

# DEVIATIONS OF SPEECH ACTS IN BECKETT'S *WAITING FOR GODOT*: A STUDY IN PRAGMATICS

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## **Abstract**

Pragmatics interprets utterances in context, not in isolation and deals with all the sociological and psychological factors affecting the functioning of speech. The language of *Waiting for Godot* is conspicuous for deviations from the norms of formal conversation in context. A large number of utterances of the characters violate the principles of Speech Act Theory. The dialogues of the characters seem to convey nothing because of the hybrid utterances. The research paper aims to establish that these deviations from the normal speech patterns are instances of foregrounding which would yield a variety of meanings through Pragmatic study. Four extracts from the text of the play are selected for analysis under the theoretical framework of Austin and Searle's Theory of Speech Acts keeping in view their stylistic and thematic significance.

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**Keywords:** Pragmatics, Speech Act Theory, Hybrid sentences, Foregrounding, Theatre of the Absurd

## **1. Introduction:**

Pragmatics is a relatively new phenomenon in linguistics which has added new dimensions to the study of the meanings of a text. It is a study of speaker's/writer's meanings which are meant to be deciphered by the listener/reader. Defining Pragmatics, Alan Cruse (2006) writes that "Pragmatics deals with aspects of meaning that are not 'looked up' but which are 'worked out' on particular occasions of use" (p. 136). In Pragmatics, the

focus is laid on the context rather than syntax. “This type of study necessarily involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said” (George Yule, 1996, p. 3). According to Alan Cruse (2006), context is:

An essential factor in the interpretation of utterances and expressions. The most important aspects of context are: (1) preceding and following utterances and/or expressions ('co-text'), (2) the immediate physical situation, (3) the wider situation, including social and power relations, and (4) knowledge presumed shared between speaker and hearer (p. 35).

The listener also plays the important role of decoding the speaker's said or unsaid meanings in this study. “Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said” (Yule, 1996, p. 3). The notions of conveying something to the listener and how much to utter to communicate depend on the closeness or distance between the speaker and the listener. If they have intimate relationship with each other, they may use fewer words to communicate or vice versa. Therefore, it is the study of deictics. “They play a significant part in establishing the spatio-temporal perspective of a narrative, and may suggest whether the perspective of narrator or character is invoked” (Elizabeth Black, 2006, p. 4).

Linguists argue that the interlocutors follow certain principles of conversation to make the communication meaningful. The most conspicuous principles which the linguists have evolved through the analysis of the language in use are the speech acts theory, maxims of cooperation, implicatures and deixis etc. The Speech Act is an utterance with which an interlocutor performs an action with a purpose to communicate. With the Cooperative Principles, the speakers cooperate with each other for successful conversation. Hence, in the words of Elizabeth Black (2006), these are “the ground rules that we observe when speaking and interpreting utterances” (p. 23). Implicatures are implied or suggested meanings which crop up when the ideal maxims of cooperation in conversation are flouted. They may result in irony, metaphor and litotes etc. which present a vast horizon of deeper meanings. Deixis stands for ‘pointing’ with language. Alan Cruse (2000) in *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* illustrates “five main types of deixis: person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis” (p. 319).

Literary writers sometime use marked expressions to capture the attention and focus of the reader. This results in departure and deviation from normal grammatical rules. This deviation from standard grammatical rules results in foregrounding. The text which follows the standard/ formal rules of language is called background text, but the text which breaks away from

these rules is called deviated or foregrounded text. Of the various literary genres, drama is more conspicuous for language deviations because it deals with character-to-character and face-to-face interaction and hence leads much for the reader / audience to infer meanings through the context. Modern drama especially the Absurd play has revolutionised the stage due to the shift of action from external world to the internal one. In the theatre of the Absurd, the characters perform actions through words which represent their emotions. Sometimes, they try to conceal reality behind language but they fail because their body language and context reveal what they are trying to hide behind utterances. So, the language of the Absurd plays is rich for the Pragmatic analysis as it is abundant in deviations from formal rules of communication.

*Waiting for Godot* is a masterpiece in the theatre of the absurd. It is conspicuous for deviations from the rules of speech act theory. The text of the play highlights the unpredictable and uncertain condition of the two persons: Vladimir and Estragon, displaying their loneliness, pessimism and nihilism. To rescue themselves from this mire, they dream of a rescuer Godot who pledged to offer them some relief from this critical situation. They are adamant that their chaotic and disorderly life will be enduring and orderly with his arrival. The drama consists of dialogues representing actions through words which present a gradual action from life to death and from an activity to inertia. Certain situations and issues in the text of *Waiting for Godot* are beyond the grip of the conventional studies and scope of literary criticism e.g. apparently meaningless and irrelevant dialogues, random topic shifts, unexpected conversational moves and the unnecessary circumlocutionary utterances etc. the analysis of these deviations of standard uses of language can be analysed under Speech Act Theory in order to understand the true meanings and reality.

John Langshaw Austin (1962/1975) and John Searle (1979) have presented Speech Act Theory – a viable point in Pragmatics. “Speech acts are uses of language which, either directly or indirectly, commit the user recipient to a particular *action*” (Carter & Nash, 1990, p. 33). A speech act consists of “three related acts. There is first a locutionary act, which is the basic act of utterance” (Yule, 1996, p. 48). This utterance communicates a force of an offer, an invitation or a request etc which is known as illocutionary effect. This utterance is spoken with some intention which may have effect on the reader; it is called the perlocutionary effect. To make speech acts successful, “certain expected or appropriate circumstances” (p. 50). If the utterance is unable or unsuccessful in achieving its goal with certain felicity or happy (contextual) conditions, it gives certain reasons for those infelicitous sentences. If the appropriate circumstances are not found for some speech act; the act will be infelicitous. Felicity conditions are

content, preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions. In addition to this, if the characters do not observe politeness principle, their utterances will be threatening. By offering someone help, one becomes polite to the other person but on the contrary by ignoring or negating a person's needs, one becomes impolite and involves in face threatening acts. To be brief, if the illocutionary act does not have its resultant perlocutionary act, it is an irregularity of Pragmatics.

Austin divides Speech Acts into Constatives and Performatives. A Constative describes and states the situations whereas a Performative is a speech act which “indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (1962, pp. 6-7). According to Searle (1979), Speech acts can be classified into five types: Declarations, Representatives, Expressives, Directives and Commissive. Declarations are those speech acts which bring the change in the world with words e.g. getting married and firing someone from job etc. Representatives state the world of beliefs of the speaker e.g. describing, asserting, predicting and stating facts etc. The next speech acts Expressives express the speaker's emotions. “They express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow” (Yule, 1996, p. 53). To direct somebody to perform some deed is done with Directives e.g. requests, orders or suggestions. In Commissive, speakers commit themselves for some obligatory future actions e.g. promises, threats and refusals etc.

## 2. Literature Review

The literary aspects of *Waiting for Godot* have been extensively evaluated by the critics and scholars. These critics have also focused upon the role of language in addressing the major themes of the play. However, the analysis of the language of the play has been a text-based study. Being a univocal discourse, this text-based study does not unfold the broad-based sphere of meanings. Pragmatic analysis based on Speech Act Theory, Cooperative Principles and Implicatures which can help dig deeper into the meaning is scarcely available. Keeping in view the existing criticism on the play, the review of literature comprises: i) the study of works on the role of language in the play *Waiting for Godot*, and ii) the application of Speech Act theory by Austin, Searle and Mick Short on various other texts which might provide guidance for the current study.

Dr Ghanim Obeyed Oteiwiy (2012) in his article “Language in *Waiting for Godot*” has displayed the significance of language which represents human cultures, identities, emotions, communication and miscommunication. Speech stands for life and existence whereas silence symbolises alienation and death. Beckett makes the inefficiency of language

prominent in *Waiting for Godot*. To show various experiences of human life, he uses multiple styles of language disintegration. “They range from simple misunderstanding to dropping of punctuation marks. This indicates that language has lost its function as a means of conveying thoughts,...dialogue, like all actions, becomes a mere game not to convey the thought but to pass time” (p. 20).

Robinson (1969) dissects the dialogues of the characters to reach a conclusion which inform us about the debacle or collapse of language into nothing i.e. a pause. The two characters Estragon and Vladimir try to use language successfully as a tool of communication but often they fail in this attempt and reach at “a pause into silence” (p. 127). Inactivity, activity, dialogues and sentences, all the things remain incomplete and unfinished.

Martin Esslin (1980) looks at the play from a different angle. For him, language in the play does not fail the characters in their communication but it has radically devalued itself in *Waiting for Godot*. Beckett’s original and creative imagination has made this play “far richer, more complex, and open to a multitude of additional interpretations” (p. 44). Ultimately, every reader with a different perception evaluates it differently because of the openness of its text.

Sherzer (1978) in an article “De-construction in *Godot*” presents Beckett as a playwright who is haunted with the balance of the dialogues and sounds of the characters’ speeches. He has exploited different rules of language to convey his thoughts. Sherzer describes them in detail:

1. The discourse of speech acts and events, that is, the communication established between characters in particular contexts;
2. the manipulation of the rules of semantic association;
3. the use of different registers of language;
4. the use of semantic paradigms and synonyms;
5. the use of common expressions and clichés;
6. the exploitation of the different meanings of a single word;
7. and the use of sounds and sequences of sounds...

(In Cohn, 1993, p. 145)

Richard Ohmann (1971) in “Speech, Action and Style” has applied Speech Act Theory on Oscar Wilde’s *Importance of Being Earnest* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. He suggests that comedies tend to create its comic and farcical atmosphere through mechanical repetition of Speech Acts. In this connection, he presents the example of Oscar Wilde’s *Importance of Being Earnest*. On the other hand, tragedies have wider scope for using various illocutionary acts to present various colours of human nature, actions and passions. The example of Shakespeare’s world renowned tragedy

*Hamlet* is presented to prove his point. “*Hamlet* begins with a question, a refusal, two commands, a kind of loyalty oath (‘Long live the king’), a question, a statement, a compliment, a statement, an order, thanks, and a complaint – all this, of course, between two guardsmen” (p. 253).

Keir Elam (2001) in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* presents the ideology which seems to strengthen the viewpoint of Richard Ohmann discussed above that ‘stock’ figures mostly work with one type of speech acts whereas “rhetorically rich characters will exploit a range of illocutionary modes, depending on context and addressee” (p. 168). He gives example of Polonius in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* who uses directives with his children in the play and causes comic events in the play.

Mick Short (1997) has applied speech act theory on two famous plays of Elizabethan age. Firstly, analysing Shakespeare’s *King Lear* he narrates that everybody obeys his orders because of his royal power. He punishes and deprives his youngest daughter Cordelia of his state because she couldn’t deliver a speech of love for her father quite contrary to his directives. He gives his state to the two elder daughters on their false declaratives of love for him. His speech acts, having the status of law of the country, divide the country into two between his two elder daughters. By performing this action, he ordains his powers to Goneril and Regan and changes their and his worlds with his Directives. Resultantly, he makes himself a powerless person to live on a heath and lose his senses.

Secondly, Short writes about Christopher Marlowe’s tragedy *Doctor Faustus* which is ripe with various speech acts. The protagonist abandons his studies and signs a bond with Lucifer for demonic powers with a Commissive. He confronts with good and bad angels who through Directives refrain him from and pursue him for the black art respectively. Through Expressives, Faustus expresses his pleasure at his prospects of power, and through Directives, he relishes the demonstrations of magical spells.

To sum up, the literature review of the above-mentioned works provides sufficient space and guideline for pragmatic analysis of the play under the theoretical framework of Speech Act theory.

### **3. Methodology**

The researchers have adopted an eclectic approach for the analysis of deviations of Speech Acts in *Waiting for Godot*. The Speech Act theory by Austin and Searle which is applied on the text of the play is augmented with easier and comprehensible ideology of Mick Short. Mick Short’s (1997) model of analysis is comparatively easier as it is based upon the sentence type of the utterances. According to Mick Short, very often illocutionary acts fit in grammatical structures very easily and their contextual study can make

us sure about their perlocutionary forces of different kinds of speech acts. This is elaborated in the table given below:

Grammatical Structure	Speech act	Example
Interrogative structure	Question	'Is he singing'
Imperative structure	Commands	'Sing!'
Declarative structure	Statements	'He is singing.'

(Adapted from Mick Short, 1997, p. 198)

Data (marked utterances) are analysed and interpreted in the following steps:

- 1- The utterances which are marked for analysis and interpretation are conspicuous cases of deviations from the speech act theory.
- 2- Selected utterances are analysed and interpreted in three steps:
  - i) First of all, the context and description of the given utterances is explained.
  - ii) Analysis and interpretation of the deviation from the speech act theory
  - iii) Evaluation

#### 4. Analysis and Interpretation

##### Text 4.1

**Vladimir:** I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever.

**Estragon:** Me too.

**Vladimir:** Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (...) Get up till I embrace you.

**Estragon:** (...) Not now, not now.

(Beckett, 1985, p. 9)

##### 4.1.1 Context

The two persons, Vladimir and Estragon, wait for Godot daily who may release them from their problems and give them some job to earn their livelihood. Every day, they meet each other at an appointed place and every night they get separated from each other to spend night. In this scene in Act 1, both are happy at their reunion. Vladimir's enthusiasm at their reunion is a habitual act. He has expressed the same eagerness in previous reunions.

##### 4.1.2 Analysis

The focus of the study is the analysis of the characters' emotions and reactions to the reunion as reflected in their utterances. Vladimir's speech acts (expressives) vocalise his rejuvenation on meeting his friend again after a break. Both the characters are afraid of loneliness and to escape it both are

interdependent on each other. Vladimir wants to celebrate this occasion as a great achievement by embracing Estragon who is engrossed with his boot. Estragon declines the offer immediately which shows his irritation on such a suggestion. This is an unusual emotional outburst of Estragon which becomes a foregrounded statement.

Vladimir's direct illocutionary speech act of celebration with a loving embrace has the perlocutionary force of getting the same love and warm reception from his friend. Estragon does not catch the meanings of Vladimir's speech; hence, the failure and infelicity of speech event. Estragon does not reciprocate the wish and need of Vladimir of expressing affection, so he is also being impolite to Vladimir.

Estragon's refusal "not now, not now" to Vladimir's offer is in the form of repeated phrases; he uses same negative "not" twice with the same repeated temporal proximal deixis "now" which emphasise that Estragon cannot be forced or flattered to comply with Vladimir's directive at this moment.

Vladimir uses plural pronoun "we" in his utterance "we'll have to celebrate this", which gives the impression to the researchers as if he were in the position to control the situation by suggesting a course of action without counseling with Estragon. "This" is a proximal spatial deixis which is referring to their present meeting. The verb phrase "will have to celebrate" tells that they are bound to be happy on this situation. He begins his next sentence with verb phrase "get up" which is an imperative in construction and its perlocutionary effect is of an order. It can also be a request without any polite expression added to it because they are very close friends. Estragon's annoying refusal is making the whole situation topsy-turvy. What the reader is expecting from him is making the equal share of contribution to express love and happiness towards Vladimir but his declining Vladimir's offer categorically is unusual and unexpected for the reader. Consequently, his utterance pops out of the text, comes to the fore and becomes prominent for analysis and interpretation.

Vladimir's first utterance is an exclamatory sentence (an Expressive) but the sign of exclamation is missing. The playwright may have avoided the mark of exclamation in order to reveal the superficiality of feelings in his character Vladimir because it has become his routine to greet Estragon in this way. So, this habitual act has lost the worth of genuine emotion of happiness on meeting his friend again. Later on, he has said that the habitual acts become the cause of monotony and dullness in life. Resultantly, human beings do not feel any change or variety in life. In his routine life, Vladimir is feeling fed up with his futile waiting for Godot which has sapped him of his enthusiasm on finding his friend Estragon and he remains neutral in his tone. But, Estragon does not even pretend to celebrate the occasion of



meeting Vladimir again because he knows in his heart that it will also prove another dull and insipid day of his life without any change in his status.

#### **4.2 Text 2**

(I)**Vladimir:** ... One of the thieves was saved. (...). It's a reasonable percentage. (...). Gogo...

(Beckett, 1985, p. 11)

(II)**Vladimir:** Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

**Estragon:** No.

**Vladimir:** Shall I tell it to you?

**Estragon:** No.

**Vladimir:** It'll pass the time. (...) Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One

**Estragon:** Our what?

**Vladimir:** Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other....

*(he searches for the contrary of saved)...* damned.

(Beckett, 1985, p.12)

#### **4.2.1 Context**

The given excerpt which comprises two texts refers to the same Biblical event narrated in The New Testament. Vladimir narrates the story to Estragon. It is about Christ and the two thieves on the Cross. Estragon is not willing to listen to it; he diverts Vladimir's attention too by not giving proper feedback to him; therefore, the story is prolonged on a few pages of the play with the discussion on other issues in between. Estragon is not inclined to listen to it perhaps because of one thief's damnation and other thief's rescue from hell in the story which may remind him that one out of these two friends will be saved and the other will be accursed because of chance happenings. Vladimir's first dialogue in the given chunk is uttered after Estragon's successful effort of taking off his boots. After the solution of this physical problem, Vladimir is now focusing on a spiritual problem that is a significant issue of religion. The question arises in his mind that why one thief was saved and the other was damned. He is unable to resolve this affair but he tilts to a positive approach of one thief's being redeemed.

#### **4.2.2 Analysis**

The story of two thieves which commences on page 11 gets detracted by the mention of some unfulfilled desires like repentance, marriage and honeymoon. After recalling the train of his thoughts (on page 12) which was derailed due to his conversation with Estragon, Vladimir feels very happy

and excited as a child which is quite obvious from his words “Ah yes” the phrase which has an interjection with an affirmative. Next, Vladimir performs a speech act with an interrogative with the illocutionary force of a question. He asks Estragon if he can recall this story of two thieves. It means Estragon knows the story beforehand which is obvious from lexeme “remember” in “Do you remember the story?” On Estragon’s conversational turn, he shows his ignorance of the story which leads to a polite offer from Vladimir in the form of an interrogative to share his knowledge with Estragon and to benefit him with it. Its perlocutionary effect should be the acceptance of his indirect offer-cum-question positively by Estragon. On the contrary, he responds negatively and declines the offer and refuses to agree with Vladimir’s proposal which in the words of Levinson (1983) is Estragon’s “dispreferred act” (p. 336). The reader feels surprised at unexpected negative reply of Estragon. Hence, it becomes a marked and foregrounded situation in the text.

Estragon’s replies are very short which show his lack of interest in the conversation as Leontes did in Shakespeare’s (1993) *The Winter’s Tale* in the beginning of the play with his friend Polixenes on suspicion of his adultery with his wife. He suspects that he will be damned and Vladimir will be saved. But, it does not stop Vladimir from his efforts to initiate the dialogue, to engage Estragon with it and to pass the time successfully while waiting for Godot. Consequently, Vladimir seems to be in power to control the situation, topic and the floor of conversation for a longer time. This utterance receives no comment from Estragon; hence, there is a pause of silence to escape the anecdote. After that pause, Vladimir starts telling the story himself. At the noun phrase “Our Saviour”, Estragon interrupts Vladimir’s dialogue with a question about the identity of the man who was crucified with the thieves. The repetition of the noun phrase in Vladimir’s dialogue creates a pun and a mocking element that Saviour is unable to save himself and other people from the pain of crucifixion and death. Vladimir, the intellectual self, alludes to the account of the crucifixion in “Luke 32:43”, where one of the thieves rebuked Christ. Resultantly, he was damned and cursed to be thrown in hell. The other thief feared God and said that Christ was innocent of any vices. This thief was promised by Christ to enter paradise with him so he was lucky to have salvation from Jesus Christ. Vladimir and Estragon are also waiting for Godot – a saviour who will save them from their agony of life. This Biblical allusion used by Beckett in *Waiting for Godot* and put in the mouth of Vladimir has an important function. It is not only decorating the conversational exchange of Vladimir but also points to the Estragon’s lack of knowledge and disinterest in the topic. In the words of Simpson (2004), Beckett’s use of biblical allusion through the mouth of Vladimir is “a device of power, enabling the speaker to

control a situation” (p. 218). Simpson argues that Vladimir “seems the logical beneficiary, given his preoccupation with repentance and crucifixion throughout the play” (p. 33). Whereas Estragon all the time shows pessimism and less chance of his salvage. It is because of this religious element and biblical allusion that the play is also called a Christian and religious play.

### **4.3 Text 3**

**ESTRAGON:** ... You know the story of the Englishman in the brothel?

**VLADIMIR:** Yes.

**ESTRAGON:** Tell it to me.

**VLADIMIR:** Ah stop it!

**ESTRAGON:** An Englishman having drunk a little more than usual goes to a brothel.

The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one or a red-haired one...

(Beckett, 1985, p.16)

#### **4.3.1 Context**

Estragon narrates the humorous story of an Englishman in a brothel as earlier Vladimir narrated the story of two thieves. Story-telling sets a contrast between two characters. The themes of both the stories are different: one relates to salvation and the other relates to prostitution. Vladimir does not listen to Estragon’s story and the narrative remains incomplete.

#### **4.3.2 Analysis**

Estragon’s statement is in declarative form but it has a question mark in the end. Estragon’s speech act becomes an odd combination of declarative and interrogative. It looks “like a hybrid between statement and a question” (Short, 1997, p. 201). The use of a declarative form suggests that most probably Estragon knows about Vladimir’s knowledge regarding this story. But, the question arises on the use of question mark at the end of his utterance. This implies that he is not sure of Vladimir’s grasp at joke and he does not trust in his power of memory either. So these contradictory thoughts of Estragon are represented by this blend of the declarative and the interrogative.

Vladimir’s reply is in affirmative which leaves no room for any doubt about his knowledge of the anecdote. Estragon’s second speech act is imperative in structure but what sort of meaning is conveyed by it. Is it a request or a command? Estragon wants to get some information on a topic, so the perlocutionary force of his illocutionary act would be a request. We know that they are very close friends and one friend can take liberty with the

other friend, therefore, the perlocutionary force of his speech act can also be authoritative to have information from his friend. Vladimir’s speech act is another imperative which is stronger one than Estragon’s. “Ah” is an interjection which is having emotive connotation of despair and deprivation. He orders his friend to stop this topic in his utterance which is very unusual speech event because if a person knows about something, he can dispense with the knowledge to his friend on his request. In the adjacency pair of conversation, rejection or refusal of a request is called “dispreferred seconds “or” dispreferreds”. The following table of Levinson will make it clear:

**Table: Correlations of content and format in adjacency pair seconds**

<i>FIRST PARTS:</i>	<i>Request</i>	<i>Offer/Invite</i>	<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Blame</i>
<i>SECOND PARTS:</i>					
<i>Preferred:</i>	acceptance	Acceptance	agreement	expected answer	Denial
<i>Dispreferred:</i>	Refusal	Refusal	disagreement	unexpected answer or non-answer	Admission

(Adapted from Levinson, 1983, p. 336)

Vladimir’s attitude towards Estragon shows that he is not inclined to tell the story. He is not being informative to his friend. When Estragon starts telling the event, Vladimir refuses to listen to it. We can interpret Vladimir’s refusal to listen to Estragon as a speech act which suggests “his fear and apprehension of all of life and of certain things that are best left unsaid” (Roberts, 1995, p. 22). Perhaps Vladimir is afraid of his incapacity of having any physical pleasures in this world. This deprivation agonises him and he cannot bear the hint of other people enjoying and living life with full zeal and zest. Beckett did not inform us about their beloveds, wives and family backgrounds etc. So, this is their weak point and Estragon is harping on it to intensify this deprivation in their lives.

Estragon annoys Vladimir by narrating the story which has more serious implications. In this narration, Estragon uses such phrases “fair one”, “dark one” and “red-haired one” to complicate the understanding of the readers. The usage of the above-mentioned noun phases which are just describing the color of hair perplexes the readers. Following questions are in the mind of the reader: whose hairs are these and for what purpose they are indicated? The contextual study fills the gap between what is literally said and what is conveyed implicitly and the meanings are transferred to the readers successfully. Estragon is using the register of the bawds or agents who use code words to convey their meaning to the customers because of having fear of the police to be caught and imprisoned. Beckett has used Synecdoche which is “identified with a rule which applies the term for the

part to the whole” (Leech, 1989, p. 50). “A fair one”, “a dark one”, and “a red-haired one” are noun phrases. Each phrase has two modifiers (article and adjective) before noun. In all the three noun phrases indefinite article “a” is used and “one” as a head word is used. “Fair”, “dark” and “red-haired” are different attributive adjectives used in the three noun phrases. “One” is an ambiguous use of pronoun which does not indicate to anything in particular. It is actually used figuratively which refers to a prostitute. The different colours of hair refer to the prostitutes of different ethnic groups. So hairs are used as parts to the whole – girls or boys. Cohn presents the complete joke in which the Englishman “wants a boy. Shocked, the bawd threatens to call a police man, and the Englishman pleads: ‘Oh, no, they’re too gritty’” (In Graver, 1989, p. 40). So, the story is basically an “obscene French joke that turns on the alleged preference of the English for sodomy” (Fletcher & Fletcher, 1985, p. 57). With this joke, comedy is created in the play which is called comic relief. Beckett uses the trick of interruption and comic relief in Estragon’s story of Englishman which is also interrupted “otherwise it would have gone on forever” (Graver, 1989, p. 8). Overall, this whole passage points out man’s physical desires and his stilted condition in fulfilling them which result in depression and boredom towards life.

#### **4.4 Text 4**

**VLADIMIR:** You want to get rid of him?

**POZZO:** He wants to cod me, but he won't.

**VLADIMIR:** You want to get rid of him?

**POZZO:** He imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted

to keep him on in that capacity.

**ESTRAGON:** You've had enough of him?

**POZZO:** In reality he carries like a pig. It's not his job.

**VLADIMIR:** You want to get rid of him?

**POZZO:** He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision. Such is his miserable scheme. As though I were short of slaves! (...)  
Atlas, son of Jupiter!

(Beckett, 1985, p. 31)

#### **4.4.1 Context**

Vladimir and Estragon are curious to know about the cause of Lucky’s not unburdening himself. Pozzo’s answer consists of different endeavours to give them a logical explanation but every time he feels himself deficient in providing them with the accurate reason. Pozzo shows his unwillingness to keep him in his service. Ultimately, he discloses his intention of selling Lucky at a fair for a good price.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis

Vladimir's first question is not an interrogative with its normal grammatical structure. It looks more like a statement than a question but the sign of interrogation shows its status as a query from Vladimir. He repeats this question twice further in the text with same syntax. It is a hybrid expression. Many questions are asked in the play but they are not answered most of the times probably because of such constructions. Such order or arrangement of lexemes to make an utterance demanding for the needed information shows that Vladimir and Estragon are timidly asking questions from Pozzo because of his superiority over them. Sometimes these questions are not answered at all and if they are answered the answers would not relate to the questions which sometimes result in comedy. Fletcher and Fletcher (1985) write that Beckett "creates laughter out of failure" (p. 40) of communication between characters. Pozzo answers Vladimir's questions irrelevantly. In speech acts, Austin's Constatives are the utterances which may be true or untrue because "they claim to report that certain things are the case in certain worlds" (Goring *et al*, 2001, p. 175). So, Pozzo's dialogues in this chunk are all Constatives; they may be true or untrue since we are unaware of Lucky's arguments in this regard.

In his turn, Vladimir performs an action by a Performative. His speech act is an interrogative with which he is seeking some information from Pozzo. This illocutionary speech act is in need of its perlocutionary act from Pozzo, but he does not provide its answer. In this way it is a deviation of speech act. "The speech act cannot be successfully performed unless the speaker gets the listener to *recognise* his illocutionary intentions" (Elam, 2001, p. 163). Vladimir fails in conveying his message to Pozzo so it is "non-securing of uptake" (p. 164).

Estragon's speech act is also an interrogative with a question mark as Vladimir's speech act but its structure makes it a statement. As we have its contextual study, we come to know that his illocutionary speech act has the perlocutionary force of a question in need of Pozzo's reply. "Relevant contextual conditions for the adequate performance of particular speech act include speaker/hearer intentions as well as states of affairs in the world" (Short, 1997, p. 199). Estragon raises this point that Pozzo's dislike towards Lucky is upshot of his being tired and he may be exhausted because of the monotonous routine in his company. Vladimir does not change his next question; its wording is the same one. The repetition of the question with its irregular structure from them makes it prominent for analysis. Both the friends may be sensing an opportunity to grab for the post of a slave or carrier of Pozzo. They want to be tied with someone so that they may be free of their tension of food and all their actions will be determined by the owner.

Consequently, they may have a prescribed course of action for which they will not consume their energies.

Pozzo's last utterance is also in present tense as are his previous sentences. Present tense has at least five uses. One of them is to depict a habitual action. Pozzo's use of verbs "wants", "imagines" and "carries" represents Lucky's customary needs. According to Pozzo, Lucky may have been engaged in such teasing activity for some period of time. Pozzo bursts with emotions and laments over such behavior of Lucky in the company of other human beings. Pozzo gives another version of Lucky's bad behavior as if his earlier speech acts were failed to express his feeling. Kennedy (1975) elaborates this point further that "they can neither communicate nor express, they can only fail" (p. 134). He puts another effort of telling both the friends about Lucky's "scheme". The usage of this word has negative connotation of a conspiracy against Pozzo, i.e. Lucky's habit of complying with Pozzo's needs without showing any dislike may accustom him to his servant then he will feel sorry about his "decision" to depart from Lucky. It shows that Pozzo has reached at the verdict against Lucky who wants to keep himself pinned with him. According to Pozzo, Lucky has failed miserable in his effort. Pozzo pretends to be a sufferer but his dialogues have proved him ironically a tyrant. The foundation of their relationship is one person's desire to dominate and the other person's yearning to be dominated.

Pozzo's speech act "As though I were short of slaves!" is an ambiguous one. This illocutionary act is suggestive; apparently, it gives the meaning of Pozzo's lack of slaves but its perlocutionary force is projecting contradictory meaning. It is foregrounded by saying something else and meaning something. It presents Beckett's creating new meaning by exploiting the common speech acts. Pozzo has employed here Litotes or Rhetorical Understatement which is "a mode of intensification, suggesting that the speaker's feelings are too deep for plain expression" (Leech, 1989, p. 170). Litotes is often categorised under irony because of its two-layer approach to the meaning of phrases, clauses or sentences. Pozzo is disparaging Lucky here and by saying that he lacks slaves he is implying its opposite which means that he has a lot of slaves at his state. Beckett censures the master-slave relationship through Pozzo and Lucky in which one is at receiving end and the other is at giving end. In the background of post-colonialism one presents the colonisers and the other symbolises the colonised. Murch (1984) narrates: "Pozzo became the icon of the colonial oppressor; Lucky ... the colonial slave" (In Cohn, 1993, p. 64). In Paul Scott's *Jewel in the Crown*, the British Empire expanded its empire with slaves and they were not short of it (colonised people) as Pozzo. Lucky's servitude has crushed his individual instincts and individuality. He has become a machine to be run by the owner. Guicharnaud says that Lucky's

actions have become “inhuman and abstract” (In Bloom, 1985, p. 113) while serving Pozzo but Pozzo is still unhappy with Lucky even after his complete surrender to him.

The last two utterances of Pozzo “As though ... Jupiter” are marked for analysis because of their hybrid construction. After these utterances of Pozzo, we find sign of exclamation. He says that he does not have dearth of slaves in his premises. The world is full of the poor who are ready to become slaves only for the sake of food and shelter. They will do anything gladly to keep themselves alive. Pozzo is alive to this situation and his utterance expresses his emotion of excessive pride which is mixed in his declarative. Therefore, exclamatory sign is used at the end of his sentence. This situation is proved more pathetic and heart-rending for us when we sense Vladimir’s and Estragon’s interest in the would-be vacant post of Lucky. They seem to be interested by their dialogues in slavery to give their lives some sense of direction. Pozzo’s next utterance shows his hatred, malice and nonchalance for Lucky. His both illocutionary acts imply the perlocutionary force of denial of Lucky’s existence, his worth and services. It presents Pozzo as a callous and self-centered person.

## 5. Conclusion

In the analysis of the selected passages, the marked cases of deviations of speech acts point to two kinds of deviations. One is the failure of perlocutionary force as the listener fails to receive the speaker’s intention correctly or fails to respond to the illocutionary force. The other deviation of speech acts is the mixture of two different types of speech acts. Directives are found in the form of Expressives; Interrogatives are in the form of Representatives and Expressives are sometimes either in the form of Interrogatives or in the form of Representatives. Such deviations of speech acts are called hybrid speech acts.

The irregularity of the failure of perlocutionary force is found frequently in the dialogues of Vladimir, Estragon and Pozzo. Sometimes, they misunderstand the intention of illocutionary act and their responses are foregrounded because of being infelicitous. Resultantly, disharmony between illocutionary act and perlocutionary effect arises comedy because the characters are restricted in the present scenario. This apparent comedy establishes the absurdity of life of modern man due to lack of meaningful communication between characters.

The hybrid speech acts are found in Estragon, Vladimir and Pozzo’s utterances. These utterances are mixture of a statement and a question, a statement and an interrogative and an expressive and a declarative. They are used to present the confused state of the modern man. Estragon’s sceptic nature is presented with his various hybrid speech acts. Most of the times,



statements are mixed with interrogatives because Estragon and Vladimir are not sure of getting the answers of their questions regarding their place in this world, their existence and the fulfilment of their wishes. Pozzo is a powerful master in Act 1; he is not a victim of vagueness in his life. In Act 2, he is blind and less powerful, so his speech acts become hybrid as he becomes uncertain about his future life.

To conclude the discussion, the study of deviations of speech acts in the selected extracts adds to the meanings and artistic effect of the play. These mixed speech acts and infelicity conditions also result in comic and tragic feelings which make the play *Waiting for Godot* a tragi-comedy.

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