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Expressing the Bewilderment of the Modern Man through Silence in Samuel Beckett's Happy Days

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التعبير عن حيرة الإنسان في العصر الحديث من خلال في مسرحية "الأيام السعيدة" لصامونيل بكت الصمت

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Abstract

Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* (1961) clearly portrays a lack of communication among the characters of the play which refers to the condition of modern man. This failure of communication led Samuel Beckett to use a lot of pauses and silences in all plays written instead of using words. To express the bewilderment of the modern man during the 20th century, Beckett adopts the use of no language strategy in the dramatic works. After World War II, people were without hope, religion, food, jobs, homes, or even countries. Beckett gave them a voice. He used a dramatic language out of everyday things, in which silence was part of the syntax as a poetic repetition. Language is no more important to the modern man; instead, he used silence to express his feelings. For him, silence is more powerful than the words themselves. That's why; long and short pauses can be seen throughout all Beckett's plays. In this play, the characters chose not to communicate; instead, they kept silent because they failed to interact with each other or even with themselves. The nature of this study is qualitative and objective; it textually analyzes the text to show the state of the modern man during 20th century. As a conclusion, one can say that Beckett's use of pauses and silences was to express the bewilderment of the modern man and the inner conflict inside of him. Moreover, the modern man has lost his communication with other people as a result of that conflict.

Keywords: Absurdity, bewilderment, failure of communication, pauses, silence

المستخلص

مسرحية "الأيام السعيدة" (١٩٦١) لصامونيل بكت تصور بوضوح النقص الحاصل في التواصل بين شخصيات المسرحية والذي يشير إلى حالة الإنسان في العصر الحديث؛ وهذا النقص في التواصل هو الذي قاد الكاتب إلى استعمال الكثير من الوقفات في كل مسرحياته التي كتبها بدلا عن الكلمات، وكان أفضل أسلوب للتعبير عن حيرة إنسان العصر الحديث هو عدم استعمال اللغة في الأعمال المسرحية، فبعد الحرب العالمية الثانية أصبح الناس من دون أمل أو دين أو طعام أو سكن وحتى من دون وطن؛ لذلك عبّر بكت عن صوتهم باستعمال اللغة الدرامية المستنبطة من الأشياء اليومية التي كان فيها الصمت جزءاً من بناء الجملة كإعادة شعرية، فاللغة لم تعد مهمة بالنسبة لإنسان العصر الحديث ولذلك نراه يسكت ليعبر عن مشاعره. فالتوقف عن الكلام أقوى تأثيراً من الكلمات ذاتها. لذلك نرى الوقفات الطويلة والقصيرة في كل مسرحيات صامونيل بكت. في هذه المسرحية يختار الشخص عدم التواصل بالكلام، مفضلين الصمت لأنهم فشلوا في التفاعل بعضهم مع بعض بل وحتى مع أنفسهم. إن طبيعة هذه الدراسة نوعية وهدفها إظهار حالة الإنسان الحديث خلال القرن العشرين. والأنموذج المستعمل هو التحليل النصي. وفي الختام، يمكن للمرء أن يقول: إن استعمال بيكيت للوقفات والصمت كان للتعبير عن حيرة الإنسان المعاصر والصراع الذي بداخله. كما إن الإنسان الحديث قد فقد تواصله مع الآخرين نتيجة لهذا الصراع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحيرة، الصمت، العبث، فشل التواصل،
الوقفات



1. Introduction: Beckett as an Absurdist

Beckett certainly loved silence, solitude, and peace. In his personal diary of the absurd beauty of being alone, he wrote: "How I adore solitude." Silence and solitude were vital for his writing as he recognized. In his life as in his work, Beckett was surrounded by unhappiness, by the death of relatives and friends.¹

Shortly after Beckett's death, Bruce Arnold wrote in *The Irish Independent*, "His [Beckett's]... is an Irish voice deriving from dilemma in such powerful and universal terms as to make him a world writer of enduring impact."² James Knowlson, a critic, believes that Beckett was a total miserablist [Sic] and a pessimist in his life as in his work. There were certainly times when he could be somber, intense and introspective: at such times, he would raise his hand to his furrowed brow, utter a weary sigh or go into a period of unbroken silence. All these reactions were familiar enough to anyone who spent any length of time with him.³

Beckett is considered, by Fletcher, to rank in importance with the three masters of the English theatre: Shakespeare, Moliere, and Ibsen. Beckett did as much as any dramatist in the twentieth century to extend and modify the resources of the stage.⁴ Harold Pinter summed up the stage power and ugly beauty that Beckett's work still possesses for the readers when he wrote: "[Beckett] is the most courageous, remorseless writer going, and the more he grinds my nose in the shit, the more I am grateful to him."⁵

Beckett turned to writing drama from writing the novels. This gave him new possibilities for expressing his ideas. In 1972, he admitted how and why he started writing plays: "I turned to writing plays to relieve myself of the awful depression the prose led me into. Life at that time was too demanding, too terrible, and I thought the theatre would be a diversion."⁶ Beckett found in theatre a new way of making public his private world and these dramatic

writings were the works which made him successful and well-known across the world.⁷

By the time Beckett entered university, he seemed to lose his religious faith early and he continued as a man without belief.⁸ He was asked once about those who found a religious significance to his plays and he replied: "Well, really there is none at all. I have no religious feeling. Once I had a religious emotion. It was at my first communion. No more."⁹

There is no mere entertainment when watching a Beckettian play; it is a total involvement of personality, for his plays are 'total theatre'. Beckett made innovations in stage craft and dramatic production and writing more than any other writer.¹⁰ It is not possible to see or read a Beckett play and then forget it. Alan Schneider, a director and critic, observes that, "Beckett's plays stay in the bones. They haunt me sleeping and waking, coming upon me when I am least aware."¹¹ R. K. Jalali, an Indian critic, believes that Beckett had the ability to affect and move his readers and audience deeply; he says: "In spite of his modesty, he manages to express his immense compassion for all human life...because he is one of those exceptional men and women to whom love and lucidity are on the same level."¹² Robin May comments on Beckett by saying: "No major playwright can have existed in a narrower (yet universal) world than Beckett's. Although highly poetic, few dramatists can have gained such a deserved following with such theatrically static pieces."¹³

2. Characteristics of a Beckettian Play

Beckett's drama is most closely related to the theatre of the absurd. A typical Beckettian play has certain characteristics which differentiate it from the works of other writers. It has no plot or action in the ordinary sense of it in that there is nothing really important that can happen in the world of today. His plays have no conflict, nor is there any emotion or passion. Moreover, they have a lack of surface meaning which reflects the utter meaninglessness of modern existence. There is little movement on the stage and in some plays there is no movement



at all. Beckett has no characters in the ordinary sense. There are no female characters. Even when there are, Beckett does not exploit their femininity for any purpose. This makes his plays create an effect of timelessness and universality. They are free of age, country, and emotion.¹⁴

In his plays, Beckett's is concerned with human suffering and survival. His characters struggle with meaninglessness and the world of nothing.¹⁵ They belong to no-man's-land where there is only despair and pessimism. They are puppets, and they shed all human qualities.¹⁶ His characters are all symbols of impotence and vulnerability. They have no home, no shelter, and no communication with the rest of the world. For example, in *Endgame* Nagg and Nell are doomed to live in dustbins. They can never even imagine having the happiness of family life. For them, society does not exist. They are immobile and inactive. In *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon and Vladimir are tramps and the sky is their roof. Yet they have no awareness of their being homeless.¹⁷ Beckett's characters have much in common with those played by the stars of silent films, like Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, in that their 'routines, both verbal and physical, recall these 'everyman' figures of the century.¹⁸

Beckett's characters use a language "spattered with words that went dead, where each word gets obliterated, before it has time to make sense, by the word that comes next."¹⁹ Most of Beckett's characters do not know what to do, where to go, what to think of, what to come tomorrow. They live in a world where there is no certainty and possibility for certain meaning.²⁰

Beckett took drama to new extremes, and pushed his characters to the limits of solitude, non-communication, and hopelessness. Yet they all survive, and they dismiss any thoughts of suicide. He took his characters to the extremes of despair and hopelessness of *King Lear* more than any other writer since Shakespeare. That's why close parallels between *King Lear* (1606), in particular, and the plays of Beckett are seen by

Carter and many other critics. This proves Shakespeare's modernity.²¹

John Calder, Beckett's publisher and friend, comments on Beckett's writing by saying: "Beckett is a writer whose relevance to his time and use of poetic imagery can be compared to Shakespeare's in the late Renaissance."²² Beckett's name was properly associated with plays in which nothing happens and his characters became familiar to the general public. Beckett's characters either have paralyzed legs or none at all. The reason behind this is that Beckett had two uncles and a cousin who had one leg each due to what Beckett's family referred to jokingly as 'the family circulatory problem.'²³ Beckett's third uncle, Dr. James Beckett, a famous and adored figure in Dublin, lost both legs and had restricted use of both his arms and then became blind. He ended his life in much the same manner as Beckett's Unnamable, a character in his novel *The Unnamable*.²⁴

Beckett's plays are without action and his acts are without words. When asked about the significance of a play, Beckett said: "If I could tell you in a sentence, I wouldn't have written the play."²⁵

Beckett's style is so concise that each work is reduced to a highly compressed and powerful image.²⁶ His continuous theme is depression. There is something dark and unsettling on the surface of his works. They are absurdly funny. Wolfgang Iser, a German critic, performed an experiment in the first years of Beckett's famous plays while travelling around Europe. He found that the public laughed at the tragic comedies or comic tragedies and that their laughter everywhere stuck in their throat. The initial guffaw was followed by a sudden silence as if the audience was shocked that they could find something so grim and so funny. It is this silence on which Beckett's literary fame finally rests. Beckett spent a whole life and career of withdrawal and subtraction both personally avoiding publically, and in his works, avoiding personality, unlike Joyce and Proust. Beckett's



subjects are very international because they involve the world and people in general.²⁷

3. The Dramatic Value of Pauses and Silences in Beckett's *Happy Days* (1961)

Happy Days, a play of two acts, was written in 1961. Its title is ironical, since there is no room for happiness anywhere. Winnie, the main female character in the play, shouts early in the action, "Oh this is going to be another happy day."²⁸ It is just a monologue with death, delivered by Winnie in which she laments her youth, and praises the "great mercies." (Act I, p.12).²⁹

While scholars thought for years that Samuel Beckett was futuristically inspired by the 1970s sitcom "Happy Days" for his play's title, recent research reveals that he really took it from Jack Yellen's and Milton Ager's 1929 song *Happy Days Are Here Again*. The title sets up two immediate themes of the play, the ways people's happiness and their days are defined and experienced.³⁰

R. Federman comments on this play by saying, "*Happy Days* is Samuel Beckett's latest dramatic comment on the irony, pathos, and chronic hopelessness of the human condition; and like all his work it is triumphantly suigeneris."³¹

It is a static play with no action. It is a play that, unlike *Endgame*, seems to lack a sense of its own logic. This is a result of its rootlessness in time.³²

Harold Clurman, an American theatre director and drama critic, believes that Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* is "a poem for the stage, a poem of despair and forbearance. It is to be seen and suffered. It is painfully lucid. But because it is a work of art, its lucidity is manifold in meaning."³³

There are two characters in the play: Winnie, a woman of fifty and Willie, her husband of sixty. The audiences notice that the woman sunk up to her waist in a mound of scorched grass. Her husband lives out of sight behind her in his own hole in the ground. At rare

moments, he appears to read an old newspaper, a recurrent item of which he mumbles "Wanted bright boy." (Act I, p.15) At the close of the play he crawls in full evening dress toward his wife. The audience do not know whether he has come to visit her in "old style," (Act I, p.16), a phrase which runs through the play like a refrain, to pay tribute to her long years of married isolation, or to put her (or himself) out of misery. They look at each other in terrible silence.

In the second act, Winnie is covered up to her neck in the mound and cannot move her head. A bell rings and she opens her eyes. Pausing constantly, she tries to talk to Willie, who does not reply, and surmises that he has died, or left her "like the others." (Act I, p.38) She saddens over her present condition, and grows worried over the absence of her arms, breasts, and Willie.

Beckett, in *Happy Days*, brings important themes: the need for a witness to confirm one's own existence, and the urge to go on saying words as long as there any.³⁴ The search and struggle for identity is the dominant sense in the play. John Pilling suggests that Winnie's search for a personal identity is proved useless as she becomes subsumed in that which surrounds her. This is perhaps a particularly twentieth century vision of the struggle of the personal psychology in the face of the modern city.³⁵

The relationship between Willie and Winnie is another theme in this play. They are married and Beckett is commenting on the abyss between them. In his theatre, Beckett never explores relationships for their own sake; what is explored is the nature of a reality where everything, including every relationship, is in doubt and tension.³⁶

Happy Days, as *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Krapp's Last Tape*, can be read as portrayals of the last moments of existence, i.e., the idea of infinite ending which is the major theme in all these plays.³⁷

Beckett, in this play, used a different device that leaves a different impression on his stage. He used the "mound" (Act I, p.10) as an



artistic device for grave.³⁸ By using such stage setting, a mound, the playwright tries to indicate the absence of any trace of human society in the protagonist's world. The stage of *Happy Days* was something of a shock for the spectators who were used to the realistic stage or to the stage on which events occur in the physical world. The audiences failed to find in the set any similarity to the drama they had known. They found it hard to enjoy themselves in the performance of Beckett's work. The reason behind this is the oddness of the world presented on the stage. If *Happy Days* is to be compared to a picture, it is as if the cameraman had enlarged the objects so many times that it lost its natural shape to look like something else. In this play, Beckett did the same as Jonathan Swift when he made Gulliver, in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), travel the country of giants to expose the ugliness of human seen in magnified versions. In *Happy Days*, the audiences came to see an old lady buried in a mound of earth, which is a poetic image symbolizing the existential state of man.³⁹

Several features of this bleak world are inspired by Daniel Defoe's (1659-1731) *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In the finished play, Winnie prays to God and shades herself from the severe heat of the sun, like Crusoe. She also uses her possessions with a resourcefulness of economy and care that is worthy of Defoe's frugal hero. Moreover, Winnie's frequent recourse the phrase "great mercies" (Act II, p.9) echoes Crusoe's own expressions of religious gratitude for the good things that Providence seemed to have held back and released for his use.⁴⁰

Winnie hears sounds and cries in her head. Although these sounds are described as "like little ... sundering, little falls... apart" (Act II, p.40), she still regards them a blessing, and another way of helping her through her day.⁴¹

Winnie's and Willie's life has been a kind of blank stasis. They are continuous by nothing except the ground in which they are trapped. Winnie's life is a matter of toilet preparations and a taking of patient medicines the names of

which she does not understand. She is nevertheless an irresponsible optimist. Harold Clurman, a critic, believes that, "the play might well have been called 'The Optimist'"⁴² Winnie looks on the bright side of everything. That's why she always exclaims, "Another heavenly day." (Act I, p.9)⁴³

The happy day in Winnie's mind would be an prolonged night in which she would be free from the compulsion of creating a sense of a day and a sense of herself as the focus of her own perception.⁴⁴

Winnie does not die, although she is not given anything which would keep her living on. As the play passes, death is closer and closer, climbing from her waist up to her neck, but never close enough to kill her. The will keeps her breathing, even though physically she is already buried in the ground. The following words of Willie support this idea:

Willie: ... I can do no more. (*Pause.*) Say no more. (*Pause.*) But I must say more. (*Pause.*) Problem here. (*Pause.*) No, something must move, in the world, I can't any more. (*Pause.*) A zephyr. (*Pause.*) A breath. (*Pause.*) What are those immortal lines? (*Pause.*) It might be the eternal dark. (*Pause.*) Black night without end....Black night without end. (Act II, pp.44, 45).

Winnie's strangeness lies in her happiness. Her existence does not seem to be an agony for her. The idea that suffering is intolerable is more unbearable than suffering itself. She behaves and feels as if everything was natural and very understandable. This way defends against her endless despair.⁴⁵ She says:

Winnie: can't complain...no no...mustn't complain... (*holds up spectacles, looks through lens*)... so much to be thankful for... (*looks through other lens*)...no pain... (*puts on spectacles*)... hardly any ... (*looks for toothbrush*)...wonderful thing that...(*takes up toothbrush*)... nothing like it... (*examines handle of brush*)... slight headache sometimes... (*examines handle, reads*)...guaranteed... (Act I, pp.11, 12)



Winnie longs for the night, an end, where her suffering will end, but the will to live never promises any ending, any death. She envies the brute beast because of its fast and useless death in the following words:

Winnie: ... And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes ... (*she does so*) ... and wait for the day to come ... (*opens eyes*) ... the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours. (*Pause.*) That is what I find so comforting when I lose heart and envy the brute beast. (Act I, p.16).

She is waiting on the border between past and future, and the closer she tends towards “next” (Act I, p.11), the slower her time passes. That’s why she says, “Sometimes all is over, for the day, all done, all said, all ready for the night, and the day not over, far from over, the night not ready, far, far from ready. (Act I, p.34).

Winnie also finds an escape from her situation in trying to forget about it. She keeps herself busy by her little things that are in her bag like a mirror, a magnifying-glass, a tube of tooth paste, a tooth brush, a comb, and so on. The bag represents her preceding life and the things inside it represent what she used to do. Her everyday routine protects her against the suffering of being. Albert Camus mentioned such daily routine in his *Myth of Sisyphus*. It is something which protects humanity from walking up to absurdity. Camus said, “Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness.”⁴⁶ Winnie is aware of her situation. She realizes what kind of future lies before her and that her situation will not, in any case, be better in any respect.⁴⁷

Willie is described by Beckett as being like a turtle, crawling in and out of his hole in the ground and using it as a home. His concerns are almost those of the flesh. Several of his brief statements, and his protracted laughter, relate to sex “sucked up” (Act I, p.26) and the pun

“formication” (Act I, p.24), but his physical presence highlights the ineffectiveness of the physical appetites to which he clings, as well as the emptiness of aspiration and ambition “Wanted bright boy” (Act I, p.36) when these are set against the inevitability of degeneration and death.⁴⁸

Coe Comments on Beckett’s characters by saying: “Beckett’s people are solitaires; their ‘conversations’ are absurdities, their egos express themselves only in monstrous monologues, they loathe, detest and fear the other and yet they cannot do without the other, they need him, for, without him as a witness, they cannot know that they exist themselves.”⁴⁹

In *Happy Days*, language and gesture are on the way to becoming discrete: the important question of pain is along with a quest for a toothbrush: “no better, no worse ... (*lays down mirror*) ... no change ... (*wipes figures on grass*) ... no pain ... (*looks for tooth brush*) ... hardly any.” (Act I, p.10) Winnie’s overstatements save her from disappointment. She feels her existence through her endless speaking.⁵⁰

Language is empty to Winnie, because it implies nothing in her present world. For example, the word ‘breast’ in the second act is empty as her breasts are covered up and essentially no longer exist. Language fails, on the other hand, because it creates the illusion that true dialogue is being exchanged when Willie is hardly a reciprocal conversationalist. Winnie’s words fail since she talks to herself the whole play with little response from Willie. To have meaning, language should depend on its social usage and this usage is absent in *Happy Days*. That’s why language is empty and failed.⁵¹

Language works as something of a miracle for Winnie, but it also leads her to the very edge of the abyss. She distinguishes the importance of words to her continuous survival and at the same time she knows that the time will come when words must fail. They must fail either in the sense that they will run out before the end is reached, or that there will be no one there to whom they may be talked to.⁵² Words fail in



another sense, as the following passage by Winnie reveals:

There is so little one can say, one says it all. (*Pause.*) All one can (*Pause.*) And no truth in it anywhere. (*Pause.*) My arms. (*Pause.*) My breasts. (*Pause.*) What arms? (*Pause.*) What breasts? (*Pause.*) Willie. (*Pause.*) What Willie? (*Sudden vehement affirmation.*) My Willie! (*Eyes right, calling.*) Willie! (*Pause. Louder.*) Willie! (*Pause. Eyes front.*) Ah well, not to know, not to know for sure, great mercy, all I ask. (*Pause.*) (Act II, p.38).

Winnie's need to talk is part of the larger theme of the quest for meaning in existence and its absence. She is aware of the failure of her words to do all she wants them to do. She is challenging the absurdity of the world surrounding her with an armoury which consists of her optimism and a language of clichés only and second-hand terms. Knowlson believes that "This attempt to impose some meaning on a meaningless world with worn-out words appears at once pathetically inadequate and rather admirable."⁵³ The use of the long pauses and the ringing of the bell indicate that the pace of the second act is generally slower.⁵⁴

Although this play is about words and not actions, it is peppered with pauses and space.⁵⁵ Winnie's long pauses, far from suggesting her waiting for someone else's reaction, offer her required breathing spells. Her being incapable of uttering words and making gestures indicates that she is a woman approaching death. By a series of banal statements, she escapes from silence which expresses her condition of solitude and paralysis.⁵⁶

The communication among the characters in *Happy Days*, their words, and pauses reveals the idea of a disjunctive fragmented reality influx when they alternate, interrupting one another. As soon as words are uttered by Winnie, they are followed by silence. Almost all her words are followed by pauses and movements, her own, Willie's, or both together. She has to produce words infinitely "to counteract the threat of the void nullifying her space of being."⁵⁷

In Act II, Winnie's memory declines so much that she is unable to remember any of the lines from the classics that she used to recite.⁵⁸ She says, "One loses one's classics." (Act II, p.43). Beckett used quotations, bits, and snatches from Shakespeare (1564-1616), Milton and Gray (1716-1771). What he tries to highlight, however, is the fact that those poets exist only in fragments and that is very hard for Winnie to remember more than a few words or phrases.⁵⁹

As Winnie predicts, a day will come "when words fail," themselves (Act II, p.40) and there are more numerous stops in her speech. When she has nothing to utter, she says: "(*Pause*) What now? (*Pause.*) What now, Willie? (*Long Pause.*)" (Act II, p.41) She finds it more and more difficult to continue her struggle against the void breaking in. She closes her eyes more often in Act II. A transition from the alternation of sound and silence to pure silence is shown clearly in the play. If there could be an Act III in the play, it would be an act of silence in which there were no words and no movements other than a long silence.⁶⁰

As the play nears its end, its silences and pauses increase. This gives the impression that Winnie's and Willie's lives are dragging on ever more slowly towards a death they will never reach.⁶¹

Winnie's space of being is threatened every time her action is interrupted by a foreign force. The first example of interrupted action is the alternation of words and pauses which generates the structure of sound and silence. Beckett shed light on Winnie, who is continually threatened by the silence surrounding her.⁶² This is seen obviously in Winnie's following speech:

My hair! (*Pause.*) Did I brush and comb my hair? (*Pause.*) I may have done. (*Pause.*) Normally I do. (*Pause.*) There is so little one can do. (*Pause.*) One does it all. (*Pause.*) All one can. (*Pause.*) Tis only human. (*Pause.*) Human nature. (Act1, p.18).

This passage is an example of "the Beckettian form – the evocative and subtle



interplay of constricted, bivalent expression and expressive, eloquent silences.”⁶³

Willie’s pause and interruption indicate the ways Beckett says more through silence than words could. Winnie’s incapability to say the final word in the sentence is demonstrative of her attraction to and repulsion from death, the final closure.⁶⁴

In the second final act, pauses break up nearly every line of Winnie’s, and increase as the act wears on. These delays can be read as Beckett’s appropriation of a famous paradox of the Greek philosopher Zeno.⁶⁵ Zeno stated that if an arrow in flight kept making up half the distance to its destination, it would never reach its endpoint: thus it paradoxically is seemingly not moving while in motion. If *Happy Days* is to be viewed through this lens, then Winnie and Willie are creeping toward death ever slowly, and the increasing pauses reflect this asymptotic approach.⁶⁶ The image of Zeno’s little heap of millet and the notion of a steady deterioration that will not come to an end control this play.⁶⁷

The long, smile-less pause at the end of the play shows that life will return to normal again the next day. Winnie, at the end of the play, grows vulnerable, she sings her song of love and they look at each other, and then the final pause suggests a return to an eternal silence. Winnie is both a winner and a loser, continuously shifting back and forth filling the longer and longer days with her empty, present tense rituals, yet somehow holding out hope.⁶⁸

To sum up, in Beckett’s early plays, silence takes the place of language. It is employed as a desirable relief from the nonsensical language. Beckett’s originality lies not in distorting the role of language, but rather in the employment of silence meaningfully.⁶⁹

4. Conclusion

Pauses and silences, in Beckett’s plays, indicate a break in the dialogue. All the characters in his plays seem to reach their ends sooner or later. That is why they seem to be silent at the end of the plays. For example, in the *Happy Days*, Winnie’s being unable to utter

words and make gestures indicates that she is a woman approaching death.

Beckett used silences and pauses in his works more than any other writer. The pauses are as prominent and suggestive as words. In this play, he uses a lot of pauses in order to reflect the inner conflict and the bewilderment inside each character of the play.

Pauses and silences indicate the fact that language for the absurdists is no more significant. It is useless and is not able to convey any meaning. These pauses and silences reveal difficulty in communication, the distance between self and self, as well as self and others. People lose the ability to understand or to communicate even with themselves. In Beckett’s plays, pauses and silences indicate a break in the dialogue. All the characters in his plays seem to reach their ends sooner or later. That is why they seem to be silent at the end of the plays.

To conclude, the play reflects in a very clear way the state of modern man who has lost communication with the people around him. This is also reflected in the life of modern man in the 21st century although there are a lot of communication means, but in reality they are not really connected to each other. They are living in a virtual world instead of interacting with each other.

End Notes

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