanings, tokens of this kind acquire different meanings in different contexts. An analytic approach of this kind involves the study of context which belongs to that area of linguistics called pragmatics. Doing discourse analysis involves doing syntax and semantics, but it primarily consists of doing pragmatics. Austin [22] distinguishes three aspects of a speech act, namely; ‘locution’, ‘illocution’, and ‘perlocutionary force’.

This suggests that certain speech acts can and do perform one or more than one function at a time. For example, the kingmaker’s utterance, ‘do you accept [to be chief] or not’, performs different speech acts of ordering, questioning, requesting, commanding, or getting someone to do something? Describing such an utterance as a request, order, or directive, accompanied by the appropriate intention and so on, does not of itself constitute the act of making a request or an order. To understand the relations between form and meaning is to understand that discourse analysis is concerned with patterns of use while pragmatics is the study of language use with insights drawn from conversational analysis, text analysis, and socio-pragmatics as a way to better understand why people engaged in social interaction and interpret their intentions. In other words, one must have an understanding of his (1) psychological state, (2) self-concept, (3) perception of the speaker, (4) knowledge of symbol systems, and (5) the speaker’s perception of the social environment. This study is exclusively concerned with face-to-face conversations, and public speeches. When native speakers engage in a conversation or discussion, each participant takes a turn and speaking roles with native intuitive accuracy. In such instances of interaction, verbal language is not only made up of words and expressions, but also of non-verbal signals which are significantly used. Sequences, which from a grammatical viewpoint, consist of a random succession of clauses of different types can be seen from a functional viewpoint as highly structured and coherent. Insofar as the analyses developed concentrate on the function of language in conversation, the question of their underlying meaning remains crucial for this investigator.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data for the analysis is based on the selected text titled ‘The Crown of Thorns’ [1]. On linguistic studies of text and discourse, and the systematic functional linguistics introduced by Halliday [23] and the new ways of meaning, notes that whatever is spoken can also be written and that writing is simply an alternative form of speech. Several reasons account for the choice of this text. Language use occurs within a given speech community and gives life and vitality to a people’s history, society and culture. Language and literature have coexisted as inseparable. Language in literature helps to expose readers to samples of real-life settings and increases the cultural enrichment of a people, their culture and beliefs. Thus, language in literature further increases cultural self-awareness in a way that silence and culture are related and interrelated within a specific speech community. Many of the descriptive terms and metaphors are themselves polyvalent enough that they can be used to characterize speech and writing in conflicting and contradictory ways.

After several reading, particular attention was given to the writer’s craftsmanship in conversational style, turn-taking and treatment of the theme of silence as a communicative act. The Critical Discourse Analysis and the Relevance theory, Sperber and Wilson [24], can serve to identify, collect and interpret the different forms and manifestations of silence in conversational turns in the narrative. The data for the study were gathered progressively from instances of interpersonal conversations in the text. Among others, the writer exposes certain political and social ills that hinder development. The narrative is highly dialogic in nature giving the characters the possibility to express themselves completely, their daily experiences including culture shocks, abuse of traditional customs, advent of democracy, influence of administrative authorities and attempts to destroy their long established tradition. Instances of silence, pauses and dumbness are used effectively. In the novel, certain events happen in the life of the people that continue to surprise some members of the ruling class; the chief and his sub-chiefs to the extent that they lack words to express them. This situation is heightened not only when the deity of the land is stolen by unknown individuals. Further, the administrative authorities insist on enthroning someone who is not the choice of the people, are hot issues happening in several villages today. The
conversational topics bother on issues and concerns that affect the whole community and which need to be addressed in different villages in contemporary societies.

At first, instances of silence and pauses in conversational discourse were identified and numbers attributed. It was discovered that in a majority of cases, silence occurs as a reaction of the listener, and is often realised as a response or feedback to an initial request for speech. From a pragmatic perspective, the performative communicative acts of silence and pauses used, whether explicit silence or intra turn pauses, are loaded with illocutionary force. Considering the classification of forms of silence in the analysis, mostly “intra-turn pauses” are taken into account. “Intra turn pauses” are a form of silence which speakers use when they take the floor to answer a question. Therefore, other forms of silence like inter-turn pauses and the speakers’ turn constituting silences with illocutionary force were also regarded. In addition, temporary silence of individuals who do not hold the floor in interaction, total withdrawal of speech in a speech event, silence of a group participants as a constituent of social/religious events, discourse suppressed by a dominant force at various levels of social organization were considered applicable to the social setting under investigation. For the ease of the research, the use of “silence” as intra-turn pauses with illocutionary force, intra-turn pauses with illocutionary force in which the audience is verbally responsive and intentional topic switches with explicit statements signify that the speaker will be silent in the given topic and will talk about an irrelevant topic or a subtopic. The analysis and interpretation of silence as a communicative act is undertaken within the context of Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance, where in certain circumstances, silence expresses a multitude of intentions of a speaker’s feelings and emotions.

Reading and rereading the text critically enabled the reader notice the significant role played by non-verbal language throughout the narrative. He further observed that communicative silence is not silence but reveals deep emotional and psychological state of mind of the speakers. In addition, the principle of relevant silence mostly occurred in the speech of some members of the ruling class, who speak sparingly for fear of saying more than what ought to be said. Data, on silence as a form of speech behavior was collected from major characters like the chief, Nchinda, the corrupt administrative authority, D.O., traditional titled men in Small Monje as Ngobefuo, Achiebefuo etc., as representatives of the socio-political class. Age, gender, social class, and status were relevant variables considered in the choice of informants as well as frequency counts on occurrence of this feature. Collecting such qualitative data reveals much about the linguistic performances and competence of the characters, and equally much about their social status, way of thinking, speech behaviour and the socio-political organisation of the Nweh speech community, their social values and beliefs and corruption and authoritative system.

To analysis silence in face-to-face conversations in Asong’s ‘The Crown of Thorns’, various scientific techniques, drawn from linguistics, sociology, ethnography of speaking, critical discourse analysis and socio-pragmatics have proven quite useful. For the purpose of this investigation, the qualitative analysis and interpretative research used focus on analyzing features inherent in non-speech as a social fact. For easy presentation of the extracts in the text, square brackets are provided to mark different instances of performative communicative acts of silence, short or long pauses used as sample text and hardly given a second thought by many readers. An empirical description of this sort takes into consideration the holistic approach, i.e. one which does not only examine silence as non-verbal form of language use per se, but goes further to account for gestures and kinesics involved in the social context as; who is speaking, to whom, in what circumstances, for what reason, what non-verbal cues are used etc. Each of these are relevant elements that provide a useful body of information to determine the illocutionary force of the silence and their underlying intentions. Gumperz J.J., [5] notes that research in the rapidly growing and evolving field of discourse analysis flows from numerous academic disciplines that are very different from one another, yet interrelated. Linguistics and anthropology each provides adequate methods for analyzing discourse, extending to models and methods to problems of communication, cognitive psychology and literary criticism. Given this interdisciplinary diversity, it is no surprise that the terms “discourse” and “discourse analysis” may have different meanings to scholars in different fields. For many, particularly linguists, “discourse” has generally been defined as the study of anything language beyond the sentence. For Fasold [25], discourse is the study

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of language use in naturally occurring speech as conversations. Conversational implicatures have become one of the principal subjects of pragmatics. An important conceptual and methodological issue in semantics is how to distinguish senses and entailments from generalized conversational implicatures. A related issue is the degree to which sentence meaning determines what is said.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

H. P. Grice [26] was the first to systematically study cases in which what a speaker says may differ from what the sentence used implies. Consider (1).

(1) Alan: Are you going to Paul’s party?

Barb: I have to work.

In this typical exchange, Barb means that she is not going to Paul’s party by saying that she has to work. She does not say that she is not going to Paul’s party, and the sentence she utters does not mean that. Grice introduced the technical terms implicate and implicature for the case in which what the speaker says is distinct from what the speaker thereby means or implies. Thus, Barb implication is not going; that she is not going is an implicature. The “Implicature” denotes either (i) the act of meaning or implying one thing by saying something else, or (ii) the object of that act. Implicatures can be determined by sentence meaning or by conversational context, and can be conventional (in different senses) or unconventional. Such figures of speech such as metaphor and irony provide familiar examples. Implicature serves a variety of goals: communication, maintaining good social relations, misleading without lying, style, and verbal efficiency. Knowledge of common forms of implicature is acquired along with one’s native language.

To lay a solid foundation for a unified theory of cognitive science and together with an attempt to shift the whole centre of gravity of pragmatic theory to a general theory of cognition, He Ziran Ran Yongping [27] cites Sperber and Wilson [24], who proposed the Relevance Theory (RT): Communication and Cognition. Relevance theory is a framework for understanding utterance interpretation as used within cognitive linguistics and pragmatics. The Relevance principle can be defined as: information system principle prescribing that its reports be useful, understandable, timely, and pertinent for decision-making by the respondent. It states that in their contribution, speakers must be relevant.

In the fields of pragmatics and semantics (among others), relevance theory is the principle that the communication process involves not only encoding, transfer, and decoding of messages, but also numerous other relevant elements, including inferences and context. In RT, pragmatic interpretation is substantially seen as a psychological matter governed by the cognitive principle and communicative principle, thus, although it is still at an early stage of development, it is considered fundamental to cognitive pragmatics with its explanatory potential and promise for the future. Controversial as some aspects of the theory may be, this does not diminish the significance of RT as a whole. It has proved to be a very powerful theory which accounts for a wide range of linguistic and cognitive problems, including critical discourse analysis of conversational texts in narrative discourse as this one under examination.

According to He Zirian Ran Yongping [27], the Relevance theory contributes to an understanding of the way information is processed in discourse. It does not present itself in the context of existing cognitive science, but as a revision of Gricean [26] pragmatics, who laid the foundations for an inferential model of communication, an alternative to the classical code model. According to the code model, a communicator encodes the intended message into a verbal or non-verbal sign. From observation, for an utterance to make sense in a communicative situation, it must ‘have a point’: it must contribute something new to some concern of the moment. The strict linguistic meaning of the utterance is very frequently insufficient to achieve the goal of fully integrated comprehension: one can ‘understand’ an utterance and yet fail to see its point. In such a case, one is entitled to say ‘I don’t see what you mean’. One might say that for an utterance to ‘have a point’ or be relevant, it must be linked up with some concern of the moment. Only when the relevance of an utterance is grasped is there full comprehension. Schematically speaking, one can say that there is a relevance function R which takes as input pairs <U, C> of utterances and ‘concerns’, and yields as output integrated interpretations, notes He Zirian Ran Yongping [27]. The empirical and theoretical problem is then to make R explicit, i.e., to provide an
analysis of what is involved in the ‘linking up’ of an utterance $U$ to some concern $C$, and to specify what ‘fully integrated comprehension’ it amounts to, or, in other words, what is meant by ‘the point’ of an utterance. It is possible to say that an utterance $U$ is relevant with respect to a concern $C$ just in case there is a value for $<U, C>$ in $R$. There is, furthermore, an expectation on the part of any hearer that an utterance will be relevant, — there is a ‘presumption of good sense’. If an utterance fails to be relevant in a given $C$, then a hearer will start a search for some other $C$ in which the utterance is relevant. Full comprehension is, therefore, conditional on the selection of a suitable $C$, which must also be identical with the $C$ in which the speaker planned his utterance. The major questions in this whole complex are: ‘What makes an utterance relevant in a given $C$?’, and: ‘What makes a hearer decide whether a given $C$ is the one intended by the speaker?’ These questions have so far remained unanswered, and Sperber and Wilson [24] are to be commended for focussing their attention on them. Nevertheless, the idea in the Theory of Relevance clearly continues the lines set out by Grice [26] whose conversational maxims can be replaced by Sperber and Wilson’s [24] single maxim ‘be relevant.’ A Gricean perspective, properly developed, could be very useful in cognitive science, where experimenters all too often suffer from theoretical myopia.

A particularly deplorable gap is that of total neglect of presuppositions. There is a certain body of perfectly accessible literature where presuppositions are presented as systematic properties of sentences. A presupposition ensures that information necessary for the interpretation of its carrier sentence is stored in the mental representation of the discourse preceding the utterance of the carrier sentence. He Zirian Ran Yongping [27] notes that sometimes the presupposition will already be represented in the discourse representation because it has been uttered as a separate utterance. But, more often, it is supplied post hoc, on account of it being a systematic sentence property (so that competent speakers of the language ‘know’ what to supply). This process is variously called ‘accommodation’ or ‘backward suppletion’. To have a gist of this, take, for example, the following exchange:

1. A: Why does Harry get so inflamed when he sees the pope on TV?
   B: He has renounced Catholicism.

Note that B’s reply entails presuppositions, that Harry was a catholic before. This entailment is singled out by the listener (though the heuristics of this process is not systematically understood), and immediately supplied post hoc in the discourse representation (if it wasn’t represented there already). Now the discourse representation will contain more than just the representations of the two sentences given in (1), since it has the extra representation that ‘Harry was a catholic before’, which is a further, solid, element in the inferential process needed to make B’s reply relevant. There must be available, more-over, background information that the pope is the head of the Catholic Church and some generalizations, e.g. that people who renounce a faith often turn into rabid enemies. Sperber and Wilson [24] may disagree with this discourse-connected notion of presupposition, but then, given their explicit concern with contextual phenomena, their readers expect an argument explaining this position. Talking about presuppositional silence as a communicative act in Asong Linus’ [1] narrative illustrates that people in a position of power as well as those not in power use silence as a defensive strategy in the novel. For example:

[II] (Situation) Around 11.20 on Saturday morning at the residence. The structure IRIRF depicts a short conversation between the goment or D.O., and Kunzia, his house servant:

A. I: [D.O.] Kunzia, Kunzia
B. R: Yes Patron (Hurrying to meet him)
A. I: “Is it true that there was no market today?”
B. R: Looks like Patron
Madam say no man be for market Goment.”
A.F: “Why?”
The man was silent, but the D.O. saw that there was something in his silence...
(The Crown of Thorns, p.145)

In this dialogue of two turns, The D.O. wishes to find out about the situation, from Kunzia, the houseboy, (IR); the first turn is verbal, and when the D.O. initiates a second turn, Kunzia responds again (IRF) adding a Feedback. However, when the D.O. wishes to get an explanation with the question ‘Why?’ ‘The man was silent’, and the author comments that “ the D.O. saw that there was something in his silence.” Note that Kunzia’s second reply ‘Looks like Patron…’ puts him in a safe position, but entails the presupposition that ‘it is true that no man be for market’. This entailment is singled out by the D.O. (though the
heuristics of the matter is not systematically understood), and immediately he supplies a post hoc in the discourse representation (Madam say). Now the discourse representation contains more than just the representations of the two sentences given in (IRIRF), since it has the extra representation of 'there was no market today', which is a further, solid, element in the inferential process needed to make B's reply relevant. The Relevance theory in effect, is an attempt to work out in detail Grice's central claim: that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions.

Gumperz [5] equally claims that interactional sociolinguistics (IS) is an approach to discourse analysis in search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in their everyday communicative practice. It is well known that conversationalists always rely on pre-knowledge that goes beyond grammar and lexicon to make themselves understood. But how such knowledge affects understanding is still not sufficiently clear. Key insights and perspectives on verbal communication come from the ethnography of communication, which holds that instead of seeking to explain talk as directly reflecting the beliefs and values of communities, notoriously difficult to operationalize, it is more fruitful to concentrate on situations of speaking to use Roman Jacobson's term, speech events. He argues that events are unarguably more concretely available for ethnographic investigation. A speech event illustrating silence as described above (in II), by the desertion of the market on a market day, constitute units of interaction subject to direct observation and analyzed by established empirical means. At the same time, such events frequently enter into public discussion by the villagers, so that replicable information on relevant beliefs and values can readily be obtained through focused ethnographic inquiry. The ethnography of communication debate stimulated a wide variety of empirical investigations. These early studies and particularly the findings, which tended to be presented in terms of grammar-like rules of speaking of the form 'in situation A do or say X'. Nevertheless, it is clear that speech event analysis has played an important role in calling attention both to the importance of context in talk and to discourse as a whole. A socio-pragmatic theory combines such techniques as analysis, description and interpretation to understand language use as a social fact and a system of interrelated networks.

The term ‘socio-pragmatics’ was coined by Leech [6] to describe the study of the ways in which pragmatic meanings reflect 'specific "local" conditions on language use'. This sub-field of pragmatics is distinguished from the study of more 'general' pragmatic meaning and focus more particularly, on 'how communication of pragmatic meaning involves speakers' presentation of their identities' as its central concern. Pragmatics offers a refreshingly different perspective from the mainstream approach to 'general' pragmatics followed by most pragmatists. He claims that language and literature influence society as they are inseparably intertwined with human life. If literature ex-rays society and human social actions and behaviour, language use is the medium by which most writers express their inspiration and helps one understand how people in a given society live, think and behave.

5. UNITS OF ANALYSIS

Drawing from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Teun Van Dijk [9] and Kieran [7] sought to understand what people achieve with their speech; what they say and do, how and why speakers behave the way they do in conversational discourse situations. The ability to communicate effectively allows us to understand human nature more clearly. In this light, Farida [15], describes two broad categories of silence which will be highlighted namely, the destructive and constructive silences using several extracts from the text to illustrate how they effectively contribute to the social interaction and development of the narrative. Through face-to-face social interactions, moments during which various forms of silence occur, people tend to unconsciously display different types of feelings, emotions, values, reasoning, weaknesses, influence and strengthen relationships and much more. For the purpose of understanding silence as performative communicative acts, the data collected from the narrative is classified into Farida’s two broad categories in Farida [15], who notes that in recent years, researchers have suggested that silence is not simply an absence of noise nor does it mean ‘nothing.’ In fact, it constitutes a part of communication as important as speech. The context of a situation defines the power and message of silence. Thus, Farida claims that silence can either be ‘leaden’ or ‘golden’. ‘Leaden’ silence is negative and
detructive as it tends to shut down communication and creates barriers that discourage speakers from expressing their thoughts. Many have experienced various negative silences that could be called awkward, appalled, embarrassed, defensive, and fearful silences and writers often signal these silent psychological state through such words as ‘sad’, ‘appalled’, ‘pale’, ‘fighting’, ‘talkative’, ‘embarrassed’, ‘silent’ etc. These could be termed as leaden silences. On the other hand, silence can be ‘golden’. ‘Golden’ silence is positive and constructive silence which moves a conversation or discussion forward. Generally, golden silence is translated by one’s state of being confident, comfortable, reflective, peaceful, or respectful. In written and spoken discourse, these psychological state of silences are signalled through a person’s ability to be articulate, reserved, loud, energetic, joyful and lively. The different forms of silences identified in the narrative were analysed under certain subcategories, namely, (1) Leaden or negative silence include; (1a) Masking, (1b) Avoiding, (1c) Withdrawing, (1d) Awkward silence, and (2) Golden or constructive silences include (2a) Creating space through silence; and (2b) Mindful silence. I will start off with the negative forms of silence and end with the more positive ones. Therefore, rather than an absence of communication, silence is viewed as an intentional act of communication which gives a message.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 Leaden Silence

6.1.1 Masking

Masking describes the act of concealing the existence of something by obstructing the view of it. In Asong Linus’ ‘The Crown of Thorns’, there are occasions where a character is disappointed, angry and hurt and obviously suffering whilst the other person is left in the dark not knowing where they stand equally suffering. This is the prevailing situation witnessed in Chapter 1 of ‘The Crown of Thorns’, when, for example, the story opens with the disappearance of Akeukeue, the deity of the tribe at a critical moment in the land leaving the kingsmakers confused. Achiebefuo, the kingsman;

[III] Achiebefuo rose, coughed and cleared his throat to talk, but words stuck in his throat...

But his heart beat so loud...
(The Crown of Thorns, P.25)

Notice that in sample extract [III], the narrator’s description indicates that Achiebefuo ‘rose, coughed and cleared his throat’ to talk, but ‘words stuck in his throat’ as if to silence him. His inability to speak precludes silence, which can be interpreted as dumbfounded. His seeming consternation conceals the existence of something. Note that the illocutionary act; “His heart beat so loud,” suggests not only that Achiebefuo thoughts and feelings at that moment are affected by the happening and he is frustrated, but there is also a hidden rising anger, tension and bitterness and he felt as if death is eminent. Sometimes silence is used to conceal fear and lost of control in what we can say at that moment. It is an understatement to say he has lost control of himself. The entire world seems to come to a standstill that he could hear his own heartbeat, signifying a loss of face and self-esteem. The narrator describes Achiebefuo’s agitated mind using different illocutionary acts to depict what speaker’s do with words, firstly ‘rising’, ‘coughing and then ‘clearing his throat’, to reveal his emotions and inability to talk at that particular moment and in that situation. We are told that despite all of these, ‘words get stuck in his throat’, suggesting a mental blockage. Through the technique of description the use of concrete action verb to relate the chronology of action is typical of narrative discourse of this type. Rising and ‘coughing’ is not as if he has been suffering from a cold all this while. The pragmatic interpretation of the word ‘rising’ represents a sort of awakening from a dream, and a cough may signify that something is hooked up his trachea, and almost choking life out of him. ‘Clearing his ‘throat’ suggests his desire to explain things clearly, and vindicate himself. Achiebefuo felt Ngobefuo’s question came as a silent but strong blow, an insult and the narrator puts it as a ‘spit on the face’ (P.25). Note that masking in this sense is withholding the full truth of what he actually knows about the matter. This often occurs when a person’s respect is violated and honour baffled. Discovering that Akeukeue has been stolen from the shrine, we are told that Achiebefuo, chief kingsman is disappointed and bitten by the appalling situation;

[IV] Achiebefuo was silent, his head bowed in guilt and he was full of remorse”
(The Crown of Thorns, 1995, p.37)
The narrator presents a vivid description of Achiebefuo’s state of mind in [IV], ‘silent’ with his head bowed down in shame, a kind of face-saving act, with the illocutionary force of guilt, remorse and a strong feeling of bitterness signifying a negative silence. The fact is that because of the enormous complexity of human communication, the speaker is helpless and practically hardly in total control of himself, the situation and the communication process. Narrative discourse is based on vivid describing people, places, things and actions to make the event actual, real and immediate. The description sets out to situate people and their actions in space and time, to render their acts concrete, immediate and convincing. Here, notice that he is astounded by the accusations concerning the disappearance of Akeukeuer and the fact that he is unable to give a clear answer and account. For the analysis to be tangible, it is important to consider what is said and what is done associating other facts;

[V] Realizing that the god of the land has been stolen, every body is pointing an accusing finger at Ngobefuo, the high priest of the land...

Note that rather than speak openly in public, the narrator reports the silent attitude of the other members;

.......every body is pointing an accusing finger at Ngobefuo, the high priest...

In other words, no one is bold enough to confront him directly, yet many assume that he knows the where about of the statute of Akeukeuer. In a way, being silent, his close aids suspect that he is masking or hiding the truth from them. Notice the vivid description of Achiebefuo's inability to utter a word in examples [III] above and the situation with that [IV] below. Upon arrival at the shrine, Ngobefuo is so tensed at what he discovers that he shouts out loud;

[VII] “The chief fell for it. He sat still for a very long time.”
(The Crown of Thorns, p.32)

Staying silent for a ‘very long time’ suggests that he is either avoiding to talk about the issue or he is speechless. As the chief of the village, he is dumbfounded than the others. Sitting ‘still’ denotes inability to think or confusion, an illocutionary act, similar to a near-death state, not in physical motion. The disappearance of the village deity has so many cultural and spiritual implicatures and interpretations, including the thought that the village is fragilized and this situation keeps the chief and the villagers unsafe. To sit ‘still’ is to be silent, soundless, placid, and quiet. But here, the chief is silent but not quiet. He is troubled. There is in an uneasy calm because he is worried and touched. This long silence may be interpreted as a moment when the chief is trying to connect with his ancestors to know what next to do. However, continued long periods of silence is a mild form of aggression and totally ineffective for solving a dispute. However, his silence
gives room for different interpretations and meanings.

Spiritually, in Nweh community, silence is used as the language of the soul. At the shrine, priests practice conscious silence. Before invoking the spirits of ancestors, the first step is inner silence then uttering incantations follow. From a socio-pragmatic interpretation, both non-verbal reactions suggest a psychologically troubled mind, one that is completely depleted of energy and needs to sit and meditate. Note that in the Nweh tradition, the deity is the life giving force of the people. A description of silence in the Nweh society would reveal the salient, but highly coded emotional and psychological messages otherwise unnoticed by most uninitiated readers. An understanding of the relations between silence and culture among the Nweh as a coded system is important. Culture norms determine where and when to speak and when to remain silent. In some cultures, belonging to the circle of kingmakers requires a high level of discretion. Erkman [14] claims that “every culture has a set of symbolic gestures familiar to most of its members though these may have different meanings in different cultures.” This issue is interpreted in different ways based on the culture. The disappearance of the deity is interpreted as a sign of trouble lurking at the corner.

Secondly, upon hearing that Akeukeuer has disappeared, the chief, together with two of his close notables, Ngobefuo and Achiebefuo, set out for the forest shrine to see for themselves. The narrator reports that;

[VIII] “Throughout the trip to the shrine and back, the chief had not as much as uttered a single syllable…”
(The Crown of Thorns, p.46)

Note the silent manner in which the three men carry out this important fact finding mission, reporting that ‘Throughout the trip ... the chief had not as much as uttered a single syllable...’ with pause marks at the end of the sentence. One can imagine how they move with heavy hearts. The chief’s inability to utter a single syllable throughout the trip in company of his close aids reveals his introspective and distancing attitude towards the others. His silence is interpreted as a loss of confidence in his sub-chiefs. Failing to effectively utter a word results in gaps that eventually need filling for the relationship to survive. Avoiding silence involves steering completely away from sensitive subjects. We talk, but without addressing the real issues. Avoiding silence is a form of withdrawal into silence. Pragmatic interpretation reveals the speaker's intended meaning on the phonetic or grammatical form of an utterance and on what the speaker's intentions and beliefs are. It pays particular attention to meaning in context and the influence that a given context can have on the message. It requires knowledge of the speaker's identities, the place and time of the utterance. This implies implicatures: the things that are communicated even though they are not explicitly expressed, including the relative distance, both social and physical space between speakers in order to understand what determines the choice of what is said and what is not said, what is not meant, as opposed to the intended meaning: what is unsaid and unintended, or unintentional.

6.1.3 Withdrawing silence

To withdraw is to keep away from others. Though in the same semantic field as avoiding, withdrawal syndrome deals with the attitude of retreating, pulling away, staying apart, receding, pulling back, retiring, moving back or retracting. Several instances of withdrawing were identified in the narrative. However, just a few samples are used for illustration. In the following extract [IX], Achiebefuo is troubled over an undisclosed issue that has been bothering him;

[IX] “After sometimes, he rose and with an impudent nod of the head, he asked the D.O. to follow him.
Goment, do you see these things that I am holding like nothing?”
“The man remained guiltily silent. He knew that it was his intervention that had sparked off all confusion.”
“This is spittle which we have spat above our heads.
One day it will fall back to foul our faces.”
Ngobefuo added with great foreboding.
We shall never wash our hands clean,” he went on.
There was a silence......
(The Crown of Thorns, p.58)

The illocutionary act ‘after sometimes’ suggests that he has been silent and withdrawn for a considerable period of time as if lost in deep thoughts, signalled by his ‘impudent nod of the head’. Note that even asking the D.O. to come with him, it is not easy to delve into the subject of
discussion. Sitting in silence without words for too long can be very off-putting. There seem to be a long pause... before he can break the silence, showing him something (unnamed) that he is holding. However, when he asked the D.O. to follow him, in essence, it is so that people should hear their private discussion and have no gist on what is the matter. The D.O. surely looks at the things he is holding, and remains silent, described as ‘guilty silent.’ Apparently without disclosing the object, it is presumed that he recollects what Achiebefuo is referring to, as the cause of the present confusion in the village. That unnamed object is a sign of evil, a premonition, of bad omen to befall them as he explains. This far, note that Achiebefuo is still withholding the secret as the illocutionary force of the statement is pushing him withdraw from the deal they made. In a way, he speaks in parables so anyone cannot understand; “This is spittle which we have spat above our heads”; and ‘We shall never wash our hands clean,” and his use of ‘We’ forestalls that the deal included more than one person. Again, there is a troubling silence. So far both speakers do not mention what the topic of discussion is, yet they implicitly understand what it is all about. However, one thing is certain. The act committed is a negative one. This falls in line with Farida’s view that destructive silence shuts down communication and creates barriers that discourage speakers from expressing their thoughts. The D.O.’s silence is due to the negative results of their behaviour, conspiring in the theft of Akeukeue, the village deity and now they are appalled, embarrassed, defensive, and fearful of the outcome, the reason why Achiebefuo reminds him; ‘We shall never wash our hands clean.” The D.O. tends to lose his voice each time this particular subject crops up, being haunted by their act. At the end, both men remain silent. In this narration, silence is not simply an absence of noise or doesn’t mean ‘nothing’ but constitutes a part of communication as important as speech. In this extract, the performative communicative silence conveys multi-meanings such as “impressions, attitudes, emotions and intentions with illocutionary force.” Silence is the language of all strong passions, such as love, anger, surprise and fear of the unknown. It reveals the inner state of the individual associated with hiding the state of emotion, distress, hatred, or anger.

6.2 Awkward Silence

Awkward silence deals with that which causes inconvenience. It is difficult to handle or manage especially because of shape. In the sense used here, awkward is a situation hard to deal with; especially causing pain or embarrassment.

[X] Achiebefuo: “After sometimes he rose and with an impudent nod of the head, asked the D.O. to follow him
Goment, do you see these things that I am holding like nothing?”
“The man remained guiltily silent.
There was a silence.....
(The Crown of Thorns, p.58)

As mentioned earlier, Achiebefuo now realises that the issue he handled with the D.O. is a difficult one. There is total confusion and he feels guilty about it. In a way, Achiebefuo shifts the blame on the D.O., one reason is that he did not do it on his accord. He merely executed orders and instructions from the District Officer. His impudent nod of the head and his silence create this sense of awkwardness, disappointment and irresponsibility at the outcome. When he warns the D.O. that ‘We shall never wash our hands clean,” he is expressing regrets. He is feeling awkward, ill at ease, and uneasiness as negative silence acts. This suggests that often people are so convinced that their own perspective on a problem is right, that they don't stop to think about what they are actually missing out giving enough time to think before acting. The intra turns are comprised of empty spaces in conversation which causes strange, uncomfortable feelings and no one really likes it. The expectation is for action, for direction, and awkwardness is related to a lack of enthusiasm or liveliness.

Pragmatics study the speaker's intended meaning not on the phonetic or grammatical form of an utterance, but on what the speaker's intentions and beliefs are. It pays particular attention to deep meaning in context and the influence that a given context can have on the message. It requires knowledge of the speaker's identity, the place and time of the utterance. This implies that there are implicatures: the things that are communicated even though they are not explicitly expressed, including the relative distance, kinesiology, social and physical space between speakers to understand what determines the choice of what is said and what is not said, what is not meant, as opposed to the intended meaning: what is unsaid unintended, or unintentional.
From the data, another example of awkward silence is the encounter between Ngobefuo and Nchinda.

[XI] Nchinda still held his head down as he did the moment he was asked to sit on the stool.

“Speak,” Ngobefuo urged, and then turned to flattery;

“Prince of light, speak, speak, son of Fuo-ndee himself, King of Kings.
Conqueror of conquerors. Speak, Are you our Chief or not...?”
(The Crown of Thorns, p. 60)

Note Nchinda’s demoralised posture, holding ‘his head down’ is awkward. Due to Nchinda’s silent attitude, Ngobefuo urges him five times to ‘speak’, even using flattery illocutionary acts and cajolers ‘Prince of light’, ‘son of Fuo-ndee himself’, ‘King of Kings’, ‘Conqueror of Conquerors’ as communicative strategies to win over his consent. The verbal silence is not in the word, but the meaning behind it: the words produce the verbal ‘outside’ form and this sort of silence is kept ‘inside’, that’s why it is the verbal silence. If Ngobefuo urges Nchinda to ‘speak’, this is because his silent mode is weighing on him. Unfortunately, these honorific titles, however, do not impress Nchinda who is still indifferent and adamant as suggestive in his strained response;

[XII] “I am not the right person to be chief.”
Nchinda strained to tell them. But the words stuck in his throat.
(The Crown of Thorns, p.60)

Note that Ngobefuo is virtually forcing Nchinda to say something despite his reticence. He finally uses a declarative illocutionary act; “I am not the right person to be chief.” His persistent silence is further revealed in these few words, indicating his resignation from this highly coveted position of village head. Ngobefuo cannot believe that someone can refuse such a noble proposal. His disdain for chieftaincy explains why he even lacks words and speaks very little about this topic, which explains his awkward silence found in the next extract in which Ngobefuo continues in vain to convince Nchinda to be the next chief of the village:

[XIII] Ngobefuo threw his hands in the air in utter frustration, paused for a very long time and then said with infinite patience:

Ngobefuo: “Our son, it is you we have caught.
Nkoaleck will never be chief. He cannot be chief.
Do you agree or not?
There was silence.
(The Crown of Thorns, P. 61)

This extract opens with Ngobefuo’s frustration and a long pause. His infinite patience is prove of a troubled mind. This discursive discourse is expected to be a give-and-take issue. It is meant to be a conversation between Ngobefuo, a notable, and Nchinda, a prince, but here we are involved in a monologic dialogue. In a negotiation, discussions involve turn-taking and more than one point of view in order to reach an agreement between the two. Discussions and conversations create instances for social interaction and occasions by which a speaker attempts to persuade his listener to change his mind though the listener decides to stay silent despite his persuasive illocutionary acts in this extract with ‘Our Son, it is you we have caught.’ Note the use of the collective ‘We’ and the cacophony in his proposal. Despite all of these, ‘There was silence’, which can be described as awkward silence. In order words, he uses an informative speech act that all the villagers (we) have unanimously agreed that ‘it is you we have caught,’ discrediting his rival; ‘Nkoaleck will never be chief. He cannot be chief,’ using a promising act and swearing that he ‘cannot’. His silence demonstrates his unwillingness to agree.

[XIV] “For the last time, Ngobefuo began, “do you accept or not?”
“There was no answer”
(The Crown of Thorns, P. 61)

In his persuasive strategy, he uses declarative speech acts of insisting and repetition. These illocutionary acts show the speaker’s scorn and hatred for Nkoaleck. The point is that for quite some time now, the village of Small Monje has been without a ruler and Ngobefuo, for personal reasons has been struggling to convince Nchinda to accept this position, ‘Do you accept or not?’ sounds more of an injunction, but he is seemingly adamant to the proposal. Austin and Searle describe three aspects of a speech act, namely; ‘locution’, ‘illocution’, and a ‘perlocutionary force’. The same illocutionary act can be performed via a different illocutionary act: He cannot be chief is a performativ speech act whose functions includes ‘promising’, ‘predicting’, ‘warning’ and ‘threatening’ at the same time.
Looking at [XII] below, the illocutionary act, ‘do you accept or not’ performs a multitude of directive illocutionary acts including accepting or refusal, agreeing or disagreeing. The listener’s decision to remain silent communicates an attitude of indifference. His silence translate his view that what seems to be a golden crown of royalty is actually a ‘Crown of Thorns,’ reasons why ‘there is no answer.’ This weakens their message and position. In a hurry to fill the silence, they often settle for less and compromise their bargaining position. His repeated silence leaves Ngobefuo, the kingmaker, tongue tight and in total confusion. The illocutionary act; ‘There was no answer’ performs a double function described as informative and communicative intention translating an attitude of total withdrawal from the issue of chieftaincy. This suggests that certain speech acts can and do perform one or more than one function at a time. Note that one can say a lot by not uttering a word and create a greater impact. Few writers have used communicative silence effectively. In the narrative, Nchinda uses silence as an asset and an effective strategy not to provide a response in the negotiation. For a raise or promotion, a good negotiator must be able not only to present his/her position, but also to listen and use the power of the pause. This extract demonstrates that communicative silence can convey multi-meanings such as “impressions, attitudes, emotions and intentions with illocutionary force.” Silence reveals the inner state of the individual associated with hiding the state of emotion and distress.

[XV] Ngobefuo threw his hands in the air in utter frustration, paused for a very long time and then said with infinite patience:

“Our son, it is you we have caught. Nkoaleck will never be chief. He cannot be chief. Do you agree or not? There was silence.

“For the last time, Ngobefuo began, “do you accept or not?”

“There was no answer”

(The Crown of Thorns, P. 61)

‘Throwing his hands in the air’ is a sign of utter despair about the situation. The population needs a leader and Ngobefuo is convinced that ‘Nkoaleck will never be chief.’ While Ngobefuo continues his supplications “Do you agree or not? Nchinda’s silence suggests a total breakdown in communication leading to resignation, desperation and desolation. In desperation; “For the last time, Ngobefuo reiterates, “do you accept or not?” hoping that Nchinda might finally change his mind, yet “There was no answer”. The extract below further illustrates the use of awkward silence;

[XVI] Nchinda: “I slept very well,” he answered with indifference and in a voice that bore all the traces of insomnia. ..
Ngobefuo: “Your Highness, they have brought you these.”
The chief levelled a look at him and then remained moodily silent.
An uncomfortable silence followed…

(The Crown of Thorns, p. 62 )

Note the ironical tone in the response. We are informed that he answered with indifference and with traces of sleep in his voice.

6.3 Golden Silence

6.3.1 Creating space through Silence

Generally, golden silence describes one’s state of being confident, comfortable, reflective, peaceful, or respectful.

[XVII] Kunza: “You have taken up responsibilities at a very unfortunate moment captain,” he began.
The man was silent.
“Anything wrong sir?” he asked
D.O.: “there is something seriously wrong in Small Monje…..There is most likely a civilian uprising there against the government.
It sounds serious.”
There was silence.
(The Crown of Thorns, P. 210)

In written or spoken discourse, silence may signal a speaker’s emotions and psychological state to be inarticulate, reserved, loud, energetic and lively. Articulate and energetic silences are golden such as confident, comfortable, reflective, peaceful, or respectful silences. In [XVI], Ngobefuo continues with his wooing;

[XVIII] Ngobefuo: “Tell me here and now,
I am asking you with the tongue of your father, with the tongue of your forefathers,
……..Will you accept this crown and lead your people the gods had foreordained, or not?”
There was silence.

Though Ngobefuo continues to insist on the subject of becoming the next chief with ‘Tell me.’
this time invoking the ‘tongue of his father and forefathers, Nchinda seems to be confident about his stance. Such silences are helpful tools for enhancing the communication and to promote and maintain the existing relationship. In this circumstances, Nchinda’s silence demonstrates his neutrality and holding his head down suggests his pensive mood to show that I am listening/ Let me take time to think, for example;

[XIX] “The crown of Nkokonoko Small Monje has never been forced down the head of anybody who is to be their chief
We only want to make sure that the blame is not on us”
There was silence.
(The Crown of Thorns, p.60)

It may equally demonstrates respect and sometimes agreement with the speaker not the idea. It is up to the others to guess what he is thinking about and usually does not wish to reveal to them his thoughts in public. It may equally be interpreted that I need time to think about the issue, as illustrated in the extracts. Though he remains silent, it does not break the conversation. Eastern beliefs hold that “Among the wise of secret knowledge, I am their silence.” Bhagavad Gita in Chapter X. This sort of silence allows the conversation to flow hoping perhaps that Nchinda will come to his senses and agree to the proposal. True communication can only occur when there is mutual respect and listening takes place. Note that Nchinda could have asked Ngobefuo to go away and leave him alone, a sign of impoliteness, but he continues to listen. Hence the word listen has silent in it. By listening and being silent we think before we speak and therefore there is less chance of speaking impulsively and sending the wrong message. We empower the other person by showing discipline to not open our mouths so as to savour all the flavours of their conversation. In addition, graphically non-verbal silence can be represented with dots or a dash. Asong’s narration profusely uses the persuasive performative acts to convince Nchinda to agree to be chief ‘I am asking you with the tongue of your father, with the tongue of your forefathers.’

Sometimes, silence is a sign of strength of the spirit, where deliberately remaining silent demonstrates self-mastery as illustrated in [XVIII];

[XX] The day was Saturday…At eleven o’clock when the market was supposed to be packed full, but not a single soul was there…

D.O.: “Kunzia, Kunzia”
The old man answered and hurried to him
“Is it true that there was no market today?”
Kunza: “Madam say no man be for market Goment.”
D.O.: “why?”
The man was silent, but the D.O. saw that there was something in his silence which he was afraid to say.
“Tell me, Kunzia. You know your people.”
Silence.
“If you do not tell me Kunzia…you will not work here again…”
You hear me?” (threats)
Silence
(The Crown of Thorns, P.174)

Off course, Kunzia knows what is going on but prefers to remain silent. He knows that the villagers can no longer swallow the injustices of the ‘goment’. The narrator tells us that; but the D.O. saw that there was something in his silence which he was afraid to say.’ According to him, Kunzia was afraid to say it, though this is not the case. Threats not to continue working for him does not shake him. He is steadfast, confident and silent on the boiling revolution until it happens. Here he demonstrates strength of spirit.

[XXI]Kunza:“You have taken up responsibilities at a very unfortunate moment captain,” he began.
The man was silent.
“Anything wrong sir?” he asked
“there is something seriously wrong in Small Monje…..There is most likely a civilian uprising there against the government.
It sounds serious.”
There was silence.
(The Crown of Thorns, P.210)

Sometimes, as in this case, silence is always the best answer to a difficult situation, and silence becomes a golden opportunity when you cannot think of a good answer’. Notice that silence is very important, even at the dawn of the serious civilian uprising against the corrupt government.

6.4 Mindful Silence

Mindful silence deals with instances where speakers exercise caution or show care or attention, bearing in mind; being attentive to, unhurried and with care and dignity. Note the ironical mindful silence expressed in [XXII] Earlier, despite of the D, O.’s desperate attempts
to seek for a compromise, the people remain silently resilient and adamant in their plans [XXII];

[XXII] The D.O.: “My people, let us work together for the construction of this nation.”
There was silence.
They were not his people,
(The Crown of Thorns, P.180)

In fact, the D.O.’s tone in this turn becomes moderate when he says; “My people, let us work together …” after which ‘There was silence.’ using the skill of reflection people are quiet and thoughtfully ironical. People are looking inward, listening to themselves for new possibilities. It is a very positive experience which requires deep thinking. Reflection is in fact, the most under-used performance enhancement tool. It is upon deep reflections that it came to him that; ‘They were not his people.’ The narrator effectively uses this device to develop the climax as the oppressing power crumples in [XXIII].

[XXIII] The D.O. mopped the sweat from his face, licked his thick lips and in a quavering voice asked
“Please, what is it you want, you people?”
All attempts to keep anger and panic out of his voice failed.
There was silence.
(The Crown of Thorns, P.181)

This is the climax as the tension rises in the village. The D.O. is sweating and his voice is quavering, almost inaudible. This act of silence suggests the speaker’s mastery and better understanding of the situation and knows when to act promptly. His question, pleading; Please what is it you want, you people? Signals his change of position. Often we are so convinced that our own perspective on a problem is right, that we don’t stop to think about what we are actually missing. Use the positive voice of silence to collect your thoughts and to channel them in a more positive manner. The illocutionary force in this speech act is that the speaker accepts his defeat and seeks for peace. Devastated by recent events taking place in his community, the protagonist retires into apparent passivity, barely struggling to control his anger and frustration for too long. Below, events take place so fast;

[XXIV] The day was Saturday…At eleven o’clock when the market was supposed to be packed full, but not a single soul was there… D.O.: “Kunzia, Kunzia”
The old man answered and hurried to him “Is it true that there was no market today?”

Kunza: “Madam say no man be for market Goment.”
D.O.: “why?”
The man was silent, but the D.O. saw that there was something in his silence which he was afraid to say.
“Tell me, Kunzia. You know your people.”
Silence.
“If you do not tell me Kunzia…you will not work here again…”
You hear me?” (threatens)
Silence
(The Crown of Thorns, P.174)

Mark how in describing that fateful Saturday, the narrator continues to evoke various forms of implicit and explicit silence, for example; when he says ‘the market was supposed to be packed full, but not a single soul was there…’: ‘The man was silent’; ‘tell me, Kunza’; ‘Silence.’; If you don’t tell me Kunza…you will not work for me again…’; Silence. Such vivid description tells us that there was total silence at the market place foreboding something serious. Off course, Kunzia knows what is going on but prefers to remain silent. He knows that the villagers can no longer swallow the injustices of the ‘goment’. The narrator tells us that; ‘the D.O. saw that there was something in his silence which he was afraid to say.’ According to him, Kunzia is afraid to say it, though this is not the case. Threats not to continue working for him does not shake him. He is steadfast and silent on revealing the boiling revolution until it happens. Here he demonstrates strength of spirit. Being quiet when we should talk creates dysfunction and disunity among us. But silence, when timed correctly, is the language of connection. Failing to talk effectively will always result in gaps that will eventually need filling for the relationship to survive.

7. SILENCE IN ‘THE CROWN OF THORNS’

Silence is an area of interest to linguists, educationalists and writers. Its application to the teaching of language and communication as well as literature has recently gained significant interests. In the novel, the speaker can be silent in the conversation to convey a message to the listener. In [X] for instance, “After being silent for sometimes, Achiensufu arose, with an impudent nod of the head, a signal of withdrawal and disagreement. He is giving a message that what the D.O. and he did was not right. ‘….. Goment, do you see these things that I am holding like nothing?’” Remember his silent attitude is a way of admitting his guilt so that the D.O. can also
admit their wrong and to change. “The man remained guilty silent suggests that the D.O. himself is realising the error they did. His silent mood equally conveys a message of stress and guilt. Their silence is communicatively relevant. Their silence expresses that they are upset because things are not working out the way they planned it. The appropriate use of silence can be the most subtle form of communicating one’s emotions and feelings. The term ‘socio-pragmatics’ was coined by Leech [6] to describe the ways in which pragmatic meanings reflect ‘specific “local” conditions on language use’ (1983: 10) and more particularly, analyse ‘how intended meaning is communicated in conversations and their cultural identities.’ Grice [26] developed an influential theory to explain and predict conversational implicatures, and describe how they arise and are understood as cooperative. The Cooperative Principle and its associated maxims play a central role in Relevance Theory extending to the principle of communicative efficiency. Problems for such principle-based theories include over-generation, lack of determinacy, clashes, and the fact that speakers often have other goals. Hence socio-pragmatics considers the social and cultural aspects of society due to the fact that language and culture are interrelated and facilitate understanding. Language and culture are elements of social facts. Signs used by members of the Nweh community have different meanings in different cultural contexts. For instance; Nchinda still held his head down as he did the moment he was asked to sit on the stool.‘The concept ‘to sit on the stool,’ in Nweh culture is not as simple as it may seem. As in other African tradition, the ‘stool’ is a symbol of power, royalty and the supernatural comparable to the throne. Nchinda understands this as a product of the palace and chieftaincy is a highly coveted position in every society.

Accordingly, a simple stool may be the ordinary sitting object people use, but from a pragmatic interpretation, the writer means that Nchinda does not intend to change his point of view or position in the utterance ‘still held his head down as he did because, were he to take his head up, it would be signal a change that he has agreed ‘to sit on the stool’, i.e., to become the chief. The stool is a symbol of royalty and power. It gives learners a lot of information about different aspects of the Nweh culture. A pragmatic approach together with the critical discourse analysis approach helps learners contextualize the meaning of the vocabulary items and facilitate the learning process by passing information to the long-term memory. The attitude of the speaker is revealed through the use of other accompanying facial expressions. Silence may increase or release tension and stress within the body.

8. RESULTS

The use of communicative silence in face-to-face interaction is outstanding. The findings reveal that while silence is highly communicative, the speakers preferred few intra turn pauses. Where pauses were observed, it was found out that it was employed to realize certain speech acts that enable the flow of the conversation.

Ad hoc assumptions of silence in the form of speech acts.

Intra-turn pauses with illocutionary force Intra-turn pauses tend to serve the functions of threatening [XXIV], seeking avoiding silence [VII], verbal silence [VIII], guilty silent [X], seeking for approval, refusal to speak/answer [XI], accusing silence[V], awkward/uncomfortable silence [XVI], challenging mindful silence[XIX], frustrating silence [XV] fearing [XXIV], ironical mindful or tension silence [XXVIII].

Seeking the truth. This proverb implies that one should say only a few useful and important words in his communication with others. This, in turn, means that the speaker must be honest and tell only truth.

Silence in interpersonal conversations is also used to convey a multitude of meanings. Defiant silence as experienced in [XXVII] may be used in connection with other non-verbal meanings like verbal gestures like facial expressions to reveal confusion. In such situations, participants tend not to use language most of the time as a hint of appreciating the value of being silent. Silence is considered as wisdom, and above all it is good for avoiding conflict among people.

Culture norms determine where and how to use silence as a means of communication. Many conversationalists tend to use silence to express sorrow, regret and embarrassment.

From the analysis of silence as a communicative act in Asong Linus’ The Crown of Thorns’, this study has effectively analyzed the forms and significance of various forms of silence interpreted as performative communicative acts in Nweh culture. Therefore, rather than an absence of communication, silence should be
viewed as an intentional act to communicate a specific message. It can be an effective non-verbal strategy in critical situations of interpersonal communication. Silence can also be viewed as a cultural value which is associated with dignity and wisdom. In many cases in the novel, silence is more effective and influential in communication than speech. Hence, the different forms of silence examined highlight the Nwah people and an understanding of their culture.

9. CONCLUSION

Language use as communicative acts has been under focus in the last century by prominent researchers and linguists like Saussure (1913), Jacobson (1974), Chomsky (1957), Kristeva (1986), and others. In contemporary times focus of critical discourse analysis (CDA) Kieran (2003) and socio-pragmatics (Leech 1987) is the study of face-to-face interpersonal interaction and language use in its social context. The main concern, among other things, has been communication among individuals in a way other than the spoken language and the transfer of the cultural elements to the language environment. Communication can be classified as verbal, non-verbal and written. In studying narrative discourse such as Asong Linus' 'The Crown of Thorns', the non-verbal communication process among individuals through wordless messages, such as silence is quite significant. This is because silence, including the short and long pause in the dialogue, where neither the speaker nor the listener speaks constitute effective way to communicate a variety of messages in the novel. It attracts listeners' attention to what the speaker intends to do or say. In understanding a conversational text the speaker can be silent during the conversation yet convey a message to his readers. In all, silence is a communicative act and both speaker and listener must be attentive to the message conveyed. Silence in 'The Crown of Thorns' represents different aspects which are based on culture and their use depends on the situation. It may be laden, negative or destructive or it may be golden, positive or constructive as highlighted with different extracts from the narration. It may convey respect, kindness, acceptance, or disrespect, scorn, hate and disagreement and many other feelings. The study reveals that keeping silent may have different meanings depending on the situation.

In this study, drawing on from Sperber and Wilson’s (ibid.) Relevance Theory, ad hoc assumptions of illocutionary force of silence at informative and communicative levels of intention in intra turn pauses are carefully examined and corresponding speech acts are evaluated. Limited to our data, the analysis revealed the characters in the novel preferred using a lot of silence cues and few intra turn pauses, which validate the view that they are inarticulately communicative and close in social communication. Most instances of performative silences and pauses are seemingly mutually perceived, performing both informative and the communicative intention. The most frequent type of silence occurred as intentional responses and feedbacks in our data. Besides, intra turn silences and pauses carry illocutionary forces of approving, seeking for approval, refusing to speak or answer, challenging, and accusing, which consolidates the universal view that silence in communication has a meaning and function (Sifianou, 1997, Agyekum, 2002, Nakane, 2007, Ephratt 2008). These results are valuable in that they have provided an idea of what the pragmatic functions of silence are in conversational extracts in Asong Linus' ‘The Crown of Thorns’, pinpointing the fact that this preliminary study needs to be supported with the studies of other types of silence using broader data. The fact that the characters usually never refrain from ‘silences’ and ‘pauses’ indicates they are articulate and expressive. For example, in ‘You hear me?’ (threatens), the response is Silence.’ It is difficult to say whether he is silent because he is really asking a question telling him to know. One does not understand whether he has heard and understood or not. Silence can be a face-saving strategy to many. In this case, Kunzla, the houseboy refrains from speaking probably because he is in support of the revolution; whether performing a face threatening or face-saving act. When silence of any form is communicative, it does contributes to the development of the plot and character in the narrative occurring as powerful communicative signals. Each instance of non-verbal language use conveys a message and sometimes one silent act may perform more than one functions.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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