

The Utilization of Language in Samuel Becket's Play "Waiting for Godot"



توظيف اللغة في مسرحية صموئيل بكييت "انتظارا لغودو"

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المستخلص

لقد ركزت هذه الدراسة البحثية على استخدام اللغة في مسرحية "انتظارا لغودو" للكاتب الأيرلندي الشهير صموئيل بكيث ابرزت لنا هذه المسرحية وجود البرجوازية الحديثة واطهرت لنا كذلك التزام الكاتب الصمت في نقل الحقائق بأسلوبه الشخصي. وقد هدفت هذه الدراسة الحالية بأبراز دور اللغة ومن ثم بينت قدرة الكاتب في تحقيق هدفه وفي خلق هكذا نوع من الحوارات ليقدّم لنا صورة عن الحياة العبثية في ذلك الوقت. كما تمكن الكاتب من إيصال رسالته التي تضمنت ان اللغة لا تستطيع التعبير عن احزاننا وآلامنا ولهذا فان شخصيات المسرحية تقف أحيانا على المسرح دون استخدام اللغة وجعلت من الجمهور فهم مقصدها ويبقى الكاتب في عالم الصمت ويتفاخر بنقل الحقيقة ونأمل ان تنقل لنا هذه الدراسة الحقيقة التي تزعم " ان بعض مواقف الحياة يمكن فهمها دونما استخدام اللغة".

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the use of language in "Waiting for Godot" by the great Irish playwright Samuel Becket. The play displays existence of the modernist bourgeois ideology. It also helps to show how the writer keeps silent at certain stages in an attempt to convey the fact in his personal way.

The study aims to show the significance of language in the current play. Then how the playwright achieves his goal in creating such kind of dialogues to give us the picture of absurd life at that time. The writer wants to say that language sometimes doesn't able to express our sorrows and anguish. The characters of the play stand without using language but the audience understand their intention. The writer uses silence and boasts to tell the truth. It is hoped that this play gives us a lesson that some situations in life can be understood without using language.

Introduction

The French drama was constituted by Samuel Beckett in 1948. It represented as a tragicomedy. The tragedy of "Waiting for Godot" was very much suitable to that period especially the period after the world wars. These wars were terrible and violent. The world was suffering from crisis and from the adventures of governments. Human feelings of despair became part of their daily life. They started to live a meaningless life and vagueness of future. The European society started to seek on their own philosophy, the philosophy that made them away of religious aspects. Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot" represents as a paramount literary production in the world of drama. The 20th century has witnessed the appearance of such drama on the stage of absurd theatre. It also witnessed a philosophical themes and an independent language. The play employs the language in a way that often depends on meanings and highlights the fragmented circumstances of modern man. The writer tries to show the language as a tool for communication conveying how words language can create a sense of interaction. The current paper attempts to show how the author of the play uses the language not a mere dialogue, but as a major element that created absurdity.

In Becket's play, the language sometimes fails to communicate that's why the writer uses it in unconventional way. It expresses the suitable atmosphere of waiting for a person who never come. It derives the plot and reveals the characters in the traditional scene. The language of the play can be effectively noticed that reflects the atmosphere of absurdity and manifest the psychological mood of the character.





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An Introductory Glance at the Play

If we look to the play carefully, we notice that it displays conflict and contradiction of unity less than meanings. There is no central idea but a diverse and irregular meanings within the text. This doesn't mean that the literary work is not complete rather it is suitable to the modernist bourgeois ideology, which covers it with silence at some expressions to appear the truth. This paper attempts to highlight the utilization of language as well as to display how the text's language portrays the writers on the tongues of the characters. However, the play shows a historical perspective towards the concept of absurdity, it provides us with huge violations of conventional drama.

"Nothing to be done" (Beckett, 1956) gives us an introduction to the idea of absurdity in the play. It also portrays the uncertainty of human future in Europe and the confusion that made human away of real life.

The Irish writer, Samuel Beckett wrote this play in French in 1949. Then translated it into English. At that time, the symbolist movement was in its peak and lasted until 1900 in France. Thus it was considered as an embankment from realism to modernism. Symbolist movement had a strong influence on arts and literature. The symbolist writers intend to convey personal and dream-like situations of consciousness depending on the use of metaphorical language. The play has been acted in Europe and achieved great reputation. According to (Esslin, Martin, 1980, p.3) "One of the successes of the post-war theatre".

Generally speaking, the writer uses a lot of key words in the language of the play and most of these words refer to questions "What?", "Why?", "How?", "Where?" or "When?", which denote his idea about the existence of and become fundamental part of the dialogue among the characters.

Estragon: Who?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: What's all this about?

Abused who?

Vladimir: The Saviour. Estragon: Why?

Vladimir: Because he wouldn't save them. (Beckett, "Waiting for Godot" 9)".

After Estragon's trials to change, he believes that nothing to be fulfilled. Vladimir also confirms this idea because he does his best but in vain. The state of pointless waiting in the absurd world leads to much anxiety. The traces of anxiety can be felt in the play through their language which reflects the absurd atmosphere. The characters in the play feel free to speak and do anything.



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Beckett as well as Camus offered some kinds of solution in the absurd world. For instance, Camus had offered a type of response to the absurd and made the citizens able to fight the death, this was clearly reflected in his work "*The Plague*". Samuel Beckett's characters did not revolt against absurd as Camus's characters do, yet, they use humour sense to get rid of their misery. They also use other ways to escape of thinking of their situation through trivial dialogue:

Vladimir: There's nothing we can do.

Estragon: But I can't go on like this!

Vladimir: Would you like a radish?

Estragon: Is that all there is?

Vladimir: There are radishes and turnips.

Estragon: Are there no carrots?" (Beckett, "Waiting for Godot" 44)

The connections between language and its performance

As far as the connection on the stage is concerned, the writer was very much aware that his play is going to be acted well and pay the attention of the audience. It also adds a special effect to the performance. Beckett used a kind of a kind of stage direction to support the written text and give the readers the chance to think. (Michael, 1961).

Beckett uses special type of language to prove the importance of language for human being. The writer tackles speech pattern for his character, sound effects, pronoun changes, and repeated words to apply the themes of the play. The writer wants to express the idea of absurdity in a way that mixed between comic and dull expression. (Batty, 2013).

The essence of the play stands on the ambiguity of human so the play shows the human suffering and the negative effects of modern capitalism on a man at that era. It also reveals the bad consequences of industrial capitalism on human beings and the exploitation by bourgeoisie forces who exploited people in different levels. (Terry, Eagleton, 2003). The writer of the play would like to reveal the fact that the current play gives us a lesson that human cannot live alone.

According to (Catherine Belsely) that ideology is buried in every utterance of language yet there is a signifying system of the social formation whenever the reader feels common sense, folkways, and everyday behavior, social gestures, and myth are relevant signs in this respect. (Catherine, 1980). The writer uses the symbol of Godot to reveal the man situation in modern capitalist formation and this suffering comes to a head in the portrait of Godot in which the play splits between the contrastive meanings. In this respect, the play "Waiting for Godot" turns into a contradictory and ambiguous one. The ideological establishment of





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this ambiguity gives us a picture on human conflict, and at the same time it reflects the distrust of modern changes.

The play foregrounds the circularity, repetitiveness rather than its function of communication. The play's dialogues were illogical and transforming linguistic emptiness. Characters were engaged speeches that guide them nowhere. As (Worth, 2004) claims that the actions in the play reflect bodily performance rather than language alone.

The Dialogues of the Two Major Characters

Both the characters speak in a circular way. They mix between comedy and tragedy. Estragon sometimes knows completely that he is in a discomfort with Valdmir. This dynamic tension supports the play in spite of lacking of plot development (Cohen,2001).

The writer utilizes pauses, repetition, movements to serve as a portrayal for the empty the characters' experience. The dialogue between the characters does not put a solution rather it annotates meaning (Connor, 1988).

The dialogue between the two main characters is distinguished by the repetition and incoherence, which denotes the state of Estragon and Vladimir. They are waiting for unknown person whose name is Godot but never come. Estragon often refers to his desire to put an end to his suffering whereas Vladimir keeps on the same routine and hope. (Bennett, 1990).

Moreover, Samuel Becket uses pauses after silence as gaps to emphasize the manipulation of language in a limited way in expressing the fact. The dialogues of the two major characters in the play gives us the insight scene of human condition under the tent of absurdity. (Kalb, 1989).

Finally, the dialogue portrays the failure of communication for instance Estragon forgets events that he immediately mentions them. Vladimir adheres to ritual speech. The loss of the communication between them reflects the human struggle to find an intimacy in a fragmented world. (Fletcher, 2000).

Beckett and the Solution in the Absurd World

Samuel Beckett is not the only dramatist who shows some types of solution in the theatre of absurd. He does not use humor only for the sake of laughter, but he uses simple ways to imitate high society or characters. This can be traced by the character of Pozzo who keeps up to be seen: "*Pozzo: Good. Is everybody ready? Is everybody looking at me? Will you look at me pig! ... I am ready. Is everybody listening? Is everybody ready?*" (Beckett, 30 31). This kind of exaggeration has been done by Beckett refers to double meanings, the first one refers to comic in themselves and fun of everyone who sees himself higher than others. This



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can be clearly noticed when Tramp meets Pozzo. They are not certain who Pozzo to be so he tells "(Terrifying voice) I am Pozzo! (Silence) Pozzo! (Silence) Does that name mean nothing to you?" Estragon answers: "Pozzo....no... I'm afraid I... no... I don't seem to." (Beckett 22). Through this imitation, Samuel Beckett wants to inform us that outer appearances as compared with reality is nothing. They mean nothing just like Pozzo "His melodramatic style falls flat in this world of empty waiting. His acting style, like his attitudes, is out of date and irrelevant, and his importance for Vladimir and Estragon, as well as for the audience, extends little beyond helping time to pass more quickly." (Mackean).

Actually, Beckett faced the philosophical way of the absurdity i.e the struggle between the man and his/her desire. Here are some of the solutions that are suggested by the author.

- 1- Acceptance without illusion. He shows the character with high dignity.
- 2- Human connection: In spite of Vladimir and Estragon's friendship, they depart each other at last.
- 3- Irony and Humor: The author use irony against despair.
- 4- Continuity: The writer keeps on showing hopelessness even when there is no language, but it continues as a kind of rebellion.

Conclusion

The current study shows how language plays a vital role in reflecting human suffering and meaningless of life. The writer tries to create the suitable atmosphere that comes fit with the absurd life. He uses fragmented dialogues to reveal the characters' situation who are waiting for a figure that never come. He uses a non-sensual dialogues to bring a world of disorder. In addition to that, Becket uses pantomime, signs, and movements to create inanimate things perform their actions. He submits his language in a reduction way to suit the situation of meaningless life. The writer proves that life goes in the same circle and nothing to done. All the previous factors help the dramatist to manipulate the language to represent the absurd life of modern man.

The utilization of the language represents the outcomes of different aspects in each drama especially the drama of the absurd. The use of the words uttered with no relations or grammatical structures find in the absurdist's writings. They show their distrust of language as a means of communication. Thus Becket is fully aware with the language function to express the danger of life so the writer uses it as a means to create the atmosphere of absurdity. The language that author uses in his play becomes the sufficient means to represent the cold life.





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The whole events of "Waiting for Godot" manifests that all characters' yesterday have the same repetitive daily routine of life and that the future will be the same as yesterday. Therefore, the writer succeeded in depicting the absurd life of modern human.

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