

Linguistic Disparity of the Social Status of the Protagonists The Determinism of in *the Dumb Waiter* by Harold Pinter: Stylistic Study

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Abstract:

This paper tackles *The Dumb Waiter* written by the playwright Harold Pinter in 1957. The play is about two men “Ben and Gus” who are waiting for an order from their unknown boss, in a basement room in a hotel. The mysterious order is confirmed through a dumb waiter, moreover the plot turns to be a catalyst for tension, and consequently the characters’ existential uncertainties and strained interactions portray intuitively the absurd waiting for the nothingness. This study examines, through Jonathan Culpeper’s (1996) im/politeness theory and Mick Short’s (1996) list of powerful and powerless speech style, the linguistic interactions between the two characters, Ben and Gus. With the help of the determinism, this study aims to expose the notion of absurdity or waiting for the nothingness in the play through disparity in power of speech of the two main characters. Therefore, the main point of this study is to clarify the question of the deterministic reasons of the absurd ending of the play *The Dumb Waiter* through the above mentioned theories. Thus, this paper will provide a realistic understanding of the linguistic interactions of the two characters in order to simulate and trace the realistic mirrors of the absurd theatre.

Keywords: Determinism, Power-disparity in the speech style, Linguistic study of im/politeness, Powerful and powerless speech style, Absurdity.

حتمية التباين اللغوي للطبقة الاجتماعية للأبطال

في مسرحية (النادل الابكم) لهارولد بنتر

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الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث مسرحية " النادل الاصم " التي كتبها الكاتب المسرحي هارولد بنتر عام 1957 وتطور أحداثها باختصار حول رجلين " بن و كاس " ينتظران أمرًا من رئيسهما المجهول، في غرفة في الطابق السفلي لأحد الفنادق. يتم تأكيد الامر الغامض من خلال النادل الأبكم، ثم تتحول القصة إلى حافز للتوتر، وبالتالي فإن مكان الشخصيات السري وعلاقتهم المتوترة مع بعض هي في الواقع انتظار اعتباطي كانتظارهم العبثي للعدم. هذه الدراسة تدرس التداخلات اللغوية بين الشخصيتين "بن و كاس"، من خلال نظرية الكلام المؤدبوالغير مؤدب لكولبير (1996) وايضا من خلال قائمة ميك شورت (1996) لأسلوب الكلام القوي والضعيف. وعليه تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن فكرة العدم في المسرحية، ولذلك فإن الفكرة الرئيسية للبحث هي توضيح مسألة الأسباب الحتمية للنهاية العبثية لمسرحية النادل الابكم من خلال النظريات المذكورة أعلاه. وبالتالي فإن هذا البحث يهدف الى توضيح الفهم الواقعي للتداخلات اللغوية بين الشخصيتين لمحاكاة وتتبع الانعكاس الواقعي للمسرح العبثي.

الكلمات المفتاحية : هارولد بنتر، النادل الابكم، نظرية الاكتراث/عدم الاكتراث، اسلوب الكلام القوي والضعيف، العبثية.

1. Introduction

Harold Pinter was born on October 10, 1930, from Jewish parents, in a working-class in East London on October 10, 1930. Pinter's father was a tailor. In his childhood, he underwent the unfortunate terror of being dismayed during the conquest of the Nazis. Accordingly this fact affected his status of pacifist and he was later indulged into a strong sense of viciousness or evil of power, and its entire menace of human aggressive interactions. Thus those issues had become the main concerns into his works. At that time, he was writing short stories, poetry, and a novel (Billington, 2009, p. 2).

In 1956, Harold Pinter married an actress, Vivien Merchant, and then began writing his plays, which sometimes were considered simulation for her life, and in 1970 Pinter and his wife had separated. Pinter then married another woman, Fraser, and after ten years, their divorce was ratified in 1980. The plays, *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter* were performed on the stage in 1957. *The Dumb Waiter* was considered the first play in a series or collection of his plays, which include *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Caretaker* (1959), and *The Homecoming* (1964), and they all presented bleak and fearsome worlds, and moreover the plot of those plays were meaningless. Thus these plays belong to the absurd theatre (Chui, 2013, p. 2).

During his life, Harold Pinter has written twenty nine plays. In 1960s, he began writing official adaptations and screenplays of other writers' literary work to create movies. Pinter also has written, for the London theatre, a number of literary works. The blacklist of the American director Joseph Losey was among Pinter's writings. Pinter himself has been indulged as an actor in a number of films and also on stage. The play "*The Dumb Waiter*" was turned into an adopted film in 1987. It was directed by the American man Robert Altman and the two famous Tom Conti as, Gus and John Travolta as Ben. *The Dumb Waiter*, in 1989, was broadcasted successfully

on television, and it was later released, by Prism Entertainment on the VHS (Chui, 2013, p. 3).

Harold Pinter's play *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) consists of two characters, and it is a one-act play. The cheap place and furniture of the setting and even the prison cell were all revealed obviously through the plot of the play. However the type of this literary work that simply shows the two characters' arbitrary waiting and interactions within each other forms a dreadful image for the two characters as killers. The context of the play defines implicitly the human condition. Ben, the first character, is regarded one of the two characters who is waiting in basement of the hotel to carry out whatever appears to be the murder. Gus, the second one, is an inquisitive, talkative character, and even his social status turned his personality to be inferior when it compared to Ben's superior character. It is mentioned by Gus and Ben as the guy that they are waiting for to kill and who may passionately indulge into an argument and discussion about the most absurd or trivial things concerning Ben and his weird story that he was reading. The room that Gus and Ben were waiting in, apart from the two doors and beds, is nondescript.

The Dumb Waiter sounds like item to mysterious directives, or cogs in a machine that is bound together and also alienated from each other and even the characters of the hit men should follow the incoming orders. The two characters have determined nothing but their being is entirely defined and admitted by the obedience to their invisible existence. Thus the title of Pinter's play *The Dumb Waiter* refers somehow to a small lift built in the hotel, which is used to transport food and other staff between the floors of the hotel. Harold Pinter incarnates the notion of the dumb waiter to the two characters of the play as they are both dumb; Ben is dumbly waiting for an assassination step that is condemned by time, and Gus is unknowingly, waiting for his execution.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study reflects the realistic life of the British people during the 1950s, and states linguistically the issue of absurdity. Pertaining to the decoration of the play and the dialect of the characters are considered the main concepts that denote to that period of time of Harold Pinter's life. The study targets the characters' speech style that is filled with absurd waiting and meaningless issues. Thus linguistically, this paper tackles the significance of determinism, impoliteness, powerful and powerless theories in exploring the disparity in power of speech between the characters of the play to enlighten the impact of absurdity on portraying the real images of the two characters as real British people in that time.

In Lance Norman's article, *A Man Comes into A Room*, the notions, Critical Domestication and Anti-Ritual in Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, claims that the critical realm to fully structure Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* is in fact encouraged by play's action and structure: on a scale of meta-theatrical level, *The Dumb Waiter* critiques and forefronts the strategy of reading any dramatic narratives (Brewer, 2009, p. 1).

Moez Marrouchi (2019) has argued that Harold Pinter was famous by his magnificent style, and he has been referred to, by modern critics, as 'Pinteresque'. The contemporaneous British drama is influenced by Harold Pinter. Consequently Harold Pinter presents a fact to his audience with a literary trick of "the atmosphere of repetition" in the most of his mysterious plays. The obscurity and absurdity in a Pinter's play, interest and inquiries tend to be mostly aroused as the practical elements to guide the audiences or readers throughout the literary work. The literary characters and their utterances Pinter introduces seem to be obscured, while his dramatic activities are illogically advanced and they usually mislead the reader/audience, and the increasing of the sense of menace is announced that the absurdity embodies the existence (p. 112).

Katherine Burkman (1971) has explored that the work of drama of Harold Pinter emerges in a mysterious atmosphere that is the appearance of life is detailed in a realistic way, and its patterns that enlighten the surface of the life remain obscure. Despite the obvious naturalistic items of Pinter's dialogue, the characters of his play often behave and act dramatically, more than like real persons that readers can easily sense the realistic roles of the characters in life. Pinter on the one side has admitted that notion, Pinter on the other side, provided a suitable definition to his art as realistic, but what he does, is not described as realism. So Pinter elaborates the sense of his play to the audience, which is often distinctive in the style of his play: the mixture of the surreal and real (p. 170).

Katherine Burkman (1972) reveals two distinctive types of ritual that Harold Pinter arguably develops a notion of mixture between reality and fantasy. Pinter's drama is bounded to those habitual activities of the daily life that have to become formalized to be more like ritual life, and also have thought to become senseless or meaningless, while these daily routines are placed in contrast to the sacrificial rites that are furthermore filled with meanings and portray the characters with an image of painful awareness of their real life. Their daily routines also have been served and determined to protect them (p. 170).

Ruby Cohn (1962) has argued as well that several plays of Harold Pinter end in the literal combination of virtual annihilations of the individual of his plays. In his first play, *The Room*, which is set after a blind Negro, portrays the image of blindness. In the next play, *The Dumb Waiter*, the curtain opens up to Gus and the other character "the prospective murderer", who both look at each other (p. 60).

As mentioned, books, articles, and theses written on Pinter's play were mainly concerned with psychology, social issues, and the act of absurdity. Although the action of the play is done through conversation, no single research has paid attention

to the stylistic analysis of *The Dumb Waiter*. However, before dealing with the stylistic study of *The Dumb Waiter*, the play will be studied in the light of the philosophical belief of absurdity to show how the social and incoherent constrain have determined the end of the play. To do that, this study will depend on Elbert Camus's view in the field of absurdism. To further study the nature of social and incoherent forces, the paper will then focus on the conflict between Gus and Ben. In order to understand this absurd conflict, the study adopts a stylistic approach drawing on Mick Short's notion of Powerful and Powerless (1996). Short's views will assist to explain why Ben is a more powerful character compared to Gus. Also, powerful and powerless will assist to understand how the conflict between them (through conversation) leads to the final end.

1.3. Powerful and Powerless theory

The analysis in this study includes an examination of powerful and powerless speech styles of speech as linked with the employment of politeness and impoliteness in the dialogue between Ben and Gus. The powerful speech style, according to Weber (1998), can be defined as the ability of institutions and people to have an influential effect or control on the material lives and behavior of others, and to use linguistic features which have the negative effects on how the attitude of the speaker is perceived (p. 114).

1.4. Review of Related Literature

This part of the paper will review the sources referred to in this study. These sources are then categorized by the topic into three subsections:

- Sources on the historical and political background of *The Dumb Waiter*.
- Sources about powerful and powerless.
- The literature on *The Dumb Waiter* in the following sources is briefly discussed.

1.5. Historical and Political background

The Dumb Waiter experiences the indefinable and absurd menace in addition to the insecurity that permeates the plot of *The Dumb Waiter*. The play reflects the Zeitgeist that over-controlled the 1950s due to the Cold War. The Cold War, in its menacing form, consists of a race between, as they were called, the two super powerful realms, to construct the most horrifying weaponry, especially those of nuclear bombs.

Xinlan Pan (2022) in his paper *On the Translation of The Dumb Waiter from A Perspective of Cross-culture Communication* has argued a fact that the drama in general is considered essential in the western culture since the language of the paper is powerful and short in content, it shows the entire characteristics of the western culture. Hence the paper refers generally to the objective things that are already existed. Because of the individual contrasts, people may further have variant reactions to the same objective things, through which they may receive their understandings in different cultures. Thus, one has to learn more about western drama to furthermore have a fully understanding that enables learners to learn about western culture (p. 85).

During World War II, at the period of 1939-1945, the United States and the Soviet Union were allies against Fascist Italy, Germany or the Nazi, and Imperial Japan. After this war, those countries gradually became foes, because of the various political structures. During the period of Harry Truman, the President of the United States, the war against Japan came to an end then the orders of dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 came true. The reasons of destroying those two Japanese cities, by the dropping of the bombs have declared officially to the world, and in a specific way to the tyrant region of the Soviet Union, that the United States was technically considered a severe power. Though after the war, Stalin

had technical designs to be performed on several European countries and in fact he managed to subordinate all of those Eastern countries to be included to the Soviet Union (Davis, 2008, p. 32).

Russians also built some nuclear weapons which enhance its army, as a reaction to the American bombs, thus each country have constructed and established massive bases from which those countries pointed directly their armies and weapons at the other countries and their cities. This policy of Mutually-Assured-Destruction is appointed to Russia and the US to maintain the power balanced between those two super states, and further caused a rough malaise among the people of those nations. There was a compulsory shelter drills in general that the people, including children in schools, were forced and condemned to spend some years participating in as soldiers. Like the English mathematician/philosopher, Bertram Russell, protested the testing, building, and giving the green light to nuclear weapons. The threat had been commenced and sensed of looming danger that were tangibly pervasive in play *The Dumb Waiter* which reflects the realistic image of this cultural condition (Davis, 2008, p. 33)

The Dumb Waiter is indeed regarded as nonsense or an absurd play. Attending the absurd theatre demands a unique approach when to work with traditional and theatrical or literary forms for the characters, designers, and directors (Epling, 2010, p. 3). Leslie Rose Epling (2010) examined a fact that there is blur, unreal, or not clear definition of the absurd theatre, which is in a musical denotation to the prediction of harmony whereas in the general English-speaking world, the means as well as the word of absurdity is implicitly synonymous with ridiculous. The importance of history, the standard or historical concept of Alvin Goldfarb's and Edwin Wilson's theatre employ the meaning of ridiculous to further describe the absurd theatre (p. 4).

All playwrights of the absurd theatre have consequently their own literary and unique style of writing, and there have been a few general characteristics that connect them together, also they are classified as absurd writers. The writers have entirely the absolute beliefs that our existence or the life in general is meaningless which can be understood or even explained. Life is absurd, and as such, absurdist dramatists try to reflect this absurdity in the dramatic action of their plays. Esslin states that the absurd theatre has renounced arguing about the absurdity of the human condition (Epling, 2010, p. 5).

The writers of absurd theatre attempt to explain the absurdity much more than to teach the audience as it is in *The Dumb Waiter*'s protagonists' interaction with one another. This interaction becomes consequently through the sequence of the events more effective as if to settle down a very meticulous message that directly targets readers' attention. The plays often have no plot or clearly defined characters. Harold Pinter was able to carry Beckett's insight into more recognizable social situations, bringing about more immediate audience identification (Epling, 2010, p. 7).

1.6. Research Questions

Q1. How does the historical and political background portray the arbitrariness of the characters' behavior?

Q2. How do stylistically the characters' interactions determine the powerful/-less speech style in the play?

Q3. How can the findings of the linguistic analysis be related to the political and historical background of the play?

1.7. Methodology

This paper will analyze the language of characters in Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*. The analysis will focus on the conflicts between the two characters. This study has three research questions that the researcher hopes to answer throughout the analysis.

To answer the first question regarding the main historical events of the closing decades of the 20th century and their effect on the life of the two characters, the study will depend on the text of the play and the political and historical events that took place in the last three decades of the 20th century. The characters' waiting for nothingness, their meaningless speech, and their absurd existence in the hotel are socially explained in this question.

To answer the second question regarding the protagonists' interactions within each other, this study will present a brief introduction that concerns the social determinism in which Pinter's play was set and written to portray an understandable linguistic framework that determines the situation of the play, in addition to that, this paper sets forwards certain facts to show up the impacts of that time on the characters.

Finally, to answer the third question regarding the results of the linguistic analysis and its relation to the socio-historical background of the play, the researcher will depend on the results of the first and the second question to answer the last question. It will state that Ben as a realistic person is more powerful than his friend Gus may look in some parts. Pinter meticulously forms the relationship between Ben and Gus, which rather becomes repetitive at some parts of the play.

1.8. Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to highlight the importance of powerful and powerless in forming the relationship between Ben and Gus in Pinter's play *The Dumb Waiter*.

This study goes further to express how Pinter highlights the arbitrariness through the characters' dialogue.

1.9. Significance of the study

This paper is significantly portrait because of the importance of the stylistic analysis into Harold's *The Dumb Waiter*. The importance of this study also lies on the social distance among *The Dumb Waiter*'s characters and further linguistically through examining their dialogues. Moreover, this study stylistically traces the main notion of instability of the two characters' relationship.

1.10. Definition of the key terms

- ***The Dumb Waiter***: Is a one act play, written by the British playwright Harold Pinter in 1957. Ben and Gus are the only two characters in the play who are waiting for someone to murder. They obviously do absurd or useless things during their interactions within each other in the hotel. Their interactions are usually irrational and they sometimes discuss trivial and irrelevant topics. They are placed to express and also imply repetitively the same sentences (Sunarl, 2006, p. 8).
- **Absurdity**: It is a term referred to the nothingness or preposterousness. Absurdity also refers to the experience of contingency, groundlessness, or superfluity pertaining to the various aspects and realms of the human condition that should be submitted to rational justification (Sherman, 2006, p. 271).
- **Impoliteness**: While politeness theories focus on how to use communicative strategies to promote or maintain social harmony, impoliteness refers to the use of strategies which indicate to have the opposite impact that of social disruption. Such strategies are oriented towards attacking the character linguistically, an emotionally sensitive concept of the self (Culpeper, 1996, p. 349).

- **Powerful and Powerless Speech Style:** According to Hosman (1989) powerless language is typically defined as a kind of speech marked by hesitancy. When compared to powerful speech, it often contains more polite hedges, forms, hesitations, intensifiers, disclaimers, empty adjectives, and tag questions. Accordingly, the powerful speech is the absence of the above mentioned indicators. Hence, it is more confirmative, dominant, and assertive style (Grob, Meyers & Schuh, 1997, p. 283).

1.11. The Analysis Section

As mentioned, books, articles, and theses written on *The Dumb Waiter* were mainly concerned with psychological issues and the act of absurdity. Although the action of the play is done through conversation, no single research has paid attention to the stylistic analysis of *The Dumb Waiter*. Before dealing with the stylistic study of *The Dumb Waiter*, the play will be studied in the light of the philosophical belief of absurdism to show how the social and historical constraints have determined the disparity of the two characters. To further study the nature of social and historical forces, the paper will then focus on the conflict between Ben and Gus. In order to understand this interaction, the study adopts a stylistic approach drawing on Mick Short's (1996) notion of the Powerful and powerless. Mick Short's views will help to explain why Ben is a more powerful character compared to Gus.

The following excerpt is selected from the text of the play *the Dumb Waiter*, by Harold Pinter.

Act. 1.

GUS re-enters. I want to ask you something.

BEN. What are you doing out there?

GUS. Well, I was just...

BEN. What about the tea?

GUS. I'm just going to make it.

BEN. Well, go on, make it.

GUS. I've brought a few biscuits.

BEN. Well, you'd better eat them quick.

GUS. I always bring a few biscuits. Or a pie. You know I can't drink tea without anything to eat.

BEN. Well make the tea then, will you? Time's getting on.

GUS. Oh, I wanted to ask you something.

BEN (slamming his paper down). Kaw!.

GUS. What's that?

BEN. A child of eight killed a cat!

GUS. Get away. (as cited in Pinter, 1960, p. 12).

1.12. Analysis of Power Relations between Ben and Gus

This part of the analysis in this study includes an examination of powerful and powerless styles of speech between Ben and Gus. The powerful speech style, according to Weber (1998), can be defined as the ability of institutions and people to have an influential effect or control on the material lives and behavior of others, and to use linguistic features which have the negative effects on how the attitude of the speaker is perceived (p. 114).

The analysis to determine the powerful and powerless conversational behavior of the characters of Ben and Gus is done by referring to Short's list (1996) of powerful and powerless speakers in dramatic dialogue (as cited in Lambrou, 2014, p. 141). By applying Short's list (1996), the dialogue can be easily inspected in order to decide how power relations are at work in the conflict between the two main

characters. Though power is seen as an element of control with negative connotations, it can be exerted in both negative and positive ways, and sometimes power can be given to minimized groups (Weber, 1998, p. 114).

The following list consists of certain categories that assist to identify the powerful and powerless speaker in the selected excerpt of the play (as cited in Weber, 1998, p. 75).

	Powerful speakers	Powerless speakers
Who has most turns?	X	
Who has the least?		X
Who has the longest turns?	X	
Who has the shortest?		X
Who initiates conversational exchanges?	X	
Who responds?		X
Who controls the conversational topic?	X	
Who follows the topics of others?		X
Who interrupts?	X	
Who is interrupted?		X
Who uses terms of address not marked for respect (e.g. first name only)?	X	
Who uses terms of address marked for respect (e.g. title + last name)?		X
Who allocates turns to others?	X	

The participants in conversation are expected to take ‘turns’ when they speak. Also, they can shift turns to go forward with the dialogue, and shift the topic of the conversation for various reasons. Thus, Herman (2006) argues that these two techniques can provide useful clues that help the audience to understand the

character's behavior as well as the relationship of these clues to the relative power of interlocutors (as cited in Bennison, 1998, p. 70). Regarding length of turns, Ben's turns in general is equal with Gus's. Considering Gus's style of talking as a talkative person, who says things that are not much needed to Ben, cannot be seen as a powerful man, and moreover his long speech concerns random responses to Ben's questions, whereas Ben's character which according to Short's (1996) list of powerful and powerless speech style "Who controls the conversational topic?" is the powerful speaker. This study adopts some approaches derived from discourse analysis which Short has termed "topic control" and "topic shift" (as cited in Lambrou, 2014, p. 140).

The analysis to determine the powerful and powerless conversational behavior of the characters of Ben and Gus is done by referring to Short's list (1996) of powerful and powerless speakers in dramatic dialogue (as cited in Lambrou, 2014, p. 141). Ben bluntly diverts Gus's questions with another question "What are you ...?". This strategy makes Ben the powerful speaker as Short (1996) argues that "Who[ever] starts the conversational exchange" is to be considered as such (as cited in Lambrou, 2014, p. 141). Through this excerpt, Gus's current speech has been interrupted certain times to be diverted from a questioner to responder, this also posits Gus in the powerless place.

At this point Gus becomes a supporter of Ben's direct questions in turn (3) by being responder and now Ben is indeed the powerful speaker, because his question has been answered by Gus. Ben then asks another question from the position of powerful speaker "What about ...?". In an implicit way, Ben is giving Gus a clue about something being wrong by ignoring his question about what he has been up to. However, Gus fails to notice Ben's ignorance of his questions; therefore, he instead answers Ben's questions. Those questions are considered as signifiers which point

out Gus's weak position as a powerless speaker. The next turn (well, go on...), works as an evidence that verifies the heavy impact of Ben's personality by using a direct request that Gus, in fact, lacks. So the authority of a powerful character, when it comes to point out a direct command which further shapes most of the aspects of a powerful character, is constructed through certain aspects: the character's body-position, dialect, gestures, and the tone.

The context of *The Dumb Waiter* is encapsulated with silence and the time-pauses which particularly, are used as a very unique technique that Pinter's writing style in most of his works is notorious to such technique. Moez Marrouchi (2019) argued that the time-pauses and silences, was gradually placed in Pinter's plays, though in a remarkable way, such techniques encapsulated theatrically the mastery of his work. Silence is not just a moment for the audience or when the two characters keep a little time silent that the audience in reverse cannot hear the characters' utterances; this is a moment so pregnant and blocked with significant meanings that the readers or the audience may find it difficult to understand the meaning. In an unexpected way, silence in Pinter's plays is never considered as a normal silence. When the silence pervades, one has to take time to think meticulously of that moment. And when the protagonists stop talking, the reader or the audience needs to contemplate their unsaid thoughts (p. 112).

This technique has further provided a remarkably significant pace to the audiences as a matter of absorbing the plot of the play which actually stretches the opportunity to receive the main ideas understandably by pausing the characters' interactions, which includes at the mean-time the audiences' stream of thinking into the plot of the play that the audience, through the absurd plot, need to have enough time to decipher consequently the blurred personalities of the two characters. Ben's obscured personality is unconsciously and gradually enlightened that the main

purpose of his residence at the hotel is waiting for something to happen. Whereas the talkative Gus appears as a naive character that his character, at some places, is designed to refill certain unnecessary pauses which is accordingly considered less-effective-character in the plot of the play.

The dialogue proves Ben as a powerful speaker who takes control over a conversational topic by asking for tea, which is something he wants to have, instead of responding or even reacting to Gus's speech turn. Gus in the next turn does a receptive turn in responding up most of Ben's questions, which therefore portrays Gus obviously as a powerless speaker, who then goes and answers Ben's question, instead of having his own turn in the conversation. In fact the notion of being a recipient as well as being interrupted most of the time proposes negatively a powerless character who technically empowers the speaker to fulfill the various needs powerfully, like in the case of Gus, whose gullibility controls and condemns his status in the actual interaction with Ben.

In the turn "I always bring a ..." Ben practically controls the whole topic by asking his friend, Gus, a lot while the latter replies, which further can be considered as an obvious evidence that Ben is the powerful agent, as well as taking into consideration Short's (1996) list of powerful and powerless speakers, "Who[ever] initiates conversational exchange" is considered a powerful speaker (as cited in Lambrou, 2014, p. 141). Applicably, in the next turn Ben should interact with Gus's speech. Ben converts the turn into a request here, "make the tea then..." to directly focalize Gus's attention over the main point, which is the time, "time's getting on".

The next two turns emphasize two facts; first is the absurd events that their interactions are somehow pointless, and the second is that Ben's word "Kaw!" refers to the superiority of Ben's stream of speech over Gus's. Certain interruptions have overwhelmed obviously Gus's status that his inferiority is gradually highlighted.

Whereas the repeated pauses in time in the same turn, enlightens the idea of escaping the reality or the first plot to another plot or story. The audience has received various absurd pauses in time as a matter of moving rapidly between their absurd reality and that unknown story of Ben, which subsequently reveals and works as a mirror of the absurd life of that time.

Johnson and Vinson (1990) argued that the powerful speech is defined as the complete absence of the powerless linguistic features of speech, and have found that the use of powerless speech results in receiving the speaker as less credible, less attractive and less persuasive (Wilson, 2009, p. 1). For example, in the case of Gus at the opening scene in the play, when he talks to Ben but receives less than the expected responses, we can deduce that his lines have features of powerless speech. Moreover, the two main techniques of “turn length and topic shift” and “interruption and hesitation” are used as supported techniques which in order to have a more vivid understanding of the features of the powerful and powerless speakers. Hence Ben does the first step forward to control the topic and not to be a receptive character.

The study concludes that the idea of the questions-flow is mostly prevailed in the selected excerpt, and it is obviously held by the character of Ben. However, the content is mostly dominant by the character of Ben. Noticeably, the body movement of Ben’s character expresses further the quietness and also less arbitrary character that is more powerful, unlike the talkative and hyperactive character of Gus. The text moves forward one pace that simulates the powerful character of Ben and the naive and powerless one of Gus.

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