

## Tampering with the absurd genre: the translation of *Waiting for Godot* as an example

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## Abstract

This study, which follows the analytical, comparative and qualitative methodologies, investigates the translation of stage direction signs in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* into Arabic. The article, a close analysis of the nonverbal signs, explains the relevance of these semiotics and their thematic functions, and compares them with those of Fayeze Iskandar's translation of the play text. The researchers assess Iskandar's translation outcomes, identify and classify the effectiveness of the translation methods, employed by Iskandar, in maintaining the dysfunctional sign system and the incongruous relations within the play.

**Keywords:** absurd theatre; stage directions; semiotics; genre; translation.

## 1. Introduction

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, orchestrated with repetition of words and actions, contradictions, fragmentation of language and identity, corporeal, linguistic and mental decay and a chaotic *structure*, is a manifesto of the theatre of the absurd and the modern thought and literature. As Barella (1999: 54) maintains, "Beckett, destroying grammatical, syntactic, lexical rules and meaning, creates a sort of non-language (or rather a way of expression which is to a certain extent not subject to conventional rules). His readers cannot be conventional either; they have to interpret the text at different levels from the lexical to the allegorical". *Waiting for Godot*, a two-act play in which nothing happens twice, enacts the postmodern concepts of the absence and *unattainability* of God and transcendental signifieds, the failure of language as a means of communication and thought, and man's loss of his sense of sense, self, time and place.

While language loses its function in the theatre of the absurd, the characters' pauses, silences, hesitations, movements, gestures, deepen the character's nonsensical and clownish conversations. These signs employed in *Waiting for Godot* highlight Vladimir and Estragon's absurd existence and unsettle the audience's expectations of interpreting the play. Akhter (2015: 5) points out that

the occurrence of gaps, silences absences and non-saids in the literary text of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* is closely tied to the late modernist bourgeois ideology, which leads to conflict, difference and contradiction of meanings and continuous indication of incompleteness of the text that at the end is immanently discernible through the non-saids of the text.

Due to the deficiency of spoken language in Beckett's play, the author intensifies the use of nonverbal communication in the stage directions. Besbes (2007: 24-25) has rightly observed that

since the Beckettian text is characterized by its language economy and its tendency towards minimalization, it follows that critical attention should be as much concerned with language as with other systems of signification, properly speaking theatrical, such as: the actor's activities as signs (kinesics, proxemics, and gestural), spatial signs (decoration, lighting, and props), and auditory signs like sound and music.

Although the play does not contain ordinary actions or the ordinary climb of plot, the author succeeds in conveying absurdist ideas through sound, gesture and movement signs.

This research runs a close analysis of the signs employed in *Waiting for Godot*. It explains the relevance of the stage directions and their thematic functions as they feature in the SL text and compares them with their translations in Iskandar's published translation into Arabic of the play text. The researchers assess the translation outcomes, and identify and classify the effectiveness of the translation methods in maintaining the dysfunctional sign system and the incongruous, yet coherent network of the absurd elements in the play.

## 2. Statement of the problem

The problem addressed in this research is the lack of equivalent effect in the translation of an absurd play. The collected data points to inadequate representations of the absurd effects that are created through gestures, movements and postures, as stated in the stage directions.

*Waiting for Godot* is shot with non-verbal, stage direction signs which vary in type, frequency and function. On the surface, pauses may sound like silences, mediation like thinking, and rummaging like searching. Upon closer examination, though, these signs are significantly different from each other. When the translator uses the non-verbal signs interchangeably, the translation outcome seriously compromises the incongruity embedded in the absurd situation, which, in turn, affects the function of the sign system in the play. Ultimately, the loss in translation would tamper with the absurd genre features by making the situation less absurd than it really is or less darkly humorous than it reads in the original.

## 3. The absurd theatre thematics

It is commonly agreed in the critical circles that the absurd drama constitutes one important response to the emptiness and chaos of the modern age. Absurd authors represented the fragmented nature of the physical, linguistic, temporal and mental realities in the post-war, modern world. Esslin (1961) defines the absurd as something that is out of harmony with reason incongruous, unreasonable and illogical. Holtan (1976) reflects the vague and sorrowful hollowness of the human lives in the modern era. Stayan (1981) claims that an absurd situation is created in order to represent the suffering that could follow when purposelessness, solitude and silence are taken to the ultimate degree.

The relationship between Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and existentialism cuts deep to the bone. Absurdists such as Beckett and Pinter concentrate on existential themes such as the purposelessness, meaninglessness, futility and circularity of existence. Conard (2007) believes that "for Sartre, absurdity is a state of affairs. Existence is absurd because it lacks any inherent design, meaning, or end point". *Waiting for Godot*, which, arguably, alludes to the myth of Sisyphus, encapsulates the themes of circularity, futility, meaninglessness and the endless task of waiting.

One central theme in *Waiting for Godot* and in the theatre of the absurd in general is this intense sense of metaphysical anguish. Silverstein (1993: 144) points out that the theatre of absurd speaks of the characters' mental suffering resulting from their melancholic, fruitless pursuit for understanding the surrounding milieu. Also, Esslin (1961: 24-25) identifies the thematic core of the absurd text as a "sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition". Along the same lines, Sartre (1943: 77) places meaning in the individual

consciousness when he says: “I do not have nor can I have recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who sustain values in being ... In anguish I apprehend myself ... as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself”.

Counter to Sartre’s urge for modern subjects to create and sustaining their own self-centered truths, Beckett’s characters demonstrate lack of agency to make any sense out of the truthless, senseless universe they inhabited. Their subsequent inner emptiness marks a core theme from which the chain of absurd effects and reactions originate. This sense of defeat constitutes the nucleus from which stems the other thematic aspects of repetition, fruitless actions and the series of nonsensical dialogues, frustrations and fatigue.

#### 4. Important constraints on the translation of the absurd theatre

Translation scholars have repeatedly stressed the importance of using literal and formal strategies when aiming for textual equivalence in literary translation. Newmark (1988: 80) argues that, for such texts, “literal translation is correct and must not be avoided. It secures referential and pragmatic equivalence to the original”. Likewise, Nida (1964) points out that formal equivalence reduces the likelihood of adding any subjective ideas or thoughts to the TT. Thus, literal translation is the best strategy that translators of the theatre of the absurd can adopt so as to keep the original, thematic significance of the genre.

Absurd literature is no exception to the urge for using formal translation. Its themes are deemed universal; therefore, one would think that they are transferable from one culture into another. However, existing translations will allow us to decide whether it is feasible to render gesture for gesture, sound for sound and movement for movement or whether formal translation is an optimal option to aim for when translating absurd literature. Additionally, the thematic importance of the signs in the stage directions would require locating the exact synonym for a particular stage direction. Hence, the lexical sets in the word’s semantic field would place another important constraint on the translation choices at the lexical level. Baker (1992: 16) states that

the idea of semantic fields works well enough for words and expressions which have fairly well-defined propositional meanings, but not for all, or even most of the words and expressions in a language. Limitations aside, there are two main areas in which an understanding of semantic fields and lexical sets can be useful to a translator: a. appreciating the ‘value’ that a word has in a given system; and b. developing strategies for dealing with non-equivalence.

Baker’s proposition can be of a great use when translating *Waiting for Godot* since relating a particular word, gesture or movement to the network of absurd signs would represent both a thematic and a stylistic necessity.

## 5. Methodology

The researchers adopt the analytical, comparative and qualitative approaches. A variety of thematically rich signs, extracted from the stage directions, were comprehensively described and analyzed in order to show their impact on the absurd genre. The analytical approach is matched with comparisons of the same signs in Iskandar's translated text in order to evaluate the loss of the absurd themes and, thence, the effectiveness of the implemented translation method. Furthermore, the researchers propose translation options which will help minimize loss in translating the absurd theatre semiotics.

We have collected ample evidence on the mishandling of various constraints on the absurd condition. This article will focus on the translation of action verbs, adverbials of state, the circular structure and repetitive actions, for space restrictions, the pauses, silences, movements, and gestures will be addressed by the authors in another article.

## 6. Discussion and data analysis

### 6.1. The translation of action verbs which convey inaction

In his translation of *Waiting for Godot* into Arabic, Iskandar undertranslates the internal anguish of the characters represented through the use of action verbs in the stage directions. The action verbs are either translated interchangeably or with far synonyms in the majority of cases.

To properly describe what happens in the target text, the researchers apply Chesterman's (1997: 104) subsemantic "emphasis change strategy", which results in increasing, decreasing or changing the thematic focus of the translated text in comparison to the original. The translator renders action verbs using far synonyms, a strategy which causes a loss in the thematic features and emphasis. Alternatively, Iskandar translates the action verb directions by decreasing the number of occurrences for those verbs (partial loss), as shown in the table 1:

These stage directions reveal characters who are feeble, exhausted, hesitant, confused and eventually defeated. Vladimir and Estragon live an intense feeling of despair, humiliation, internal chaos as manifested in their meaningless acts. The table includes a variety of examples that illustrate these dark shades of meaning.

In example 1, the semantic components of the word "meditates" are defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "Focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes". Vladimir's meditation is followed by his own distorted reference to the biblical proverb "Hope deferred maketh the something sick", while the original religious line is "Hope deferred makes the heart sick...". Vladimir's contemplation moment is met with an incongruous response from Estragon, who says "Why don't you help

TABLE 1

The translation of action verbs using far synonyms

ORIGINAL TEXT (DEFINED BY OXFORD DICTIONARY)	TRANSLATION (DEFINED BY AL-WASET DICTIONARY)	LOST FEATURE
1. <b>Meditates:</b> ( <i>focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes</i> )	<b>يفكر:</b> (فكر) أي أخطر الأمر في باله وأعمله في عقله	Deeply consumed in the idea
2. <b>Fumbles:</b> ( <i>move clumsily in various directions using the hands to find one's way</i> )	<b>يبحث:</b> (بحث) سأل واستقصى عن الشيء	Hesitation, exhaustion and clumsiness
3. <b>Rummages:</b> ( <i>search unsystematically and untidily through something</i> )	<b>يبحث:</b> (بحث) سأل واستقصى عن الشيء	Inner chaos and confusion which shows confused search
4. <b>Refuses to go</b> any further: ( <i>not willing to move</i> )	<b>يتوقف</b> استراجون عن المسير: (وقف) أي سكن بعد الحركة	Inaction
5. <b>Huddled</b> together, shoulders hunched, <b>cringing away:</b> ( <i>Bend one's head and body in fear or apprehension or in a servile manner</i> )	<b>ينتظران</b> وقد التصقا بعضهما وانحنت أكتافهما، مبتعدين عن مصدر التهديد	The sense of hopelessness and total defeat
6. <b>Totters, totters:</b> ( <i>Move in a feeble or unsteady way</i> )	<b>يتقدم:</b> صار قدام أي تقرب <b>يتراجع:</b> انسحب للخلف	Hesitation and chaos

me?”. This example reflects the absurd incongruity which is reinforced by the allusive stage direction “meditates”. Since one would expect great revelations following such deep contemplation, Estragon’s urge for action undermines the act of contemplation and emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. As Vladimir contemplates and Estragon calls for help, the reader will laugh since the result is an incongruous dialogue that evokes irony over a supposedly serious subject matter. While Beckett’s ironic use of contemplation intensifies the character’s inability to think or to use language in a way to express thoughts, Iskandar’s translation—*think*—misses Beckett’s message of black humor, which is the essence of this tragicomedy.

Iskandar’s use of the Arabic equivalent “*يفكر* / lit. think” creates a major thematic loss. In this translation, the spiritual exercise evoked by the word *contemplate* is missing. As a consequence, the thematic focus and the incongruous relations are significantly underemphasized. The word “lit. think / *يفكر*” is a far synonym that does not connote any act of contemplation. Rather, the word reflects the practical scientific everyday process of working the brain. Therefore, the choice of translating “meditates” by selecting a far synonym (*thinks*) causes a loss

in the inherent incongruity of the dialogue and affects both the theme of anguish and the tragicomic essence of the play.

The translation of example 2 results in a loss in the character's clumsy movements. The word "fumbles" means "to move clumsily in various directions using the hands to find one's way" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It is repeated nine times throughout the text of the play. The word's semantic components reflect the clumsy, unsteady movements resulting from the physical or psychological exhaustion. Estragon's inner sense of defeat is reflected in his weak and dull physical movement. This sense of fatigued selves and bodies is lost when "fumbles" is translated into "يبحث/ lit. search" in all of the nine times, which lacks, in its semantic field, any connotations of clumsiness and weakness. While the character's weakness originates from his lack of agency, Iskandar endows the character with agency that the character lacks, thus creating a lack in imparting the physical exhaustion and inner confusion which are the chief characteristics of the absurd character.

The translator uses the same far synonym "يبحث/search" again as a translation for "rummages" in example 3. *Rummages'* denotative meaning is "an **unsystematic** and **untidy** search through a **mass** or receptacle" (*Oxford dictionary*). It is mostly mentioned in the directions that concern the muddled delving for food. Vladimir offers Estragon "a carrot" and gives him "a turnip" after "rummaging his buckets" in a tragicomic scene. The incongruous yet coherent relations of the play are highly affected by Iskandar's translation choices. Although incongruity is essential in creating the tragicomic sense, the translation, by using far synonym, frees this stage direction from the incompatibility of depth in comparison with the contextual nonsense. Iskandar overlooks the semantic component of chaos in his translation of the direction "rummages". It is originally implemented in a frivolous dialogue of finding carrots and turnips to create a sense of black humor due to the incongruous level of seriousness. However, he translates such directions with the far synonym "search", that does not connote the inner effect, and hence omits the incongruous relations and the tragicomic sense.

In example 4, Estragon is taken by the arm to walk up and down at first before he shows resistance and unwillingness to move. The word "refuses" in this context connotes agency and rejection, which the translator eliminates in his choice of the far synonym "يتوقف عن المسير/ lit. stops walking". The componential features of the word "يتوقف/stop" do not comprise any sense of rejection or agency; the word, instead, connotes a less deliberate halt of movement.

In the original scene, after Estragon refuses to go with Vladimir, an ironic reverse of roles occurs where Estragon asks Vladimir to move, and Vladimir responds that he cannot. Both characters show desire to move, yet they both cannot act on their desire. The relevant degree of agency represented in the stage direction is essential for showing the incongruity between desire and action. Using the verb "refuses", which connotes agency, in a context where characters lack it will only strengthen the sense of humor. They desire to move, they repeatedly



express this desire by words, yet they are entrapped in the meaningless act of waiting. The translator's use of the word "stops" eliminates the semantic sense of rejection, and, hence, there is a loss of contextual incongruity.

In example 5, the stage direction image of "**huddled** together, shoulders hunched, **cringing away** from the menace, they wait" creates a sense of humiliation and ultimate defeat. These directions are used to express both Vladimir's and Estragon's fearful reaction when they hear a feeble voice crying; they repeatedly huddle before they realize their closeness and react in sudden repulsion. Beckett uses words that include in their semantic features defeat and internal fear (huddled, cringing away), which can be defined as "bend one's head and body **in fear** or in **a servile manner**". These words express the characters' lapse into frustration.

In translation, there is a need to convey the semantic components of internal torment and defeat that advertise themselves on the characters' facial expressions and their bodily, linguistic and mental deterioration. Iskandar's undertranslation of this image by using "التصفا" / lit. cling" for *huddle* and "انحنى اكتافهما" / lit. bent" for *cringing away* replaces the semantic components of the originals with far synonyms that connote closeness, intimacy and steady movement. These TT features dry up the theme of anguish; Beckett creates humor by bestowing upon his characters agency and a sense of dramatic authority which of course deepens their lack of power and indecisiveness.

Example 6 reflects exhaustion and feebleness. It is captured by repeating the word "totters". The unstable character Lucky, the castrated philosopher whose language is bereft of logic, totters, "moves in a **feeble** or **unsteady** way", which is denotatively defined as an image of physical disfigurement and non-coordinated movement of bodily limbs. Lucky is introduced in the play as a representation of language failure. He is a type of the miserable philosopher whose language is insufficient to convey meaning. He is not a thinking being but a thing that is ordered to think by his Master, Pozzo. The semantic components derived from the denotative meaning of unsteadiness, instability and hesitation match with the semantic field and repetitive use of the word "totters" in this context to deliver the character's feeble nature and status of being subservient. However, these semantic components are lost when the translator provides explanation of the repeated word into two far synonymous words "يتراجع" و "يتقدم" / "lit. moves forward/backwards". First, these words lack the semantic features of instability; instead, they transfer a sense of direction of movement and connote agency, which Lucky lacks. Instead, the Arabic word "يترنح" would be a closer synonym that implies the semantic component of instability and can maintain the ST semantic. Second, the repetition of the direction has a thematic effect in stressing hesitation and instability. Again, explaining the sign and focusing on the far componential element of movement affects the intended thematic effect of the ST.

Overall, the equivalence relations are significantly harmed in the translation of the action verbs in the stage directions. The intensity of the inner anguish is compromised by not select-

ing the close synonyms from the semantic fields of the ST directions. A more literal rendering would have allowed for maintaining the universal theme of inner anguish.

## 6.2. The adverbials expressive of the psychological state

This second section examines the translation by omission or ellipsis. In the majority of cases where omission is applied for stage directions, it causes a significant loss to the themes of the absurd theatre. Baker (1992: 187-188) states that ellipsis “involves the omission of an item... an item is replaced by nothing”. Baker aptly maintains that deletion should be used in specific cases only: “It does not include every instance in which the hearer or reader has to supply missing information, but only those cases where the grammatical structure itself points to an item or items that can fill the slot in question”. According to Baker, this strategy should be used only if the meaning of a particular item or expression is not vital to the development of the text.

Iskandar uses this strategy arbitrarily for translating stage directions and thus he incurs much loss to the thematic effectiveness of the absurd text. The translator opts for an omission strategy in the translation of directions of voice, movement and pointing. He completely deletes the ST direction words, thus causing loss in the incongruous sense resulting from directions of action which lead to inaction. Moreover, omission creates a gap in transferring the ST intended universal messages of the futility of life and the existentialists’ inner darkness and suffering.

The following table (2) provides examples which show Iskandar’s deletion of the adverbials of state which Beckett employed so as to show the characters’ psychological disintegration:

**TABLE 2**

Deletion of the adverbials of psychological state

#	ORIGINAL OMITTED WORDS	DEFINITION (AS IN OXFORD DICTIONARY)	EXPLANATION
7	despairingly	Showing the <b>loss of all hope</b>	feeling of <b>despair</b> omitted / tone change
	despairingly (repeated)		
	gloomily	Causing or feeling <b>depression</b> or despondency	feeling of <b>despair</b> omitted
8	angrily	In a manner resulting from or betraying <b>anger</b>	feeling of <b>anger</b> omitted
	angrily (repeated)		
	vexed	<b>Annoyed, frustrated,</b> or worried	
9	violently	Using physical <b>force</b> intended to hurt, <b>damage,</b> or kill someone or something	(sound and movement) the violence characters practice against each other
	grudgingly		

These deletions constitute a serious problem since they omit the adverbials of state that repeatedly convey the psychological condition of both Estragon and Vladimir. The adverbials express the intensity of motions and emotions they experience in the play.

In the examples grouped under number 7, the translator deleted the expressions—“despairingly, gloomily”—that reveal the feeling of despair and loss of hope. This is an important state that should be conveyed about characters who find themselves in situations where they have to perform absurd roles. The characters’ anger is a reflection of an inner anger since it follows from shallow, meaningless discussions that do not normally arouse any anger. These words are an essential part of the absurd package. They reveal the dark mood that engulfs the characters and constantly leads them to react angrily to the meaningless world to which they are tied down and to each other.

Naturally, frustration would lead to despair, which, in turn, would lead to anger, a state that often leads to violent actions. Therefore, the deletion of the second group of examples (angrily, vexed) results in the loss of the anger Vladimir and Estragon feel about their inability to take any redemptive actions.

The result of this anger is shown in the violence these characters mainly practice against the servile character, Lucky. The examples grouped under 8 and 9 (angrily, violently, grudgingly) involve the deletion of the violent/angry reactions in the stage directions. The first word, “violently” is used to stress force and violence as in “Using physical force intended to hurt, **damage**, or kill someone or something”. Consequently, the translator created a non-equivalent TT in translating stage directions. The use of omission strategy created a significant loss in expressing the absurd subthemes of despair, defeat, anger and the subsequent violence.

The essential repetition, which is considered as both a theme and an absurd strategy, is dealt with using both strategies of omission and literal translation. In applying omission, the translator apparently considers repetitive directions of actions as a redundant writing and hence he deletes them from the TT. His deletion compromises the tragicomedy element built on non-sense and repetition. When Iskandar uses literal translation for structural indirect signs of repetitions such as settings, opening and closing scenes, he manages to fully transfer the intended sense of circular structure of the static plot into the target text.

### 6.3. Repetitive actions and the circular structure

In this section, the researchers discuss the related subtheme of repetition and redundancy. We distinguish the important literary strategy of repetition from instances of useless redundancy. Beckett is known for his continuous use of repetition in his writings. Voranau (2010: 48) points out that

for Beckett repetition was not only a literary tool but also the fundament of his art as such. Therefore, while in texts it would manifest in the constant reappearance of the same, though often obscured under different names, characters, reoccurring situations, motifs, and symbols, beyond them repetition would emerge salient amongst his creative principles.

Beckett employs repetition as a dramatic technique to emphasize the existential concepts of meaninglessness of the characters' world and their futile waiting for Godot, a word, like Derrida's difference, which defies any system of signification. The characters' repetition of their own actions and words and those of others undermine any sense of closure and defy the audience's attempt to bring interpretations of the play to a final conclusion. Repetition, as much as it exposes defeated characters, defies the audience's desire to see complete action. Postlewait (1978: 485) states that

the fulfillment of the formal design is paradoxically based upon the frustration of desire—that of the characters for a release from their wait for meaning and purpose and that of the audience for a resolution to its own desires for words and actions that lead to some kind of closure.

However, this literary technique may be mistakenly treated as redundancy, which is the purposeless repetition of words or actions. A skilled translator usually uses omission for meaningless actions to eliminate distractions and useless, non-informative words. Yet, in the case of absurdist, this is the theme: nonsense and nothingness. The translated text of Iskandar lacks such long, thematically significant directions. In this case, Iskandar does not appropriately convey the very core function of the ST and ends up with a non-equivalent translated text.

This section discusses the treatment of repetition at two levels: repetition of structure and repetition of actions within dialogues. The cases of repetition are identified, their functions are explained, translation strategies are classified and their effectiveness in creating the same purpose is assessed.

### 6.3.1. The circular structure of the plot

*Waiting for Godot* is an absurdist play that has a series of repetitive incidents which give it a circular structure. Such a structure affirms the darkness of the human condition where the end is the beginning. It serves to emphasize the absurdity of waiting for Godot, the illusive savior who will create meaning and order to their chaotic and meaningless existence. The play opens and closes in the same place, at the same time, with the same characters that are still entrapped in their illogical, clownish conversations and actions. Example 10 contains the stage directions at the opening of the play:

A country road. A tree. Evening.

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting.

He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again.

As before.

( طريق ريفى .. شجرة .. الوقت مساء )

استراجون يجلس على كومة فى الأرض قليلة الإرتفاع ، ويحاول أن ينزع عن قدمه فردة حذائه، يجذبها بكلتا يديه وهو يلهث يتوقف عن المحاولة منهكاً ، ويستريح قليلاً ثم يبدأ من جديد.  
ويتكرر الوضع .

Iskandar to a large extent maintains the same objects, scenes and hard labor at the opening and closing of the play by applying literal translations. Iskandar uses literal translation to recreate the same effect and transfer the original thematic repetition, which shows that what is consistent in the characters' dead life is their morbid consistency.

### 6.3.2. Repetitive actions

The repetition of the same actions and dialogues through the play gives the audience the sense that regardless of the number of acts the play may have, there will always be a continuous lack of meaning. Moreover, Beckett's use of repetition can indirectly deliver and intensify other absurd themes related to existential anguish and inactivity. *Waiting for Godot* probes the limitations of language to express thoughts that are not translated into actions. The play reflects language's failure to communicate and characters' inability to translate their words into actions. While translators should preserve the use of repetitive words spilled out in stage directions, Iskandar translates these cases differently and inconsistently. In example 11, he eliminates the repetition in the stage direction and only adds a generic reference in Arabic which literally translates into "as in previous line".

Example 11:

(He stops, broods, resumes

He stops, broods, resumes

He stops, broods, softly)

Translation:

يتوقف، يفكر، ويستأنف

كما من قبل

The stage directions in this example are included within the song that Vladimir sings at the beginning of the second scene—a song that, the theme being the death of a dog, emphasizes their cyclical existence. Vladimir's stopping and brooding expresses frustration with his own situation.

Iskandar neglects using the same words and replaces them with (كما قبل / lit. as before) creating a loss in the intended broken spirits of the characters. Iskandar treats the repeated words in the stage directions as redundant ones. However, repetition creates an illusion of sameness, for repetition leads to change that emphasizes the characters' lack of change. To achieve an equivalent effect, these core repetitive directions of inaction must be maintained in the translation. They are meant to highlight a crippling failure of intentions. Therefore, conveying such stage directions of non-movement that contradict the verbally stated requests for movement into the target language is as important in transferring the sense of absurdity as translating the dialogue itself.

In example 12, the non-verbal act of putting on and taking off small items like hats, bowlers, shoe, etc., can be seen in the absurd theatre dramatic signs as a reflection of both struggle against the nothingness of life. The researchers counted no fewer than 58 uses of the word *hat* and 33 uses of the word *boots*. The boot quarrel is mainly associated with Estragon, which reflects his down-to-earth, naïve nature, while the hat quarrel is usually connected with Vladimir, who stands for the man of "unreasonable" reason.

Literal translation serves well in maintaining the effect of the silly quarrel:

Example 12:

VLADIMIR:

Hold that.

Estragon takes Vladimir's hat. Vladimir adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Estragon puts on Vladimir's hat in place of his own which he hands to Vladimir. Vladimir takes Estragon's hat. Estragon adjusts Vladimir's hat on his head. Vladimir puts on Estragon's hat in place of Lucky's which he hands to Estragon. Estragon takes Lucky's hat. Vladimir adjusts Estragon's hat on his head. Estragon puts on Lucky's hat in place of Vladimir's which he hands to Vladimir. Vladimir takes his hat, Estragon adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Vladimir puts on his hat in place of Estragon's which he hands to Estragon. ... Estragon hands Vladimir's hat back to Vladimir who takes it and hands it back to Estragon who takes it and hands it back to Vladimir who takes it and throws it down.

How does it fit me?

فلاديمير: إليك هذه.

(استراجون يأخذ قبعة فلاديمير. يحكم فلاديمير وضع قبعة لوكي على رأسه. يرتدى استراجون قبعة فلاديمير بدلاً من قبعته التي يعطيها لفلاديمير. يأخذ فلاديمير قبعة استراجون. يحكم استراجون وضع قبعة فلاديمير على رأسه. يرتدى فلاديمير قبعة استراجون بدلاً من ... \*قبعة لوكي التي يعطيها لاستراجون. يأخذ استراجون قبعة لوكي. يحكم فلاديمير وضع قبعة استراجون على رأسه .. يرتدى استراجون قبعة لوكي بدلاً من قبعة فلاديمير التي يعيدها لفلاديمير... يعطي استراجون قبعة فلاديمير إلى فلاديمير الذي يأخذها ويعيدها لاستراجون الذي يأخذها ويعطيها لفلاديمير الذي يأخذها ويلقيها على الأرض).

هل تناسبني؟

The hat swapping scene represents the fluidity and instability of individual identities in the play. The above example constitutes a good literal translation that maintains the purpose of the repetitive action. The translator preserves both the semantic features of the ST word and transfers the same semantic effect of the context. Moreover, in literal translation instances, Iskandar maintains the structural circularity by preserving the ST style of repetition and keeping the absurd notion of tragicomedy. Hence, he recreates the incongruent effect of the playtext. Formal translation can be hazardous when dealing with culturally dependent or linguistically bound contexts; nevertheless, it can be a very good fit in transferring the play's universal absurd themes.

## 7. Conclusion

Using Iskandar's translation of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as an example, the researchers have conducted a close analysis of the translation into Arabic of three important stage direction elements which significantly contribute to building up the absurd effect in the play. These directions included action verbs directions, the adverbials of state and the repetitive structures. When we compared the translation with the original play, we found out that the translator has employed translation by far synonym, ellipsis and literal translation as the main strategies for handling these directions. Accordingly, we offer these quite significant conclusions about the requirements of translating stage directions with the aim of preserving the features of the genre of the absurd theatre.

The researchers have noted that in the source text, the verbs of action often connote character's inability to act, and when taken in their immediate context, these verbs heavily contribute to the dark humor which constitutes an important feature of the theatre of the absurd. The humor comes from the disparity between the stage directions which connote action and the text of the play which represents powerless characters tied down to Godot. The translator opts for far synonyms and thus he sacrifices such inherent incongruity which marks absurd humor.

Additionally, the translator employs ellipsis when conveying the adverbials which express the characters' desperate psychological state. This unfortunate decision has resulted in genre violation, where the tragicomic effect is neutralized by deleting references to characters' anger, fatigue and despair, which form the essence of the theatre of the absurd and the philosophy of existentialism.

The last formal convention has to do with the essential repetition, which is considered as both a theme and an absurd theatre strategy. Repetition of actions, scenes and setting is dealt with using both strategies of omission and literal translation. The repeated directions of actions were treated as instances of redundancy; hence they were deleted, causing a major loss in the tragicomic effect which is built around the non-sense of repeated, futile actions.

When literal translation is applied for the repeated settings, opening and closing scenes, the circular structure of the static plot is successfully transferred into the target playtext.

We have argued that the translation of the nonverbal stage directions is essential to maintaining the absurd genre features. Synonymous options are available in the semantic fields to fully transfer painful connotations and action directions. Seeking close synonymy will help save the tragicomic sense. Deletion will necessarily cause loss to the coherency of the incongruent relations. A translator of the theatre of the absurd literary genre should seek textual equivalence through literal translation. Literal translation will help maintain the functionality and effectiveness of absurd texts.

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