Abstract

The Theatre of the Absurd is a new movement in the English literature that has been remarkable with its new ideas that shock the traditional conventions of the English culture and theatre. It is one of the most prominent movements in literature and philosophy in the middle of the twentieth century. It is a designation for a particular group of plays written by a number of European and American playwrights in the late 1940s up to 1960s. It is also the description to the style which has evolved from the work of those playwrights. The absurd playwrights have constantly been associated with that group of philosophers and thinkers, such as Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, who lived in the beginning of the twentieth century and witnessed World War II and who came to be known as 'existentialists'. That is because of their new ideas, thoughts, and views about the nature of the human conditions presented in their works.

The plays of the Absurd Theatre are constantly described to be nonsense, meaningless, equivocal, empty of any valuable ideas, etc. That is why the main objective of this thesis is to pick out these ideas from the equivocation that plasters words and sentences of the plays of the Absurd Theatre. This equivocation infects every aspect of the absurd play, i.e., the characters' language, movements, dramatic objects, etc.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is an introduction to the Absurd Theatre and how it evolved in the first half of the last century. It also defines the term 'equivocation' from various points of view. The types of equivocation and the causes of its use are also illustrated with examples from different texts. Chapter II deals with the first type of equivocation, best described as 'lexical equivocation', which generally occurs in the words and morphemes used by the characters of
the Absurd Theatre. English is a language that contains numerous homonymous forms, expressions with multiple meanings, which create equivocation and confusion. That is why this chapter is deals with this type of equivocation with regard to the lexical relations.

Chapter III and Chapter IV are concerned with another type of equivocation, generally known as 'structural equivocation', which exists in the phrases, sentences and dialogues of the characters. On the one hand, Chapter III is specialised with the analysis of the structural equivocation by the use of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle in order to find out the valuable ideas that the playwrights try to convey to their audience/readers. On the other hand, Chapter IV is specialised with the analysis of the structural equivocation of the text within its context. This chapter illustrates the different classifications for the context, namely Stenning, Yule and Cutting's classifications for the types of context. It also states the critical role of the context in the interpretation of the encoded message in the plays.

Chapters II, III and IV deal with equivocal ideas that occur in the characters' language, i.e., their verbal communication. Chapter V deals with equivocation and equivocal ideas which are employed by the playwrights in the characters' non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is simply the activity and process of expressing ideas and feelings via the use of the various types movements, dramatic objects, clothing, etc. It also explains the settings of the plays which include place and time. Chapter VI is the last chapter which is the concluding chapter thesis and deals with findings and conclusions drawn.

To briefly conclude, one can say that the titles of selected absurd plays of this study highlight the events of the plays. They give the audience/readers fundamental ideas about what the plays are basically about. The plays of the Absurd Theatre, which are often described as
nonsense, empty and meaningless, have something to say through the character's speeches and actions. The meaningless of the language is itself meaningful and the elliptical dialogues used by the characters is a representation of the void, chaos, evasion, and deception that posses the human life. Language has an important role in the development of the characters. Non-verbal communication in the form of personal movements and silence are proved to be a vital means of communication and more important than verbal language in conveying the ideas to others, as it is demonstrated by the two brothers in 'The Caretaker' towards Davies, or the dumb-show in 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'.

The plays are mainly about the victimization of the other: victor-victim relationship. Characters are in a constant struggle with themselves and with others to avoid this victimization and gain some advantage. Beckett's duo, Estragon and Vladimir, are victimized by Godot's coming: They keep waiting for him regardless whether he comes or not. Pinter's characters try to victimize one another by gaining power and space in the room. Stoppard's duo, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are Claudius' deluded victims. Finally, one may say that the plays of the Absurd Theatre can be judged by the standards of the Absurd Theatre only, i.e., to judge them by the standards of other literary conventions is to have weird and hollow plays because they are written in a different literary movement.