

СТИЛІСТИКА ТА ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ ТЕКСТУ

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THE PHENOMENON OF SILENCE IN S. BECKETT'S PLAYS

У статті розглянуто та проаналізовано феномен мовчання у п'єсах С. Беккета. Виявлено, що мовчання актуалізоване у досліджуваних творах як на рівні структури п'єс, так і лексично. Мовчання представлено як авторською ремаркою «пауза» або «тиша», так і дієсловами та похідними іменниками, що позначають розумові процеси. Частіше за все мовчання є більш інформативно змістовним, ніж вчинки персонажів.

Ключові слова: феномен мовчання, структура п'єс, лексичний рівень, пауза, тиша, інформативна змістовність.

В статье рассмотрено и проанализировано феномен молчания в пьесах С. Беккета. Выявлено, что молчание актуализировано в произведениях, которые исследуются, как на уровне структуры пьес, так и на лексическом уровне. Молчание представлено авторской ремаркой «пауза» или «тишина», а также глаголами и производными существительными, которые обозначают мыслительные процессы. Часто молчание оказывается более информативно содержательным, чем поступки персонажей.

Ключевые слова: феномен молчания, структура пьес, лексический уровень, пауза, тишина, информативное содержание.

The article deals with analysis of the phenomenon of silence presented in S. Beckett's plays. It is discovered that silence is actualized at both structural and lexical levels of the plays under study. Silence is shown with the help of author's remark «pause» or «silence» as well as verbs and derivative nouns denoting mental processes. Silence is often more informative than personages' actions.

Key words: the phenomenon of silence, the structure of plays, lexical level, pause, silence, informative content.

The aim of our article is to look into the phenomenon of silence present in S. Beckett's plays as well as investigate the significance of author's remark «silence» and «pause». **The object** of our investigation is plays by S. Beckett, **the subject** is the silence and its means of expression.

Communication is an exchange of information between its producer and recipient. It embraces verbal and non-verbal message, sender's code and recipient's decoding. In modern linguistics communication consists of verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal components. Non-verbal communication includes kinetics, facial expressions, acoustics, proxemics and silence which are by their nature rather pragmatic than semantic. Non-verbal signs together with verbal ones contribute to adequate understanding while communicating. Verbal communication is built on verbal signs, symbols represented in oral and written language [2, c. 95]

Non-verbal behaviour is explained as meaningful, interactive and social; the phenomenon of silence belongs to its communicative display [3, c. 69]. In artistic message silence as non-verbal behaviour obtains the status of communicative code, filled with information and helps build new meanings in the process of communication between a reader and a text [4].

The tradition of silence in theatre is an old tradition. It dates back to the times of the Greek when, for instance, the stage was drowned in silence after Hippolytus had been killed and Aphrodite declared triumphant [9, c. 204]. Modern stage, however, has its own approach to silence. As Michael Goldman says in his article «Vitality and Deadness in Beckett's Plays»: Silence, of course, is not uncommon on the modern stage, and it can carry many meanings. It can suggest an inability to express, as through excess of feelings or stupefaction, it can refer to what language cannot express; or it can convey the doubt that there is anything to express, that meaning is possible [8, c. 68].

Failed actors like those in Beckett's theatre experience several types of silence or verbal retreat which perform several functions related to the plays' structural and aesthetic properties and the characters' states of estrangement, frustration and existential entrapment. In «The Language of Silence», Leslie Kane comments on the multi-dimensional aspects of silence in Beckett's plays, he says: Blank space functions as the background, the white canvas against which Beckett may project the words. Incorporated into his portrait of existence is the emptiness and evanescence of phenomenal and psychological experience. Beckett's drama is characterized by a retreat from the word; physical, emotional, and linguistic entrapment; stasis as dramatic structure; evocation of evanescence; the motif of waiting; and the centrality of time [10, c. 115].

The emphasis on stasis as dramatic structure already intimates the idea that silence, beside its role as an authentic marker of everyday-life conversations, can act as a structural device or rather as an organizing principle that ensures a subtle dramatization of stasis and perpetual decay [6, c. 144–145].

At the end of both acts in «Waiting for Godot», the alternation of silence with words becomes almost systematic. In the last scene of act one and after the arrival of the boy, we count nearly eight silences; whereas in the last scene of act two we count almost sixteen silences. The number has doubled not because the play is gradually approaching its closure, but because the characters now need to reason more and to reflect more deeply on their situation and destiny which have become more alarming than before. In these circumstances silence comes to signify more powerfully than words, and by so doing it invites the reader to take part in the tramps' attempt to decipher the boy's message, to learn

something about their fate, and to demystify the enigmatic Godot. It is not only a silence that informs reflection, but also one that tells so much about the feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty which precede the discovery and recognition of truth [6, c. 145].

Beckett sums up the impact of silence in «Waiting for Godot» in a very expressive statement: Silence is pouring into this play like water into a sinking ship [8, c. 68]. The simile is powerfully suggestive: the more water pours into the ship, the more the ship sinks into the water. It is exactly what happens to Vladimir and Estragon: the more silence penetrates into their hearts and words, the more their already-perishing hopes sink into the deep abyss of despair and oblivion. «Krapp's Last Tape», similarly, opens with a long silence and ends with the tape running-on in silence. At the beginning of the play, Krapp is shown performing a series of non-verbal actions that signal the onset of tension, anxiety and confusion [6, c. 145]: Krapp remains a moment motionless, heaves a great sigh... and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him... remaining a moment motionless, heaves a great sigh, takes keys from his pockets, raises them to his eyes, chooses key, gets up and moves to front of table... [5, c. 221]

Almost the same thing happens in «Endgame» which begins with Clov's silent wandering on the stage and ends with a brief tableau. This is equally applicable to «Come and Go», «That Time» and «Catastrophe». It seems appropriate at this point to assert that silence serves not only to punctuate the beginnings and ends of plays, but also to frame words within the actor's discourses and to accentuate their tension, immediacy, or dislocation [6, c. 146]: As Kane points out: Beckett employs silence to frame and accentuate words that are uttered between silences. In Pozzo's twilight speech, the orator builds to the climax of his speech and elicits attention through silences. His final comment is preceded by silence and punctuated by a long silence [10, c. 116].

Beckett's manipulation of silence in the sense of structural framing or organization also lends his dramatic works a particular aesthetic quality by virtue of the musical effects and rhythmic fluctuations of sound that the alternation of words with silences creates. In classical drama, stage music needed silence to be heard and felt; but in Beckett's drama, a kind of melody that issues from the depth of human suffering and originates in the most painful states of anxiety, alienation and fear [6, c. 146].

Lexemes «silence» and «pause» are the most numerous in stage directions of English Drama of Absurd; they are central nominations of silence in stage directions. There is difference between notions «pause» and «silence». The first type of pause is denoted by word, the second one – by ellipsis. «Silence» is a kind of message-signal the function of which is to attract reader's attention. The aim of this device is to change the rhythm of thought and dialogue. Pauses in Samuel Beckett's plays almost always combine two aspects of silence motive – not speaking and hushing up, in their interconnection. The absurd character practices a special kind of silence avoiding in this way unnecessary confession. The silence motive obtains neither everyday, nor psychological, nor situational sense but rather metaphysical one. In classical drama pause means temporary characters' speech gap without any actions; in Beckett's drama, vice versa, it is illogical monologue with pauses and active actions [1, c. 101-102].

The basic metasigns of silence in author's remark of Beckett's plays are the following words and phrases: *silently, silence, silent, to pause, pause, to hesitate, hesitation, to reflect, reflection, to ponder, deep in thought, still, to brood, to meditate, in rueful afterthought, the voice breaks, to stiffen, to say nothing, marooned and bemused for a moment.*

To show silence the playwright uses verbs or derivative nouns denoting mental processes, for example:

He broods, musing on the struggle [5, c. 3]; *He reflects* [5, c. 3];
Vladimir deep in thought [5, c. 5]; *after prolonged reflection* [5, c. 15];
He ponders [5, c. 34]; *He meditates. Not very convinced* [5, c. 124];
in rueful afterthought [5, c. 173].

The examples given show that at this moment the characters are thinking of what was said or heard. However, sometimes the playwright makes a remark that his characters are silent in answer to the cue of their interlocutors focusing in such a way on their emotions:

He broods, musing on the struggle [5, c. 3] (the character is in despair realizing that nothing is to be done);

Pause. Violently [5, c. 42] (the personage is furious and frustrated because the same things happen every day and he can't influence it);

Gloomily [5, c. 93] (the main hero is desperate understanding that the gloomy present situation won't change);

hesitates [5, c. 226] (the personage is agitated recalling his past).

Samuel Beckett in his plays concerns himself with the use and function of language. His text becomes a critique of language that deconstructs the systematic unity of spoken words and reach to the reality of «Other» by demystifying the logocentrism through a «different form of utterance, a further remove from spoken language» [7, c. 7]. The pauses then give a sense of continuity of language not fully exhausted but arduously calculating postmodern fragmentation together «with the obligation to express». The foreshadowing of postmodern discourse in Beckett's dramatic work ascertains the urgency of speaking «pause» to communicate the limitations of language itself [12, c. 312]. Locatelli has reflected: Fragmentation through silence and pauses works there as more than a suspension of the linguistic or representation continuum. It works as a re-contextualizing semiotic device that creates the horizon for systemic signification of both language and silence. In other words, fragmentation in discourse, that is, within the verbal chain, constitutes a way of expressing the limits of language as context, and allude silence as another possible context, comparable to language in this respect [11, c. 25].

Thus, as one can see, the effect of silence is actualized in author's remark in S. Beckett's plays. The key lexemes denoting silence are «pause» and «silence» which contribute to the dramatization of people's existential problems.

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