

Expressions of Power in Pinter's *The
Birthday Party* and Albee's *Who's
Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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To all those who are not allowed to speak in their mother tongue, to my late father who departed this world on my thigh just two weeks before starting my MA study, to my family, to all my friends, and to those who taught me a word in my life.

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1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The program of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of:

- i) Research Methods course during the undergraduate study
- ii) Examination of several thesis guides of particular universities both in Turkey and abroad as well as a professional book on this subject.

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ABSTRACT

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June, 2014

Expressions of Power in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

This thesis presents an analysis of dramatic dialogue as a major characteristic of the "Theatre of the Absurd" for practicing power in the two absurdist plays Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* through the lens of communication and speech act theory. The analysis of dramatic language as a significant figure of Absurd drama is a useful way to understand the various points of the Theatre of the Absurd and its important manifestations. The paper applies an analysis of the concept of power gained through language by the characters of the two plays. By explaining the relationship between power and language, it can be understood that how language has an important role in the power struggle among individuals to control and dominate each other. Firstly, the paper defines the "Theatre of the Absurd," and its significant characteristics and techniques. Then, the study defines the concept of power with reference to communication theory, and gives a short biography of the two playwrights and brief introduction of the two plays Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Secondly, the paper explores the role of language as a means of power; it shows how characters during dramatic dialogues use linguistic strategies and techniques in both plays so that they can hold onto power. Finally, the paper makes a comparison between the two playwrights, Pinter and Albee, and "European Absurd Drama" and "American Modern Drama." The thesis ends with a conclusion.

Key Words: Pinter, Albee, Theatre of the Absurd, Language, Power, Speech Act Theory.

KISA ÖZET

BASHDAR RASUL QADIR

Haziran, 2014

Albee'nin *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* ve Pinter'in *The*

***Birthday Party* İsimli Eserlerinde İfadelerin Gücü**

Bu teziki dilin en önemli özelliklerinden biri, dili güç kazanma için iki absürdist tiyatro dramada Harold Pinter'in *The Birthday Party* ve Edward Albee'nin *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* kullanımının iletişim kuramı ve gücü yaklaşımı ışığında analizini sunmaktadır. Absürd dramada dil analizini önemli bir figure olarak absürd tiyatroyun çeşitli noktaları anlamak için ve önemi ve belirtileri göstermek için önemli bir yoldur. Bu çalışma iki tiyatroyun karakterleri ile dilini kullanarak kazanılan güç kavramına doğru bir analiz uygular. Güç ve dil arasındaki ilişkiyi açıklayarak, dilin ne kadar kişileri kişilere başkalarını kontrol ve hakimiyet altına alınabilir güç veren yüksek bir öneme sahip olduğunu açıklanabilir. İlk olarak, çalışma absürd tiyatroyun arka plan ve tanımını, önemini ve teknik özelliklerini gösterir. Sonuç güç kavramını tanımlayan iletişim kuramı ve sonra, iki oyun yazarlarının kısa bir biyografisi ve iki oyunun kısa bir tanıtımı verilir. Harold Pinter'in *The Birthday Party* and Edward Albee'nin *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* ikinci olarak dilin güç aracı olarak rolünü araştırıyor, iki oyunun karakterleriyle dilin bir strateji olarak bilginin diğerlerinden nasıl saklanacağını ve bununla güç kazanımının olacağını açıklar.. Son olarak, çalışma iki oyun bir karşılaştırma ve benzerlikler ile son bulur, ve bu bütün bir çalışma sonuç verir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pinter, Albee, Absürd Tiyatro, Dil, Güç, İletişim Kuramı.

LIST OF CONTENTS

Dedication Page	iv
Approval Page.....	v
Author Declarations	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Kısa Özet	viii
List of Contents	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	3
1.1 The Theatre of the Absurd: Definition and Characteristics	3
1.2 The Concept of Power.....	7
1.3 Language	8
1.4 Samuel Beckett's Impact on Harold Pinter and Edward Albee.....	10
1.5 Harold Pinter and <i>The Birthday Party</i>	14
1.6 <i>The Birthday Party</i>	16
1.7 Edward Albee	17
1.8 <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>	18
CHAPTER 2: Linguistic Strategies as Mechanism of Exercising Power in <i>The Birthday Party</i>	20
2.1 Interrogation	22
2.2 Repetitions	29
2.3 Extending Conversation: Turn-Taking, Interruption, and Shifting and Raising Topic	32
CHAPTER 3: Expressions of Power in Albee's <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>	36
3.1 Reminding Past Failures and Revealing Secrets.....	38
3.2 Verbal Aggression and Sexual Conversation for Domination.....	47
3.3 Language Use for Creating Story as a Means of Exercising Power	50

3.4 Linguistic Techniques for Power Struggle: Turn-Taking	53
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION	59
4.1 European Absurdist Drama vs. American Modern Drama	59
4.2 Edward Albee vs. Harold Pinter	60
CONCLUSION	63
Bibliography	67

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most important forms of human communication. Through speaking human beings can interact and express their needs. The language we use influences the way we think. By uttering words in every speech act, one can take a place in the community where she/he lives in. It is through language that messages are communicated and people understand each other. Dramatic dialogue in the Theatre of the Absurd has an important role in giving an influential vision of the genre. The language of "Absurd Drama" is based on a day-to-day conversation that lacks cohesion and coherence and it is sometimes full of incorrect syntax. Consequently, when power is interwoven into language, then one can use such language for his or her own purpose. Individuals that are aware of the powerful potential of language can misuse it in order to take control over others and accomplish their own goals. In this respect, the analysis of dramatic language as an important feature of "Absurd Drama" is a useful way to understand the various points of "Absurd Drama," and its significant manifestations.

The relationship between power and language has long roots in human history. Language gives power to individuals to exercise power over each other. Members of the society in the real world and characters in Absurd Drama use linguistic strategies to dominate each other. Power plays a high important role in this world. The term 'power' is used in various situations, and social, political or cultural contexts. Every single person uses this term differently with various purposes. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault defines power as something that is not acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of no egalitarian and mobile relations (1990: 94). In this paper, 'power' is analyzed as something that can be obtained by using linguistic tactics and elements among individuals and characters in absurdist plays. It can be said that language produces

discourse that occurs due to verbal and nonverbal communicative social actions; it covers all aspects of human activity. Foucault believes that the world should be recognized through discourse. It is through discourse readers and writers, speakers, and hearers are able to fully understand each other and be aware of what is happening all over the world and around them.

The purpose of this study is to discuss the elements of dramatic dialogue of "Absurd Drama" as a means of power in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The paper explores that how the characters of the two play to dominate and overpower each other using linguistics strategies and elements. The paper interprets the linguistic techniques and expressions for dominance among the characters of Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in light of speech act and language communication theory.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. The Theatre of the Absurd: Definition, and Characteristics

To create a guiding gate to take us to the detail of the Theatre of the Absurd, it would be useful to refer to the definition and meaning of the term 'absurd.' Martin Esslin who coined the term of the Theatre of the Absurd in his comprehensive book, the *Theatre of the Absurd*, writes 'absurd originally means 'out of harmony,' [...] 'out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, and illogical.' In common usage, absurd may simply mean 'ridiculous' " (2001:23). Furthermore, Esslin also gives Ionesco's understanding of the term of absurd that he wrote in an essay on Kafka as follows: "absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless" (*Ibid* 23). From Ionesco's definition of the concept of absurd, one can say absurdist writings do not depend on any particular dominant idea; it is an independent way of writing and expressing. Moreover, the world's anguish, insecurity, and uncertainty make human life meaningless and illogical that eventually reflects in the works of absurdist.

The perception of "absurd" has a long history in European thought; in the philosophical sense absurd also has long roots among the existentialists. Albert Camus, one of the prominent existential writers, popularized the thought of the absurdity of human life in this disjointed world. In his great work, *The Myth of Sisyphus* that is often described as the most significant modern text concerning the absurd, Camus writes:

But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between

man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity. (qtd. In Esslin 2001:23)

Camus believes that life has lost all meaning, and seeking for suicide is justifiable. He further illustrates that man is absurd because he is cut off from rational understanding of both the universe and himself. He also portrays the human situation in a world of traumatized beliefs. He believes that life is surrounded by insecurities and uncertainties that have made human homeless and hopeless.

The Theatre of the Absurd is an umbrella term given to the work of playwrights who wrote existentialist dramas in Europe, and America in the post-World War years from about 1945-1965. Samuel Becket, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Edward Albee, Harold Pinter, these are all names associated with the Theatre of the Absurd according to Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*. The absurdist playwrights never proclaimed to have a private school of writing, but they were some writers with their own personal approach to both subject matter and form. Their work focuses on the suffering of people and the absurdity of the present-day conditions, nameless menace, isolation, mental disturbance, and the failure of communication among individuals. The absurdist plays share the view that man lives in a world whose meaning is intangible and that his place within it is purposeless.

To sort out the Theatre of the Absurd from conventional theater, its techniques, subject matters, and devices should be pointed out. The use of language as an effective means of communicative action is one of the major characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd rarely seen in other drama. The linguistic absurd drama uses the disintegration of language and follows techniques of babbling, failed effort of communication, repetition, and untidy proliferation to create tension between meaning and unmeaning. Such a technique was widely employed by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter in their linguistic absurdist plays. The linguistic absurd might be the most

conventional view of the absurd, Esslin highlights this aspect of the absurd in suggesting that the absurd “tends toward a radical devaluation of language” (Esslin, 2001:26). It means that language becomes a means of failure in communication, and some members of the society handle it in order to use it for serving their own goals, agendas, and purposes.

The use of dramatic dialogue is perhaps a substantial distinction between absurdist theatre and conventional theatre. Esslin points out “if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings” (2001:22). Absurdist language may seem repetitive, banal, or simply bizarre. For example, in Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*, two strangers arrive at a boarding house occupied by Stanley Webber; these unknown strangers; Goldberg and McCann, apparently know Stanley from unspecified previous association. In a climactic moment, they start cross-examining Stanley about his past, but the questioning quickly becomes a bombardment of implications. Dialogues in absurd drama are imitations of everyday speech but often circular, apparently aimless, especially in the plays of Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter. For instance, in Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano*, the Martins talk about those issues that they both already know them; things like their children’s names, and the food they have had for dinner.

The absurdist plays are quite different from the conventional play in terms of *Form*. Most of the plays in the Theatre of the Absurd have only two or three acts. They usually have little conventional rising actions and no predictable climax to produce suspense in the spectator; they do not have any full linear plot, which is regularly exposed and finally solved. J. L. Styan in *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 2* says, “the absence of plot serves to reinforce the monotony and the repetitiveness of time in human affairs” (126). Thus, absurd drama has no developed plot to reveal a clear story; the Absurd Theatre is a theatre of the situation in opposite to conventional theatre of chronological events.

Characterization in the Theatre of the Absurd is unobvious. The character's backgrounds are unrecognizable and fragmented. "Absurdist plays fall within the symbolist tradition, and they have no logical characterization in any conventional sense" (Styan 126). Some absurdist plays are dramatized to the audience with almost mechanical puppets. Their characters lack motivation as compared to realistic drama. In the Theatre of the Absurd, the characters conceal their inner-self struggle by using language in a special way in which the mutual understanding among them is not possible; each person finds himself cut adrift from the other, completely disunited and disconnected. During communication, they use silence, pause, repetition and non-verbal expression to reveal their intentions and survive in the current situation.

Relatively, the subject matters of the Theatre of the Absurd concern the uncertainty and ambiguity of human existence. Absurdist drama emphasizes the plight of man as being caught up in a web of circumstances over which he has little control. It means that man is trapped in a world of illogical conditions and insecurity and human being is lost and unable to escape from his own destiny. "That he can never know his true nature and purpose and that no one will provide him with ready-made rules of conduct" (Esslin, 2001:374). It means that human being is dissatisfied with the absurdity of daily life and unaware of its true existence. Thus, in the absurdist plays, the emphasis is not on individual characters and their development, but on the circumstances in which they find themselves.

The Theatre of the Absurd does not recommend any solution and does not give any way to escape from the absurdity of humankind. Rather, it is an attempt to inspire humans to be aware of their void so that a universal consciousness and truth may fill it and restore their humanity, dignity, and worth. "Absurdism is intent on making its audience aware of man's precarious and mysterious position in the universe" (*Ibid.* 353). It means that Absurdist theatre attempts to make the playgoers experience the absurdity

of human beings by presenting aspects of life in greatly simplified form, or with remarkable exaggeration so that the spectators will realize their own miseries and take them as a distinguishable reality of life. The absurd reveals a complex reality that is incomprehensible when taken superficially. Absurdism only presents the fear of world outside, the terror of betrayal without giving any solution. The absurdists make people aware of many absolute truths, illusions and the ambiguity of human identities.

1.2. The Concept of Power

Power plays an important role in this world and human life. Social and political institutions define and exercise "power" differently. Shan Wareing says, "Power is quite an abstract, but an infinitely important influence on our lives" (10). Every single person practices power with various purposes to reach a made-goal. Conventionally, "power" is perceived as belonging to strong humans, or to a mighty state, but J. M. Whitmeyer in his article, "Mann's Theory of Power" defines the term power as "the ability to affect the behavior of others, or more precisely, the ability to affect the probability that others will perform some behavior" (212). It means that some individuals have more capacity to make others accepting their own form of reality. Moreover, the position an individual has within a social institution gives him the opportunity to practice power over others.

It is necessary to refer to Foucault's well-known and comprehensive concept of power. His writings extended the concept of power from sociology to all other branches of social sciences. Because, mostly, the theoretical background of this study is based on the power-language relationship, so Foucault's arguments of power should be taken into consideration. Foucault believes "power not only operates in specific sphere of social life, but occurs in everyday life. Power occurs at sites of all kinds and sizes, including the most minute and most intimate, such as the human body" (qtd. In Sadan 57). It means that Foucault claims that power is not only a tool in the hand

of authority, but it is also everywhere and exercised by everyone to some extent. In addition, according to Foucault's definition of power; it is an undistinguishable part of social interaction. Power is an essential feature of social life. It is always part of the relations in daily life. On the other hand, Foucault also gives the role of language and linguistic strategies in human communication to obtain and exercise power among human beings. He observes, "no doubt communication is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons" (Foucault, 1982:786). He believes that power can be obtained through language serving as a means of dominance. Thus, it can be said that Foucault sees power not as something that is imposed on another but as a network of relations that functions through society.

1.3. Language

Language is one of the most important parts of human life; it gives human beings the opportunity to speak, identifies and introduces their culture to their world. Through communication, members of the society can be social individuals. Pascal Etzold believes "everyday talk helps to make sense of the world. This sense-making is rooted in language and the meanings that are emerged thereof explained how the world collegially unfolded" (18). It means that through language individuals can learn about the world and about how to behave and what to value. Moreover, language in some situations gives the interests to the dominant social groups, since they are the groups who have more control over it.

Due to the importance role of language, there have been many definitions and studies dealing with language among the scholars, writers, and philosophers throughout literary history. The function of language has been on debate continually, some linguists see language just as a bare means of communication, but others relate it to power struggle through social and political discourses. Bourdieu and Wacquant state that language empowers the one who leads the conversation:

Even the simplest linguistic exchange calls for a complex and interconnected network of power relationships between the speaker, provided with a specific social authority, and his conversant or his audience, who accepts his authority at different levels. It also creates power relationships, between the different groups, to which each of them belongs.

(qtd. In Etzol 20)

According to this view, language can be seen as an essential need of human being. Moreover, language is an inseparable part of speech act that plays a vital role in revealing and hiding human emotions, meaning and intentionality. Furthermore, through language individuals can realize their statue in a social environment. "Language enables the exchange of individual subjectivities which helps build up the consciousness of each individual" (*Ibid.* 39). Speakers through uttering words and sentences reveal their background and intention to the listener. Thus, the necessity of using language becomes known in face-to-face situations; one learns to know oneself and the other through conversation.

Foucault's approach and understanding of language and its linkage to power is useful to understand language as a vehicle of communication. In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault reveals his idea on language in constructing statement:

To speak is to do something-something other than to express what one thinks; to translate what one knows, and something other than to play with the structures of a language (langue). To show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture. (2010:230)

It can be said that the duty of language is not summed up in speaking, but it also determines the hearer's percepts of the speaker's utterance and the final understanding of the meaning. The language used in daily

interactions is always shaped by the material, social and cultural setting in which it is produced. "One is always inside power; there is no escaping it" (Foucault, 2010:95). According to Foucault, power is omnipresent at all levels of social interaction, and then it is present and visible in all interplay between participants of all speeches, discourses and talks.

1.4. Samuel Beckett's Impact on Harold Pinter and Edward Albee

Samuel Beckett was an Irish playwright and poet (1906-1989) who is considered as the forerunner of "Absurd Drama." Beckett was the witness of World War II, the German invasion, and the Holocaust that inspired him to present a new kind of theatre different from the traditional one. As a traditional absurdist, by writing *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett produced a new type of drama that was completely different from the conventional drama in terms of themes, characterization, setting, structure, and dramatic dialogue. Beckett's new version of drama influenced many writers, as Steve Coats observes in *Samuel Beckett*, "Beckett's minimal approach to his work and his radical freeing of the traditions of writing and theatre has influenced and informed many of the artists working today" (4). Thus, both, Harold Pinter in Britain and Edward Albee in America were influenced by Beckett's new approach of writing in terms of techniques, structure, presenting social and political issues, the role of language in communication, and dealing with human conditions in a philosophical point of view.

Pinter, as an Absurdist playwright, took many aspects from Beckett in writing his plays. Pinter frequently acknowledged his debt to Samuel Beckett; for Pinter, he is the greatest writer of our time. Harold Bloom calls Pinter "the legitimate son of Beckett" (35). Pinter borrowed many elements from Beckett like incredible plot structure, unrecognizable character, non-linear action, dramatic dialogues, and master/slave relationship between characters. It can be said that one of the significant elements that Pinter borrowed from Beckett is the dramatic dialogue, similar to Beckett; Pinter uses a kind of

language in his plays which is distrust of words, repetition, cliché, silence, pauses, linguistic tactics to manipulate among the characters, verbal games, and word-plays. As is shown in the next chapter, all the linguistic elements used in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are used in Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, like repetition, interruption, cliché, and verbal games.

Pinter's subject matters are almost taken from Beckett. Like Beckett, Pinter lived during World War II, German invasion, and the Holocaust; as a result, Beckett's same experience manifested itself in Pinter's subject matters in his own plays. Beckett forms characters that lack control over their own lives and struggle to gain it. The worlds outside their homes have fallen apart, and nothing they can do change that. In the same sense, in her article, "The Sense of Insecurity and the Language of Pinter's Absurd Play the *Birthday Party*" Marinela Saraci suggests, "Pinter's dramatic image is based on a basic human situation: individual's search for security in a world which is full of anxiety, and terror" (386). For instance, Stanley, in *The Birthday Party*, hides himself in a boarding house at the seaside to seek safety and security from the outside world's insecurity; his memory is failing, his identity is confused, and he has not the ability to decide and refuse Goldberg's and McCann's tension.

Relatively, Pinter's characters' background is unrecognized as the same in Beckett's plays. Beckett's characters mostly have fragmented backgrounds. Beckett gives almost no data about his characters. The characters' past lives, the occupations, the familial history or the relationships of the characters are not introduced to the audience. Pinter's characters, too, have an ambiguous past life; they do not refer to a known institution obviously. Each character can be seen as the representative of a wide range of background. For instance, Stanley in *The Birthday Party* is unknown whether he is an escapee member of the system, or economic organization. In addition, Goldberg and McCann come from unrecognized institution that damage Stanley's life.

Pinter, for characterization, imitates Beckett's presenting master/slave relationship. On the sense of master/slave relationship in Beckett's plays, in her article, Agnes Clare Brandabur, "The Elephant in the Living-Room: A Postcolonial Reading of *Waiting for Godot*," claims,

When Lucky and Pozzo appear the first time, Pozzo is full of confidence, enjoying gourmet food and wine, an expensive watch, owning the road, and commanding his slave as he heads off on his exploits, checking his watch with an air of great self-importance. (128)

Brandabur's statement suggests that Pinter presents the same master/slave relationship in *The Birthday Party*; Goldberg as a master forces his slave McCann to accomplish whatever is ordered. Throughout the play, Goldberg verbally makes McCann to follow his principles without questioning. Goldberg's persuasive speeches during his turns make McCann his slave. Goldberg commands McCann to prepare the birthday party in the aim of destroying Stanley physically and mentally. This shows McCann as a slave under his master, Goldberg. What can be said about the master-slave relationship in Beckett's and Pinter's plays is that the masters are also slaves of unknown forces without having the capacity to resist and gain their freedom.

As an American Modern Dramatist, Albee also benefited from Beckett's way of writing. In "Albee's Early One-Act Plays: A New American Playwright from Whom Much is To Be Expected," Philip C. Kolin describes Edward Albee as being "credited with changing the course of American theatre history [...] he incorporated techniques and ideas from the absurdist plays of European playwrights such as Beckett" (16-7). It can be said that Albee follows the traces of the father of absurd drama, Beckett in style, but specifically in subject matters. The most common points that Albee follows Beckett in his plays is the exploration of human condition; social concerns, loss of human values, and loss of human relationships. In addition, Beckett's influence

manifests in Albee's works as existential concerns. It is worth saying that Albee uses the form and subject matter of the Absurd drama but in his own American way that turns him to be an absurdist and a social critic.

One of the elements Albee uses is the existential ideas of Beckett that are mostly derived from the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's perspectives. "Albee is concerned with the uncertainty, which involves both the uncertainty of identity and the uncertainty of existence. Albee handles this concern in two separate ways as Beckett does: uncertainty of self and uncertainty of the Other" (KÜÇÜK 6). Albee takes the individual as a social being; he believes that the individuals cannot be separated and ignored because the society is built of the individuals. Albee's characters are victims of the uncertainty of existence. He shows the bizarre condition of man in his plays. Albee takes Beckett's notion in this field, and he is concerned with the absurdity and the chaos of the modern American society. Albee, like Beckett, explores the meaninglessness of human existence; Albee's characters feel a deep obligation to accept that they exist.

Beckett shows the illusions that the characters choose to live in instead of confronting the reality of life. For example, in *Waiting for Godot*, the main illusion that Vladimir and Estragon takes it to spend their life and hide their meaningless aim in life is Godot; Godot, which is just waiting for something, that never comes makes Vladimir and Estragon's life to continue in an unconscious state. Like Beckett, Albee's characters create illusion in their lives so that they can conform to the social norms and avoid the miseries of life. Their lives are based on illusions, and the line between the reality and fantasy is absent. In such a life, they assume that they are happier because the realities of life are too harsh to bear. For instance, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* one of the main illusions in the play is the illusionary child that is developed until the end of the play. As two intelligent and sensitive people, who are unable to have a baby, Martha and George, create the story of the imaginary son and apply it through their daily

conversations so that they could survive and fill a need in their lives. In addition, another technique that Albee follows Beckett is the use of language in creating illusion, and manipulation among characters of his plays. In Beckett's plays, language is used as a means of illusion and to pass the time. Similar to Beckett, Albee's characters use language to create games and pass time. Albee uses language as an instrument for power struggle among people, especially between couples. For example, the verbal battle between the couples, Martha and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Thus, both, Albee, and Beckett's characters build illusions to satisfy themselves and avoid the anguish of life.

1.5. Harold Pinter and *The Birthday Party*

Harold Pinter was born in 1930 in East London, son of a Jewish dressmaker. He began writing poetry for magazines during his teens. He studied acting at a Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the Central School of Speech in Drama. Pinter started acting under the stage name David Baron that promoted him a career in acting, and travelling around in Ireland in a Shakespeare company. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Pinter evacuated London at the age of nine, returning when he was twelve. Growing up, Pinter experienced with the expressions of anti-Semitism that influenced him to become a dramatist. Pinter takes a high position as a modern playwright in Britain and around the world. Because of Pinter's significant role in modern theatre and the popularity of his dramatic works, 'Pinteresque' is used to describe the nature of his works. Since 1973, Pinter became famous as an activist for human rights alongside his writing. In 2005, he was awarded the Noble Prize for Literature. After a long battle with cancer, he died on December 24, 2008.

After starting a novel, *The Dwarf* that remained unpublished, "Pinter began to write plays in 1957" (Esslin, 2010: 234). Pinter's first play is an act, *The Room*, "already contains a good many of the basic themes of and a

great deal of the very personal style and idioms of Pinter's later and more successful work." (*Ibid.* 237) Another field that Pinter has written for is radio plays and screenplays for film and television. Among his well-known screenplays are those for *The Servant* (1963), *The Accident* (1967), *The Go-Between* (1971), and *The French Lieutenant* (1981).

Pinter's plays are specifically famous for their use of an understatement to convey characters' thoughts and inner feelings. Pinter established his own distinctive style, introduced by terse dialogue and meaningful pauses. Pinter creates characters that seek to and question their identities. Similar to the other Absurdist playwrights, Pinter dramatizes "the terrors that most individuals experience on confrontation with external forces" (Haney 7). According to Martin Esslin's book, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Pinter's work "has been regarded as a great achievement due to his distinctive dramatic style. His plays are imbued with the feeling of disintegration, evasiveness, and domination as manifested both in his language and themes" (24). Pinter is predominately concerned with the struggle for power both inner-self and between an individual and a powerful mechanism or another dominant person. On the other hand, the element of humor and tragedy is apparent in Pinter's plays. The purpose behind the element comedy of Pinter's plays is not to make use the comedy to arouse laughter "but to provide insights to his characters' inner world" (Bensky 63). It means that the comedic elements that Pinter uses in his plays are to reveal the true nature of his characters, and make the audience find out theirs.

In Pinter's drama that is considered as absurdist play the focus is on dialogues rather than action, that is an important characteristic of the Theatre of the Absurd. Pinter's plays do not have a straight line or specific story to follow. The action is not progressive; instead, it seems repetitive and circular. The plays keep continuing with the characters' fear, disillusionment, diverse moment of victory and fulfillment. As J. L. Styan puts it, "part of his

achievement has been to find a dramatic way of revealing the threat behind the evasive exchanges of everyday life and conveying the tension between people who think they know each other" (135). It can be said that Pinter artistically presents the struggle for power between members of the same family and the oppressive power of the system in his works. On the other hand, Austin Quigley explores that these opposing feelings make Pinter plots multi-linear (22). The use of multi-linear plot with a digressing structure builds a basis for creating dialogues as sources of expression. Moreover, by dramatic dialogues Pinter gives a clear action of his characters in his plays, the language they use reveals more than that what they say.

1.6. *The Birthday Party*

The Birthday Party, Pinter's first full-length play, is one of Pinter's well-known plays written in 1957, and it was performed in 1958 for the first time at the Arts Theatre, in Cambridge, England. Anthony D. Santirojprapai argues, "although Harold Pinter's 1957 play *The Birthday Party* opened to critically mediocre reviews, this dramatic work would prove to be a hallmark of Pinter scholarship, as well as a testament to his dramatic achievement" (22-23). Many critics have categorized the genre of *The Birthday Party*, some see it as a Comedy of Menace, but Martin Esslin describes it as an example of The Theatre of the Absurd especially in terms of ambiguity of time, place, and the artistic use of dramatic dialogue among characters for dominance.

In *The Birthday Party*, some characters purposely use linguistic techniques to serve a goal and collapse the others. "Only language significantly happens in the play, with the characters, plot narrative, and stage actions hiding behind the language. Language significantly evolves the absurdity in the characters, relationships and situation" (Azizmohammadi & Kohzadi 2060). Within the play members of an unknown institution appear more powerful than the others; as a result, force some other individuals to accept their agendas and intentions.

The plot of *The Birthday Party* focuses on an ex-concert pianist, Stanley Webber in his thirties. He lives in a boarding house owned by Meg and Petey in a seaside town. The couple protects Stanley and attempts to make him pleasant. Through the passage of time specifically at the end of the first act two agents or messengers, McCann and Goldberg arrive, they apparently appear to have come seeking for Stanley. In his dissertation, *Positive Influence: Harold Pinter and the In-Yer-Face Generation*, Marc E. Shaw says “when two men named Goldberg and McCann arrive, Stanley fears them; seemingly the pair knows Stanley and seeks retribution” (26). Through their cruel cross-examination, Goldberg and McCann turn Stanley’s birthday party into a nightmare; they destroy Stanley mentally and physically to some extent that he is unable to speak and respond their accusations. At the end of the play, the two unrecognizable intruders take Stanley away to their so-called master Monty.

1.7. Edward Albee

Edward Albee was born in 1928 in Washington Dc. “At the age of two weeks he was adopted and brought from Washington Dc to New York State. He was named after his grandfather who holds a place in American theatre history as founder and owner of Albee theatre circuit” (Rufolo-Horhager 22). Albee’s adoptive father had many international vaudeville theatres that inspired Albee during his childhood to become a playwright. Albee’s educational early period in some way was a failure. He attended the exclusive Rye Country Day School, as well as Lawrence, and then the Valley forge Military Academies, but eventually he failed in each case to succeed and he was finally expelled. Albee’s first play was an act, *The Zoo Story* (1959); it gave him reputation as a critic of American way of life. As Pinter, Albee’s first full-length play, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) took his name to internationally recognizable. Albee won Pulitzer Prizes three times for three of his plays.

There have been many debates about the theatre of Edward Albee to classify it under specific category. Famously, Martin Esslin, in his book, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, in addition to Samuel Becket, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, and Jean Genet, considers Edward Albee as an absurdist playwright who has contributed the features of the Theatre of the Absurd. Apart from that, Esslin mentions some absurdist features in Albee's plays like "hackneyed, empty language. Albee masterfully takes up the style and subject-matter of the Theatre of the Absurd and translate it into a genuine American idiom" (2001:312-313).

1.8. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf? written in 1961 by the American playwright Edward Albee. It is Albee's first full-length play that is quite different as compared to his earlier short plays in respect of characters and play's action. The play concentrates on marriage in American society post World War. Albee presents two families, George and Nick's family who do not have any child. Martha and George cannot have children, Nick's wife, Honey, has the hysterical pregnancy.

The play consists of three acts; each of them has its own title. In the first act, titled 'Fun and Games' Albee introduces the value and lives of all characters. The conflict between Martha and George is built, and the secret is declared that joins them to each other. Martha reveals the secrecy of their illusionary son to blame George for his failures. The guests, Nick and Honey are involved in games being unaware of the hidden intentions of their hosts. In the second act, "Walpurgisnacht", the games of the previous act keeps on, the drinking is increased, stories and secrets are unfolded. The characters behave each other harshly. Sexual dialogues occur between Martha and Nick in front of George. George promises to play the top game "kill the Kid". In the final act "The Exorcism", the play reaches its climax while Martha and Georges' imaginary child is killed by Georges' made up-

story. On the other hand, Honey reveals her desire to have a child in spite of her fear of childbearing. The end of the play shows a path to recovery "All four characters experience catharsis as they undergo a series of confrontations which lead to increased self-knowledge" (Rufolo-Horhager 104).The characters realize their faults and have a chance to improve their way of living. By the end of the play, the satires of the social norms are uncovered, and the difficulty of rejecting conventional way of life is revealed.

CHAPTER 2

Linguistic Strategies as Mechanism of Exercising Power in *The Birthday Party*

The question of power in Pinter's plays such as political power, social power or power among individuals is always a dominant subject. In his book, *Understanding Pinter*, Roland Knowles points out, "Pinter has been named Foucauldian *Avant la Lettre*, Pinter's writings have always been shown a consistent concern with direct and indirect forms of power-physical, social, and oral" (190). Power does not just manifest itself in political institutions, but it also has a direct and creative influence on social life. Pinter's biographer, Michael Billington, on Pinter's view of power, writes, "Pinter's vision of human relationships is as a quest for dominance and control in which the power balance capable of reversal" (56). It can be said that the power that Pinter presents throughout his works has a destructive effect, because it is practiced upon those who are powerless, homeless, and then eventually it causes them to collapse and breakdown. To focus on Pinter's plays in terms of power is reasonable, because Pinter can be recognized as a 'dramatist of power.' Thus, the struggle for dominance and control occur between characters in most of Pinter's plays.

After the 1950s, a group of playwrights began writing plays concentrating on absurdist perspectives. Pinter as an absurdist playwright produced a kind of drama with mysterious facts, and established his dramatic language as a weapon of attack and defense in the hand of his characters. Martin Esslin points out in his article 'Language and Silence,' that to understand Pinter and his use of language one may "start from an examination of the function of language in stage dialogue generally-and indeed from consideration of the use of language in ordinary human intercourse itself" (35). Everyday conversational language and speech acts are the major mechanisms of action in Pinter's plays. On the other hand, in an article, 'A Foucauldian Reading of Harold Pinter's *Old Times*', Ifacat Banu

states Pinter's dramatic language as "the character's use of language that foregrounds the postmodernist aspect of language as discourse which functions as a site where power relations are constantly destabilized and reconstructed" (38). It means that the characters repeat daily conversations and clichés to dominate and control each other instead of revealing a stable truth or reality. Thus, language becomes a mechanism of exercising power between individual in the aim of controlling each other.

The Birthday Party is one of Pinter's plays that depict power relations and struggle for power dominance. The characters in this play struggle to obtain power over each other. It must be said that power does not only lies in political institution, but it is everywhere. Referring to Foucault's idea of power is helpful, for he believes that "between every point of a social body, between a man and a woman, between everyone who knows and every one does not know, there exist relations of power (Foucault 187). The fact that dramatic characters are member of one of Foucault's category, therefore it can be said that the characters who struggle for gaining power in Pinter's plays are members of different organizations, member of the same family or the state institutions.

In *The Birthday Party*, Pinter skillfully uses linguistic expressions and tactics to indicate how his characters can obtain advantageous position and win the stage over the other partakers of the dialogue. The main character, Stanley Webber uses language to face menace forces. On the contrary, some characters like Goldberg and McCann who come from an unknown organization uses the linguistic tactics to manipulate others. Goldberg and McCann intentionally use linguistic strategies to force other accepting their own form of reality. Eventually, the result of using language as a technique of exercising power gives dominance to some characters and breakdown to some others in the play.

Pinter's *The Birthday Party* exposes an institution that enables some of its members to be more powerful than others. Through the linguistic

strategies individuals choose, they can support their intentions that give them even more power. Robin Stone believes that the language used by the characters in *The Birthday Party* has a hidden intention; it is used to obscure meaning and manipulate others by masking to accomplish a self-serving objective (31). It means that during conversation characters only utter those ideas that serve their goals and suppress the other utterances. Moreover, Deborah Tannen, on the subject of linguistic strategies and speech act during conversation among participants of a verbal dialogue illustrates that every person has his own characteristic speaking pattern that affect the message he conveys in his social interactions (139). In this respect, dealing with the dramatic dialogue of *The Birthday Party* and analyzing the linguistic tactics and strategies as a means of exercising power are explained in this chapter. This chapter examines the speech act techniques for gaining power in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* through the lens of communication theory as interrogation, repetition, and extending conversation: turn-taking, interruption, shifting and raising topics.

2.1. Interrogation

Questions, such as those used in cross-examination, can be considered one of the most significant mechanisms of verbal aggression. Through well-planned questions, someone can obtain some specific information; and by interrogating in conversation the speaker has the opportunity to make the listener reveal what is required as a result he can manipulate the listener intentionally. The more questions a character asks, the more words he/she uses and the more information he/she gets about the other participant of the conversation. Martin Esslin argues,

Words become weapons in the mouth of Pinter's characters. The one who gets hold of the more elaborate or more accurate expression established dominance over his partners. The victim of aggression can be swamped up by language that comes too

thick and fast, or is too nonsensical to be comprehended; this happens, above all, to Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, who is subjected to a process of brainwashing through a torrent of incomprehensible questions and assertions fired at him by the two terrorists (1972:49).

Wherever there is a question and answer relationship, a discourse among the participants is always there. Referring to Esslin's statement above on Pinter's language, it should be said that while one participant asks too many questions and raises various kinds of question respectively, he/she deprives the other participant from answering and expressing himself/herself; as a result, the sign of dominance and discourse manipulation occurs.

In Act II of *The Birthday Party*, the archetype character of Pinter's menacing torturer appears to victimize the victim of the play, Stanley. As a feature of Pinteresque menace, the identity and past of the so-called intruders, Goldberg and McCann, is never revealed. This leads Stanley to ignorance, because he has no knowledge about his torturers. Francesca Coppa believes that lack of information brings menace to participants in a conversation "menace depends on ignorance; the terror of it stems from vagueness of the threat" (52). It can be said that in the conflict between the dominant and the subservient members, knowledge, especially pertaining to the opponent's identity, becomes a weapon. The individual, whose identity is laid open, subject to attack, is victimized for the reason that he/she has no information about who the enemy is.

Goldberg and McCann start torturing Stanley by cross-examining him at "a rapid fire pace," Stanley is not allowed to answer the questions because his answers do not seem to really matter to Goldberg and McCann. "Rather, the function of the rhetorical attack is to underscore the idea that Stanley is no longer in control of his role or his function" (Santirojprapai 25). Goldberg and McCann use their linguistic tactics skillfully to confuse Stanley's past

memory, to reduce him to an infantile fool, to accuse him of being guilty, regardless of whether he has committed any wrong. Goldberg and McCann ask Stanley as follows:

GOLDBERG. Where was your wife?

STANLEY. In—

GOLDBERG. Answer.

STANLEY. What wife?

GOLDBERG. What have you done with your wife?

MCCANN. He's killed his wife.

GOLDBERG. Why did you kill your wife?

STANLEY. What wife?

MCCANN. How did he kill her?

GOLDBERG. How did you kill her?

MCCANN. You throttled her.

GOLDBERG. With Arsenic.

MCCANN. There's your man! (*The Birthday Party* 49)

The tone of the language and the content of the above questioning consider Stanley guilty of killing his wife without offering any persuasive evidence. Even though Stanley tries to deny their blame but his attempts remain hopeless because Goldberg and McCann only oppress their suggested answers. The dominance here oppresses its own form of reality; the victim's opinion of what he has done is useless. The torturers change the reality and put their victim into a state of ignorance. About this part of the cross-examination of the play, Francis Gillen in his essay "Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*: Menace Reconsidered" observes that "what Goldberg and McCann have accomplished is to have taken away both Stanley's present and his past and left him nowhere to go except a future that they or the society they represent control" (42). Thus, Pinter suggests the anguish and uncertainty of human existence. He reveals the fear of losing the sense of

individuality in modern life to some extent that people are forced to accept a created reality even though it is against them.

Stanley, who is hiding himself in Mr. Boles' boarding house in order to be saved from the outside world's mysteries and insecurities targeted by a range of interrogations by the two intruders, McCann and Goldberg. Anshu Pandey claims, "Stanley attempts to evade all the connections of his past life and begin a new life, but Stanley does not succeed in this attempt, he becomes apathetic figure, and embodiment of fear felt by the individual in the modern world" (19). The two men, Goldberg and McCann, who come from an unknown institution, turn Stanley to a bizarre and intruding cross-examination. In the interrogation scene, Pinter follows 'stichomythia,' which is a form of dramatic dialogue with both McCann and Goldberg cooperating in asking Stanley some illogical and meaningless questions:

MACANN. What about the Albigensian heresy?

GOLDBERG. Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?

MACANN. What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?

GOLDBERG. Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?

STANLEY. He wanted to---- he wanted to---- he wanted to---

MCCANN. He doesn't know!

GOLDBERG. Which came first?

MACANN. Chicken? Egg? Which came first?

GOLDBERG and MACANN. Which came first? Which came first? Which came first?

(*The Birthday Party* 51-52)

The above extract suggests that language can be used by participants of a conversation to hide intentions. Since these questions are illogical and meaningless, Stanley does not have any knowledge to answer them; as a result, the two interrogators confuse him. They aim to prepare a condition to collapse and turn Stanley mentally destructive. Austin E. Quigley, one of the theorists of speech act in an article "The Language Problem," suggests, "Stanley is confronted by two visitor; they verbally bludgeon him into

submission and silence by a sheer number and variety of their accusation” (289). Such questions can be read as accusation while Stanley is unaware of the reality of the answers and lack of information about the source of the asked questions.

It might be said that Pinter’s intention of such a kind of questioning is not purposeless. Pinter uses a planned dramatic conversation precisely to uncover how language can be used as a tormenting tool in a discourse, sometimes to have destructive effect on others. He aims to reveal that in post-World War; a world of violence, uncertainty, fragmented nations, and Holocaust, a pursuer from a mysterious organization may arrive at someone’s door in order to investigate and accuse him for an action that he has never heard about it.

To ask a difficult and mysterious question to be answered as a linguistic strategy can be used for controlling and manipulating others. Giving examples in *The Birthday Party* shows how McCann and Goldberg successfully can achieve their aim in manipulating and destroying Stanley into becoming a speechless being. They defeat Stanley and make him to share what they want from him. The main purpose of the interrogation is an initial step in the play to make him mute. In analyzing the questions in Pinter’s drama, Almansi Guido writes, “you ask a series of irrelevant questions, just to keep up the language game to going; or you can ask an awkward question so that the other is not able to answer” (34). It is clear in the following extract, Stanley is able to answer the questions for a short time, but when the questions turn awkward he is no longer able to keep on answering. The interrogators change the speed of the questions and raise many various unrelated questions; they do not give Stanley enough time to respond to them.

GOLDBERG. Why did you come here?

STANLEY. My feet hurt!

GOLDBERG. Why did you stay?

STANLEY. I had a headache!

GOLDBERG. Did you take anything for it?

STANLEY. Yes.

GOLDBERG. What?

STANLEY. Fruit salts!

GOLDBERG. Enos or Andrews?

STANLEY. En- An-

(*The Birthday Party* 48)

The language that dramatists use to convey their messages in their literary works is inseparable from daily conversational encounters. As Jean Paul Sartre claims, "dramatic language is a moment in action, as in real life, and it is there simply to give orders, defend things, and expand feelings in the form of an argument for the defense" (105). Sartre clarifies further how language can be used to persuade, accuse, demonstrate decisions, and to make use it in verbal duels (120). What the playwrights present through their character's performance can be seen as an adoption of real life discourse. It is reasonable to say that what is happening between Stanley, McCann, and Goldberg during the cross-examination meeting may happen somewhere and sometime in every single person's life.

In Pinter's works, someone who questions the system's strategy is always punished and tortured by an unknown organization. When Stanley sees McCann for the first time, he wants to know his identity and his intention, why is he staying at the seaside. In an encounter with McCann, Stanley asks, "So you are down here on a holiday?" "You are here on a short stay?" "I've got a feeling we've met before," but in response to Stanley's questions, McCann answers him without revealing any truth about him and his master Goldberg, "no, we haven't" (Pinter 39). McCann's refusal to answer honestly is the first step to collapse and destroy Stanley. Steven H. Gale believes that this encounter between McCann and Stanley is the first real explicit act of terror in the play, and this action serves to substantiate

the hint of menace (49). It can be said that it is Stanley's first and last serious attempt to defend himself, but he fails.

The final part of the cross-examination in Act II proves Stanley's complete breakdown. He is not able even to identify himself. Goldberg and McCann consider him as a dead and useless person. McCann asks Stanley to give his identity and introduce his personality, "who are you, Webber?" but it is Goldberg who answers instead of Stanley and attacks Stanley's core of selfhood and presence, "You're nothing but an odour!" (Pinter 52) It shows that after the verbal torture, Goldberg and McCann have successfully made Stanley to a speechless, break-down creature.

MCCANN. Who are you, Webber?

GOLDBERG. What makes you exist?

MCCANN. You're dead.

GOLDBERG. You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There is no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour! (*The Birthday Party* 52)

Goldberg and McCann bombard Stanley by a range of illogical, aggressive, and meaningless questions. They accuse Stanley of some crimes to manipulate him like treating Meg as leper, betraying their organization, not paying the rent, and killing his wife. As a result, he becomes silent, inarticulate and speechless; he utters animal-like words, it means he loses his humanity and individuality, and "fails to respond except as a being reduced to grunts and gurgles, and ambiguous physical outbursts" (Toolan 198). Stanley cannot defend himself and reject the made up-reality that Goldberg and McCann create for him. In the end, he begins to shudder and is unable to assert himself properly. Furthermore, he screams just like a child, it shows his weakness in front of the intruders.

GOLDBERG. Steady, McCann.

GOLDBERG. (*circling*). Uuuuuhhhhh!

GOLDBERG. (*rising*). Steady, McCann.

MCCANN. Come on!

STANLEY. Uuuuuhhhhh!

MCCANN. He's sweating!

STANLEY. Uuuuuhhhhh!

GOLDBERG. Well, Stanny boy, what do you say, eh?

STANLEY. Ug-gughh... uh-gughh...

MCCANN. What's your opinion, sir?

STANLEY. Caaahhh... caaahhh... (*The Birthday Party* 52 & 85)

The destruction of Stanley can be compared to individual's life in real world. In a conversation, each member of society might face the same destiny Stanley faces. As Lisa Korpimies suggests, "through verbal manipulation someone is able to lead a conversation; where he chooses and he knows how to persuade the other to behave according to his desire, with skill, his mysterious duty is fulfilled" (329). It is understandable to say when there is a verbal dialogue, one of the participants is always more powerful; he can use the linguistic tactics to make the others accept his intentions and claims.

Psychological analysis can be followed to diagnose the breakdown that the torturers bring to Stanley by their cruel interrogation. The psychic action of *The Birthday Party* is described by R. F. Storch as "the psychological lever of Goldberg and McCann [...] to make Stanley regress to the infantile state, they brainwash him to the last vestiges of an independent spirit" (706). Goldberg and McCann use language as a weapon to oblige Stanley to conform; as a result he loses his own self as the pianist and individual artist. It becomes clear how at the end of the play, Stanley, just like Goldberg and McCann, wears a dark, well-cut suit and white shirt. By this, Pinter most probably criticizes how people are forced to accept unknown agendas without questioning.

2.2. Repetition

Repetition is another important speech act that is used to control and dominate in dramatic dialogue and everyday conversations among participants. Rafael Salkie in *Text and Discourse Analysis* writes "repetition is inevitable in every-day language, as we repeat certain words to create coherence in our utterances and syntax in sentences" (4). Dialogue in drama is doubtlessly planned by the playwright, so when a word, phrase, or sentence is repeated, it is not without an agenda. A character or a participant in real discourse may repeat an utterance or sentence to emphasize on an important event. Thus, through repetition one might get the floor and manipulate others.

Repetition takes a high position among the absurdist playwrights, because they believe that life is repetitive and circular. Martin Esslin describes repetition as "distinctive feature of the Theatre of the Absurd" (2001:26). As prominent figures of absurdism, Pinter uses repetition in his plays widely. In her dissertation, "Repetition in Becket, Pinter, and Albee," Cynthia Woodard Schnebly suggests that,

Repetition in Pinter moves in two directions. When characters repeat, they are usually either trying to evade responding to the questions of the other characters, or they are trying to verbally dominate other characters themselves and keep more control over the conversational floor. (99)

In Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, there are many encounters and interactions where characters repeat a certain word, phrase or a whole sentence either to control others or gain self-psycho power. Goldberg and McCann use repetition to gain power over Stanley. In the second act of the play, which is the final scene of the cross-examination, the interrogators, use repetition to destroy Stanley completely. . .

GOLDBERG. You stink of sin.

MCCANN. I can smell it.

GOLDBERG. Do you recognize an external force?

STANLEY. What?

GOLDBERG. Do you recognize an external force?

MCCANN. That's the question!

GOLDBERG. Do you recognize and external force, responsible for you, suffering for you?

STANLEY. It's late.

GOLDBERG. Late! Late enough! When did you last pray?

MCCANN. He's sweating!

GOLDBERG. When did you last pray?

MCCANN. He's sweating! (*The Birthday Party* 50)

Goldberg and McCann speed the tone of questions by some effective repeating sentences; they do not give Stanley a chance to respond. The repetitive questions like "do you recognize an external force," "When did you last pray" are abnormal and difficult questions. They are repeated three times respectively. As a result, Stanley is confused; the only answer he can give is "it's late," "what," "nothing" (Pinter 50-51). He is almost silenced. The interrogators know Stanley's weak point; they know he is not a skillful conversationalist, and that is why they repeat these difficult questions. Furthermore, if a sentence is uttered once, it might not seem powerful, but when it is repeated it might dominate and violate the listener's mood and mute him. Thus, when repetition is used in dramatic dialogue and daily conversation, its influences can be destructive.

In *The Birthday Party* repetition has another function among the characters. Some of the characters use repetition to convince themselves and show their importance to others. Some characters repeat some phrases and sentences to gain psychic power. On the use of repetition as a psychological action Martin Esslin states that some characters in *The Birthday Party* repeat words and sentences not as an informative exchange, but as a psychological expression to reveal that everything is undergoing as they wish

(37). The following short dialogue between Meg and her husband Petey shows the importance of repetition to gain personhood and psychic power:

MEG. I was the bell of the ball.

PETHEY. Were you?

MEG. Oh yes. They all said I was.

PETHEY. I bet you were too.

MEG. Oh. It's true. I was. (*Pause.*) I know I was.

(*The Birthday Party, 87*)

In the above exchange, Meg repeats six times the idea of her beauty and elegance in the party, through this repetitious phrase, Meg tries to convince her husband that she is still young and good-looking; that eventually gives her a psychic power. Repetition in absurd drama can be used as "emphasis on a surface vacuity and an underlying spiritual emptiness, mental poverty, self-deception or linguistic incapability" (Hodges 71). In other words, it can be said that Meg attempts to conceal the reality that she is an old, alone, empty woman in her house.

2.3. Extending Conversation: Turn-Taking, Interruption, and Shifting and Raising Topics

Speakers to reach a pre-proposed goal in conversation organize their talks in advance. Turn taking gives speakers the chance to extend their conversation turns and accomplish as much as they desire. "Turn taking is one of the elements of linguistic style, one person speaks, and then the other responds. However, this apparently simple exchange requires a subtle negotiation of signals so that you know when the other person finishes" (Tannen 139). On the other hand, dramatists use turn-taking technique to show the characters' features and their possible intentions. Furthermore, a character who keeps on extending his/her turns might be someone who intends to be the center of attention or needs to have power over a current situation.

In *The Birthday Party*, Goldberg takes his turns skillfully; he waits until he has a good chance to extend his turns and convey his messages, as a result, he forces the other characters to listen to him and follow his instructions. Throughout the play, Goldberg takes the longest turns; whenever a character asks a question, he takes his turn and announces more than the required answer. It is Goldberg, who makes use of Meg's information about the time of Stanley's birthday, then he suggests having a party for him, and eventually his suggestion is consensually accepted. Goldberg's persuasive speeches during his turns make McCann his slave. On the use of language by Goldberg masterfully, one of the characters of the play, Lulu, tells Goldberg surprisingly, "You're a marvelous speaker, Nat, you know? Where did you learn to speak like that?" (Pinter 57) It shows how Goldberg persuades the other participants of the conversation into accepting his behavior by extending turn taking at the right moment.

Interruption is another linguistic expression that is used among the participants of a conversation to control and dominate. Jefferson Searle defines "interruptions is the starting up in the midst of another's turn, not letting the other to finish" (6). One of the participants of the conversation interrupts the other to gain a goal "in some situations interruptions may reflect a desire to dominate the conversation and control the other participants" (Rodger 30). An interruption occurs in order to change the topics, or raise a new topic with the goal of making the other one stops speaking. In *The Birthday Party*, there are many dramatic exchanges between the characters; they purposely interrupt each other, especially Goldberg's interruptions during the interrogation scene. Goldberg overlaps repeatedly and forces Stanley to give away; as a result, Goldberg is able to control the situation and subjugates Stanley:

GOLDBEG. Enos or Adrews?

STANLEY. En- An-

GOLDBERG. Did you stir properly? Did they fizz?

STANLEY. Now, now, wait you-

GOLDBERG. Did they fizz or didn't they fizz?

MCCANN. He doesn't know!

GOLDBERG. You don't know. When did you have a bath?

STANLEY. I have one every-

GOLDBERG. Don't lie.

(*The Birthday Party* 48)

The above example can be taken as one of the most effective interruptions in the play. It shows how Pinter artistically uses language to dominate and to deprive other from expressing themselves properly. Goldberg skillfully interrupts Stanley; he does not give him a chance even to answer the proposed questions. Thus, the conversation leads to an unbalanced dialogue among Stanley, Goldberg and McCann. Stanley is not allowed to react. However, he attempts to respond, but he is interrupted. By the interruptions, Goldberg and McCann can destroy Stanley; under the influence of the interruptions, Stanley is entirely controlled, dominated, and confused.

Raising and shifting topics as a trick of changing the subject of discourse is precisely can be used to dominate in daily conversations and dramatic exchanges. To raise or change a topic is used for various purposes by the conversationalists of social groups; some people raise and change topics as a linguistic tactic to prove that they know about everything that is being discussed. In *The Birthday Party*, Goldberg changes and raises those topics that suit his interest to dominate others and the situation. The more topics Goldberg changes or raises the more power he gains over the other characters. After taking control over the boardinghouse atmosphere through his smart turns and effective repetitious techniques, Goldberg uses another important speech act: raising and changing topics to force others follow his orders. He carefully shifts from on topic to another; he quickly raises various topics like religion, his childhood, business, and his family life. Furthermore, at the time of the interrogation with Stanley, Goldberg changes topics

tactically to some extent that he does not give Stanley any room to choose one of the topics to reply. He asks Stanley personal questions in a rapid way ("wearing pajamas, taking bath, washing cup,") religious topics as ("praying, knowing external force,") philosophical and absurdist topics like ("chicken? Egg? Which came first?") (Pinter 45-52). It might be said that Pinter reveals that even people inside their home are not safe and far away from the mystery and insecurity of the outside world. Unexpectedly, someone may enter our home and through bringing up various topics confuse each of us.

CHAPTER 3

Expressions of Power in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* contains absurdist elements crafted to American concerns. Albee explores human condition and existence; he uses absurd drama to focus on his social concerns. By depicting social follies, Albee sees the theatre as a forum in which to raise social awareness. Martin Esslin argues that "Edward Albee comes into the category of the Theatre of the Absurd precisely because his work attacks the very foundation of American optimism" (2001:226). Although he follows traditional Absurdist techniques like lack of communication and aggressive language, Albee's work emphasizes social concerns, as well. In *Who's Afraid*, Albee criticizes the institution of marriage and the immoral materialism that often accompanies the "American Dream."

Through the characters of Martha and George, and Nick and Honey, Albee reveals the hypocrisy of marriage in America's post-war years. The men and women of the play come from middle-class backgrounds and are well educated. In other words, all of them are "ideal" members of American society; they are supposed to be good husbands and wives according to the social expectations of the era. Yet their horrifying behavior during the course of the night exposes how the prevailing ideology of the American Dream has spoiled even the so-called "best" sector of society. George and Martha attack and humiliate each other in front of the young couple, Nick and Honey. Albee reveals how Martha and George create an illusionary son to extend the illusion of their marriage as a way to conform to the social norms of the 1960s in America.

On the other hand, Albee uncovers that Nick marries Honey for the sake of her father's wealth; he wants to advance himself by marrying into

privilege and wealth. It means that in 1960's in America people believed that happiness was related to wealth. By Nick's marriage, Albee suggests that people at that time were opportunists and even used immoral ways to make money. According to Kolin, "Albee targets the depraved power of money to set moral standards in America" (28). Albee satirizes the greedy American society of that era by portraying his materialistic characters. Albee depicts the character of Nick as a young ambitious professional who employs immoral means to promote his professional ladder like seducing other professors' wives.

One of the absurdist elements of Albee's plays is lack of communication and aggressive language determinately in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* On lack of communication in Albee's plays James L. Roberts in his analysis of *Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* writes,

In Edward Albee's plays, each character exists in his own private ego. Each makes a futile attempt to get another character to understand him, but as the attempt is contrived, there is more alienation. Thus, finally, because of lack of communication, Peter, the conformist in *The Zoo Story*, is provoked into killing Jerry, the individualist; or in *The Sand Box*, a continuation of *The American Dream*, Mommy and Daddy bury Grandma because she talks incessantly but says nothing significant. The irony is that Grandma is the only character who does say anything significant, but Mommy and Daddy, the people who discard her, are incapable of understanding her (11).

Albee presents a critique of modern society by showing the failure of language as a means of understanding, aggressive language between the characters and language use to hold into power. As an American dramatist who lived in the period of the prevailing ideology of American Dream, Albee strongly criticizes the social value norms and the lack of individuality. In

addition, Albee attacks the lack of individuality in a so-called modern civilization, he shows that Man proclaims to know everything in this universe but he is unable of having a meaningful communication. Albee, similar to the European Absurdist playwrights claims that human being has lost all the sense of individualism “and either functions isolated and alien or else finds himself lost amid repetition and conformity” (Roberts 13). It means individuals either member of a family or institution must live in isolation or conform to the social norms without questioning the destructive outcomes. For instance, as a childless family, Martha and George unable to have a true communication; as a result, they verbally attack each other. Through his characters in *Who’s Afraid*, Albee depicts how people attack each other avoiding communication of their loss and sadness.

The use of language purposely is an essential aspect throughout *Who’s Afraid*; the characters use language tactics and expressions to serve their own agenda. For example, while Martha fails to conform to the sex role stereotypes, she compensates her failure by refusing her silent about the on-going failures of her husband, George. In addition, George involves Nick in verbal games to establish his intellectual superiority over him. On the other hand, Martha uses verbal aggressions to show George and Nick’s sexual impotence. In response to Martha’s linguistic attacks, and humiliation George skillfully removes the illusionary son and returns his dominance over Martha. Thus, this chapter makes a concrete reference in Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to analyze that how characters dominate each other through reminding past failures and revealing secrets, verbal aggression and sexual conversation, language use for creating story as a means of exercising power, and turn-taking.

3.1. Reminding Past Failures and Revealing Secrets

Reminding past failures and revealing secrets are sometimes tactically used for domination. An individual during real conversation, in a workplace,

or in a political negotiation uses language as a tool to reveal someone's secrets as a part of dominant mechanism. The language we speak and dramatic dialogue of a play is an intentional action that is performed with a purpose. Shan Wareing in "What is Language and What does It Do" states, "power is often demonstrated through language; it is also actually achieved or done through language" (10). In Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* whose characters are from middle class families struggle to hold onto power by commenting on each other's past failures and secrets. The verbal struggle for control and dominance is between George and his wife, Martha, in one side, and George as a historian and Nick as a scientist on the other hand. The battle between George and Martha is a marital one, but George and Nick competes each other on a career, masculine, and gender base.

Language and power relations are almost concerned of struggles that take various forms and assume different degrees of intensity. Fairclough Norman as an analyst of language and power, states that powerful participants can manifest power in conversation and discourse by taking over and constraining the contributions of non-powerful conversationalists (46). It is possible to say that power may be exercised through efforts to standardize language forms or impose particular linguistic formats; this restricts who speaks, or who heard, about what, and from what position. In this sense, the place, the situation, and the topic that Martha is speaking about to reveal Georges' secrets can be read as a tactic to overpower him in front of Nick and Honey. At the beginning of Act I, 'Fun and Games,' Martha breaks the code of secrecy of the imaginary son. Martha talks to Honey about the illusionary child intentionally to humiliate George. Bringing the non-exist child boy makes George think of revenging Martha eventually,

HONEY: I didn't know until just a minute ago that you had a *son*.

GEORGE (*wheeling, as if struck behind*): What?

HONEY: A son! I hadn't known.

GEORGE [*to Honey*]: She told you about him?

HONEY [*flustered*]: Well, yes. Well, I mean . . .

GEORGE [*nailing it down*]: She told you about him.

HONEY [*a nervous giggle*]: Yes.

GEORGE: And she mentioned . . .?

HONEY [*cheerful, but a little puzzled*]: . . . your son's birthday . . .
yes.

GEORGE: O. K., Martha. [*For Martha, as if she were in the room*] You
goddamn destructive. . . (Who's Afraid 23)

Through analyzing the above extract, it can be said that Martha intentionally reveals the secret of their illusionary son to devalue George. "The main problem that was identified with the child is that both parents manipulate him at their will in order to use him to attack and blame each other. Martha uses the child to dishonor George and to trash him publicly" (Martel 44). By revealing such a secret, Martha starts exposing a series of secrets publicly to gain power over George. Martha succeeds in destroying George's personality, psychology in the presence of Nick and Honey. The danger of mentioning the imaginary son to public on George is obvious when George says "O.K., Martha, you goddamn destructive" (Albee 23). Here, Albee depicts the role of Martha as a woman who is different from American conventional wife of the era. At that time, according to the stereotypes, wife's social function is to help her husband to succeed, but Martha is a threat on George's life by publicizing the secret of the imaginary son.

Relatively, while Martha's characteristics are totally against the American conventional woman of 1960s; as a result, she has to look to support from various sides for obtaining emotional psychic power. Using language intentionally is Martha's only tool to make others value her. Revealing the illusionary son can be taken as Martha's attempt to look support from Honey to prove her identity and gender expectation. "It is clear that Martha is not sure of her status in society that embraces the myth of the wholesome, nurturing maternal figure" (Winkel 111). Thus, Martha talks to

Honey about the non-existent child to show herself as stereotypical mother; in addition, she rejects her infertility and non-productivity. Here, Albee criticizes the culturally social view of woman during cold war period. At that time, women in America were defined by their ability to be a good wife house and to give birth. Albee emphasizes that if a woman cannot conform to social norms, she obliges to create illusions and lie to be accepted by the society. It must be mentioned that Martha has the problem of identity because she has no professional career, no child, so she is not able to conform to the stereotypes; as a result, she has to use verbal tactics to reveal the imaginary son to Honey.

Throughout the first act of the play, Martha reminds and reveals more of George's past failures. This time, Martha gives the details of George's personal and academic failures to the guests, Nick and Honey. Martha declares that George has never advanced to be the Head of the History Department due to his physical weakness. Through bringing George's failure into the dialogues among the characters, Albee suggests the society's expectations to a middle class man in America after the Second World War. At that time, the society expected a man to be educated, physically powerful, sexually strong, and academically successful. Furthermore, the outside world is full of competition to be successful, as Rachel Blau Duplessis in her article "In the Bosom of the Family: Contradiction and Resolution in Edward Albee" states, "the men's world is the world outside the family. The university workplace is rife with rivalries and competition, and the men must apparently succeed in this world" (1977:135). In essence, George is not the stereotypical man according to American Dream ideology, so Martha takes revenge on George by revealing his failure to take the head of History Department where her Daddy is university president:

MARTHA: George is not preoccupied with *history*. . . . George is preoccupied with the *History Department*. George is preoccupied with the History Department because . . .

GEORGE: . . . because he is *not* the History Department, but is only *in* the History Department. We know, Martha . . . we went all through it while you were upstairs . . . getting up. There's no need to go through it again.

MARTHA: That's right, baby . . . keep it clean. [*To the others*] George is bogged down in the History Department. He's an old bog in the History Department, that's what George is. A bog . . . A fen . . . A. G. D. swamp. Ha, ha, ha, HA! A SWAMP! Hey, Swamp! Hey, SWAMP!

GEORGE [*with a great effort he controls himself . . . then, as if she had said nothing more than 'Dear, George' . . .*]: Yes, Martha? Can I get you something? (*Who's Afraid* 26)

It must be said that Martha's purpose behind revealing George's inability to take over the History Department is a weapon to humiliate George. Martha uses a linguistic tactic that is reminding past memory and failure of her husband to play him a game of domination and control in the presence of Nick, George's competitor. "The women are verbally abusive to the men precisely because the men do not succeed in the stereotypical term, the women do not cause the men's failure, but they accentuate them." (Duplessis, 1977:137) It can be said that while a woman fails to conform to the sex role stereotypes, she compensates her failure by refusing her silent about the on-going failures of her husband. "The women's bitchiness and domination have their source in the men's failure; rather than failure, the women simply comment cruelly and incessantly upon it" (Duplessis, 1977 137). Since Martha is not the stereotypical mother in the eyes of the society, she exposes George's failures as a tactic to hide her infertility. This makes George appear powerless in front of Martha, and Nick. The last line of the above dialogue obviously shows George's surrender to Martha's linguistic game of reminding past failures, he says, "Yes, Martha? Can I get you something?" (Albee 26)

At the end of Act I, Martha keeps on humiliating and dominating George. Purposely, she destroys and humiliates George in front of his competitor, Nick, but this time she brings back George's physical failures. Martha does not skip any opportunity to talk about George's physical failure because she believes that his physical weakness deprived him to be an ideal man of the time. Martha retells the boxing match story to humiliate George publicly, she says:

George, here, doesn't cotton much to body talk, do you, sweetheart?
[*No reply.*] George tell 'em about the boxing match *we* had. . . I got into a pair of gloves myself... and I snuck up behind George, just kidding, and I yelled 'Hey, George!' and at the same time, I let go sort of a roundhouse right . . . just kidding, you know? And George wheeled around real quick, and he caught it right in the jaw . . . POW! [Nick laughs] I hadn't meant it . . . honestly. Anyway . . . POW! Right in the jaw . . . and he was of balance . . . he must have been... and he stumbled back a few steps, and then CRASH, he landed . . . flat . . . in a huckleberry bush! (*Who's Afraid* 28 & 30)

George's loss in the boxing match demonstrates Martha's masculine qualities. Martha debases and emasculates George through language by bringing the boxing match event into public. Issuing the secrets of George's physical failure in front of a virile, up and coming young scientist as Nick, makes George appear devastating, and subservient until his turn. In her article "Fun and Games with George and Nick: Competitive Masculinity in *Who's Afraid Virginia Woolf?*" Clara Virginia Eby demonstrates "Albee's characterization of Martha shows that he conceives of gender as a less about biology than about assuming certain qualities, George himself admits as much, describing Martha as her father's 'right ball' " (604). On the other hand, by the end of Act I Martha completes George's degradation by publicly declaring, "maybe Georgie boy didn't have the *stuff* . . . didn't have much . . . in fact he was a sort of a . . . a Flop!" (Albee 46) it may be said that

through Martha's infantilizing and sexually deflating George, Albee reveals his understanding of gender. Thus, Albee offers his belief of gender presentation as a performative act rather than defining gender as an attribute action. Albee illustrates that to identify one's gender role the use of linguistic strategy, a speaker and a listener is necessary. According to Judith Butler's formulation "*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*," "gender is not an interior, fixed, or private action, but a public one" (140). Therefore, while Martha and George are alone, the bitterness of her insults through language is not taken into granted as compared to the presence of an audience, listener as Nick.

In Act II of the play, Martha declares another academic and personal failure. She focuses on how her Daddy prevented publishing George's book. Martha aims at showing her Daddy's power over George's academic life by talking about the unpublished book. Martha chooses the right time to reveal George's failure to Nick and she smartly utilizes it to humiliate and control George whenever she needs,

MARTHA: And he didn't run on how he tried to publish a goddamn book, and Daddy wouldn't let him.

NICK: A book? No. [*egging her on*]: A book? What Book?

GEORGE: Please, Martha . . . [*pleading*]: Please. Just a book. All right . . . ! For heaven's sake . . . we'll have some dancing.

MARTHA [*with a glance at Nick*]: Yeah . . . yeah, that's not a bad idea. Will you put on a record and shut up?

George: Certainly, love. (*Who's Afraid* 66- 67)

The above exchange shows that how revealing the personal failures threaten George to some extent that he pleads Martha to stop telling Nick about the unpublished book. Furthermore, the end of the dialogue offers how Martha controls George; she publicly seduces Nick without caring George's presence. She dances with Nick and uses sexual words without considering her husband's presence. Apart from that, she abuses George

“will you put a record and shut up?” (Albee 66) In response, George accepts every insult and verbal aggression that Martha tells him, “Certainly, love” (Albee 67), because he is afraid of bringing up the story of the unpublished book.

In Act II of the play, George’s turn comes to take revenge on all those who enjoyed and participated in his humiliation. Firstly, the humiliated, destroyed George uses his linguistic power to take revenge on Nick. Here, Michel Foucault’s notion of power must be mentioned, he suggests, “where there is power there is resistance” (40). Since Martha in front of Nick humiliates George, so he has to find a way to resist and defend himself. George’s waiting game comes; he is storing up ammunition to use against Nick whom he was the observer of his humiliation. Elizabeth Mary Cobb in “Control and Connection” observes,

Nick, who has merely sparred with George in the previous act, enters the fray in earnest, but he is greatly outmatched, underestimating George’s fighting skills; Nick reveals his own vulnerabilities – Honey’s false pregnancy, his marriage to acquire her father’s ill-gained money. (55)

After Nick’s revelations of his secrets, George victoriously states his aim in extracting such a secret: “you realize, of course, that I’ve drawing you out on this stuff, not because I’m interested in your terrible lifehood, but only your represent a direct and pertinent threat on my lifehood, and I want to get the goods on you” (Albee 59).

Relatively, George masterly makes use of Nick’s marriage story to humiliate him in front of his wife, Honey. Albee suggests the idea that while language is a weapon in the hand of some people to overpower others, the same language is accessible for the destroyed, humiliated person to take revenge once they have the chance. . .

GEORGE: . . . and . . . oh, we get a flashback here, to How They Got Married. [*triumphant*]: Yes! How They Got Married. Well, how they

got married is this . . . The Mouse got all puffed one day, she went over to Blondie's house, she stuck out her puff, and she said . . . look at me.

NICK: No!

HONEY [*as from a distance*]: . . . and so they were married . . .

GEORGE: . . . And so they were married . . .

NICK: NO! No!

GEORGE [*as if to a baby*]: . . . and then the puff went away . . . like magic . . . pou!

HONEY. . . The puff went away . . .

NICK: Honey, I didn't mean to . . . honestly, I didn't mean to . . .

HONEY: You . . . you told them . . . [*grabbing at her belly*]: Ohhhhh . . . nooooo. . .

GEORGE: [*abruptly and with some disgust*]: And that's how you play Get the Guests. (*Who's Afraid 77-78*)

It is worth saying that George reveals that Nick told him about Honey's hysterical pregnancy. George retells the secret to prove his ability and intention to humiliate, and take revenge on Nick and Honey who were the witness during his humiliation by Martha. Thus, the final lines of the conversation show how Nick is humiliated and overpowered by George, "Honey . . . honestly, I didn't mean to . . ." (Albee 78), at the same time George's upper hand appears on Nick and Honey when he tells them, "and that's how you play Get the Guests" (Albee 78). The role of language must be taken into consideration in the battle for gaining power between male characters in the play; it means that the verbal combat between George and Nick shows Albee's understanding of gender as something discursively constructed.

It is important to say that Albee presents the struggle between George and Nick to offer a wide vision of male relationship. According to the characteristics mentioned in the play, physically, Nick is stronger than

George; as a result, George has to engage and fight him in an intellectual and mind war. Robert Wright believes "competition among human, even prehuman, males has been largely mental" (90). George has not the chance to fight Nick physically, but he can defeat him intellectually.

Albee in *Who's Afraid* shows a new identity of the American male ideal, keeping in mind during the nineteenth century the "masculinity in America was conquering space, (the frontier)" (Eby 601), but here Albee illustrates that the male ideal in twenty century is conquering one another by competing in the marketplace, and academic field. When the Second World War ended, millions of veterans returned home and re-entered into civilian life. American males competed for home ownership and higher educational position under the effect of American Dream. The American Dream was the pursuit of material prosperity. Man as breadwinner of family worked hardly to get fancy car, big house and beautiful family. The middle class economy boosted and the majority of America's labor force obtained white-collar jobs. The struggle between George and Nick to be the head of one of the university colleges is a result of male model shift in American post World War.

3.2. Verbal Aggression and Sexual Conversation for Domination

There is always an essential relationship to join verbal aggression with power. It is clear that a verbal aggression usually causes control or dominance over the others. An oppressive and destructive participant of a conversation uses such linguistic tactic to get full power over the oppressed one. Hand by hand in gaining the floor, or achieving domination, verbal aggression can also serve to a total destruction of a person. "The oppressed whose verbal techniques are not so developed can easily succumb and surrender, and let the more powerful ones control him or her" (Svachova 60). On the other hand, Almansi states, "the overall effect of a great verbal assault is to reduce the opponent to a state of catatonia" (45). It means

when a conversationalist uses verbal aggression or assault in social real life or in dramatic dialogue aims at obliging the other to accept his own form of reality and agenda.

In *Who's Afraid*, the characters humiliate and dominate each other through verbal assaults and aggressive language. In this play, the verbal aggression or assault sometimes is due to a direct threat or sexual phrase. On domination aspect in the play, Duplessis points out,

the no-holds-barred destructive games, whose purpose is to break another person's self-esteem by verbal entrapment, provide a compelling spectacle for the audience because characters in the play are, thrust for thrust exercising power over each other. (1977:141)

Martha throughout the play uses verbal aggression against all the others, because it is her mere tool to compensate her lack of an academic profession and social value standards. Martha's talents, her intellect, quick wit can only be expressed through her anger, verbal entrapment, and bitter exchanges with George. She attacks on George for his lack of masculinity and humiliates him in front of Nick and Honey, she says, "I wear the pants in the house because somebody's got to" (Albee 83). "My arm has gotten tired whipping you" (Albee 80). Through this verbal attack, Martha's intention can be read as a reaction against George's lack of American ideal man. On the other hand, Albee reveals that George is not the conventional husband of the period in America; he is a failure, not only in academic field but also in familial life.

Martha tactically uses her verbal aggression to publicize George's sexual impotence. Martha reveals and attacks George's sexual inability through verbal attacks; as a result, she overpowers George and humiliates him in front of Nick, George's competitor. Martha tells George: "You're such a . . . such a simp! I swear . . . if you existed, I'd divorce you. . . I can't even see you . . . I haven't been able to see you to see for years. .. I mean you're

a blank, a cipher . . . a zero, a flop . . . a great . . . big . . . fat . . . Flop . . .” (Albee 7-8), in her response, George replies “[almost crying] Martha I said stop, Martha.” This shows that how Martha by citing George’s sexual inability destroys him in front of Nick. George’s cry and suffering in the face of Martha’s insults suggests, “George’s keen understanding of Martha’s real purpose. Every vicious remark that she spews forth carries with it the innuendo that not only is George a failure in his profession; he is a failure in their sexual and reproductive life as well” (Winkel 140). It can be said that Martha is disappointed and frustrated with the way she lives; she has not been able to get her ambitions in her husband, therefore; she seeks to debase George whenever she has the opportunity. Thus, Martha uncovers George’s sexual inadequacy as weapon against him.

Anyone who gets in Martha’s way is swept into her grisly war machine and dominated by verbal attacks. Anthony Channell Hilfer in an article “George and Martha: Sad, Sad, Sad” suggests, “Albee’s characters remain trapped at a prolonged emotional debauch within a sustained pile-driving, repetition of verbal violence” (140). As usual, Martha uses verbal techniques against Nick who pretends that he has gained power over George and Martha at the beginning of Act III due to the sexual episode. Martha smartly breaks his delusions and assures that she has not been in his side in the games. She tells him rather bluntly: “you see everything but the goddamn mind; you see all the little specks and crap, but you don’t see what goes on, do you?” (Albee 107), later rankled at being called a houseboy, Nick requests Martha [quietly with intense pleading] to “Tell George I’m not a houseboy” (Albee 108). “The pleading and intensity are of course new emotions for Nick, and are indicative of just how far from his smug, self-involved complacency he has moved during the evening” (Shull 113-14). Finally, Nick surrenders and understands his powerlessness not only in front of Martha, but also in front of George. Nick comes only with his threefold repetitions and he eventually confesses his loss, “I think I understand this” (Albee 126).

It means that he understands that he has been dominated and somehow cheated throughout the night games by Martha and George. For most of the rest of Act III, Nick fades into the background, while George parades his masculinity.

Albee intentionally portrays Martha as angry and frustrated woman who always attacks on others. In her article, "the Psychological Component of Infertility," Patricia P. Mahlsted explains, "how coping with infertility can often lead to feelings of intense anger, the losses and stresses of infertility leave couples not only depressed but angry" (340). It is reasonable to say that Martha's continuous anger and verbal attacks specifically on George result from her childlessness and her husband's infertility. On the other hand, Albee's presentation of sexual verbal attacks can be analyzed through Foucault's understanding of power relationships. Foucault gives the sense that within the West since the 1960s, people tried to find out the truth about themselves. Foucault suggests that it is a common assumption that if one examines one's sexuality, one's experiences, one could discover the essence of your very being. However, for Foucault, the moment when you think that you have discovered the truth about yourself is also a moment when power is exercised over you. (Mills 73) So, according to Foucault's perspective revealing the truth of someone becomes a side in power relationship and exercising power among individuals. It can be said that discovering Nick's and George's sexual inability by Martha can be analysed through Foucault's theory how it allows her to dominate and humiliate them in front of each other.

3.3. Language Use for Creating Story as a Means of Exercising Power

Language plays an essential role in inventing stories, and illusions for gaining psychic and emotional power. In Albee's *Who's Afraid*, and even in real life due to the tight social norms people look for fictional and linguistic

illusions to conform into the society. Members of society through illusions of language avoid themselves from dreadful realities of life; as a result, they get psychic and emotional power for a short period. Thus, linguistic illusions and stories sometimes are cure to reunion between individuals and family members.

The central linguistic illusion in this play is the non-existed child that is developed until the end of the play. As two intelligent and sensitive people, who are unable to have a baby, Martha and George create a story and apply it through their daily conversations so that they could survive and gain emotional power. "The illusionary child fills a need for the couple" (Martel 41). It can be said that the fantasy son that is a fabricated communicative tool provides Martha and George the opportunity to cope with the reality of life, and conform to live an illusionary nuclear family life. Martha enthusiastically says, "our child, we raised him, yes, we did, we raised him" (Albee 116). Relatively, the made up child fills the emptiness and meaninglessness of George and Martha's marital relationship. Furthermore, the son is a verbal game that has enabled them to make sense in their senseless universe for twenty-one-years. Through the fabricated son, Albee reveals the lack of true communication in American family. Thus, the imaginary son becomes a means of communication Martha and George to avoid intolerable reality of life.

On the other hand removing and killing the child by a story "car accident" is also a way to achieve emotional power. Respectively, the literary death of the imaginary son empowers George over Martha. George reveals the death of the son "now listen, Martha; listen carefully. We got a telegram; there was a car accident, and he's dead. Puff! Just like that! Now, how do you like it? Martha pathetically replies "no; no, he's *not* dead; he is not *dead*" (Albee 124). George creates a story to kill the imaginary son and removes the linguistic illusion forever. "in spite of the long night of hitting and tearing at each other with words and even on occasion with hands,

George and Martha have moved beyond their furious grievance, beyond even their private grieves, into a mutually shared grief" (Cobb 63-4). It can be said that the only way to increase psychic power and reunion George takes the responsibility to stop continuing the illusion of the imaginary child. By killing the imaginary son in front of Nick and Honey, George enables Martha to release her grief; she can leave illusion of her imaginary son and exorcise her demonic fiction. Thus, George kills the son to force himself and Martha to face the reality that they cannot have a baby, and that they must manage without it even if life to be hard to bear.

Relatively, as the mastermind of the action through the play George brings the evening to a close. Thus, it can be considered as George's power over Martha. George's announcement of the death of imaginary son brings Martha quite literary to her knees. In "Terror and Violence in Edward Albee" Jeane Luere explains, "George and Martha struggle bitterly for supremacy in their relationship, the illusionary child is constantly at the middle of that struggle." (44) George knows well that at some point in his relation with Martha, their illusionary son is raised against him and Martha is using it as a weapon to obtain what she wants. Therefore, killing the child literally through a story can be analyzed as George's tactic to take revenge on Martha for all the insults and the humiliations he was faced in front of the evening guests, Nick and Honey:

[*Grabbling her hair, pulling her*] Now, you listen to me, Martha; you have had quite an evening . . . quite a night for yourself, and you can't just cut it off whenever you've got enough blood in your mouth. We are going on, and I'm going to have at you, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant, pull yourself together! I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, I want you up for it. (*Who's Afraid* 111)

Removing the illusionary child by George has been studied in a feminist point of view. In an article, "In the Bosom of the Family: Evasion in Edward Albee," Rachel Blau Duplessis explores the death of the son as being George's final access to the stereotypical male-dominant position in the marriage. (90) Killing the son destroys the emasculating characteristics of Martha in the end. This shows that the humiliated, defeated George appears stronger than the brutal, anger, emasculating woman, Martha. George through his creative linguistic strategy can solve family problems. Albee offers that the family problems can be solved not by the sources outside the family but "by further regulating the family relations in a highly normative manner, the man is returned to his position of mastery, and dominance over a subordinate, dependent woman by exorcising all challengers" (Duplessis 1972:90). Thus, verbal element helps the father to return to the center of family, and the wife goes back to the stereotypical woman that is supporting and accepting her husband's behavior.

It must be mentioned that the sacrifice of the imaginary son can be taken as a religious ritual and symbol in the play. Comparing the imaginary son to "poor lamb," and killing the son that takes place early on Sunday morning are Catholic symbols in the play. The imaginary child can be seen as a Christ figure that is being sacrificed during the Mass of The Dead by George. The child almost has been worshiped and given a sacred position by Martha and George. Martha considers the child as a savior. Thomas Porter about the fantasy son claims "Martha does see the child as savior and a medium of reconciliation and redemption in a hostile universe" (244). It can be said that the son is the source of reunion, and it is the sacrifice of the son brings salvation and purification to his parents in the same way Jesus did for the sake of humanity.

3.4. Linguistic Techniques for Power Struggle: Turn-Taking

Dialogues and conversations are defined as verbal interchange of thought between two or more participant. Analysis of dramatic dialogue includes a consideration of how the characters of a play negotiate their 'verbal interchange,' thus giving rise to the term of 'turn': "when a speaker speaks, he or she takes turns at speech and as speech alternates, turns alternate as well" (Herman 19). In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha and George use turn-taking to "exercise the level of interactional control and power required to win the verbal games" (King 205). It can be said that participants in a play or real conversation try to take longer turns to "block access to the floor for other potential speakers" (Herman 21). Thus, the everyday conversation is somehow asymmetry that indicates one speaker's dominance over the other.

In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha and George violate the rules of turn-taking system to gain conversational dominance and win the verbal battles. Their use of alternating turn taking is to dominate each other. According to Rachel King's idea, "exercising control over turn-taking in conversation is therefore central to George's and Martha's struggle for dominance" (207). Therefore, if someone wants to win or defeat in a game he/she has to be successful and aware of verbal mastery. Throughout the play, there are many turn changes between Martha and George but the longest one is the end of Act I that contains 34 turn-takings, "measured in terms of the number of words spoken by each participant, out of the total 498 words of the extract, Martha speaks 331, or 67%. In contrast, George only speaks 131 or 26% of the words" (Itacura 1862). The extract (quoted below) shows that Martha practices quantitative conversational dominance in the exchange. Despite the difference between each character's spoken words, but the number of turns George and Martha take are nearly equal: George (15) and Martha (16). On the equality of the number of turns Rachel King in her article "Power, Struggle, and Control: An Analysis of turn-taking

in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* suggests "while an equal number of turns suggests that the power between participants is similarly equal, examination of turn-allocation strategies and the texture of the turns reveals how quantitative dominance is central to Martha's ploy for authority" (208). It shows that the number of words and the intensity of the verbal use is an important aspect of domination in a conversation rather than the number of turn exchange between the participants.

If the turn-takings in the following exchange analyzed and the intention of the verbal mastery interpreted the domination and control become clear. After Turn 20, the distinction in turn-size obviously appears when Martha insists on humiliating George after he has publicly warned her against doing so, "I warn you." Rachel King offers more about the Martha's quantitative dominance:

In contempt of George's attempt to control her speech, Martha tries, and succeeds in inciting George's temper 'you get angry, baby? Hunh? You getting angrier?' by increasing the amount and strength of the threats to George's positive face, that is, his positive self-image. The increase in face threatening acts results in an increase in turn length and thus contributes to her quantitative dominance. (208)

In his turns, George three times repeats explicitly "I warn you" which has 'illocutionary force' (Austin 71) of issuing a warning, he attempts to oppress his power over Martha to block her from speaking on "the other business." Initially, George looks like a successful one, but Martha asserts the "achievements of a perlocutionary object" (Austin 71) as she replies George victoriously "I stand warned." According to Zwagerman even after George's warn Martha is still in control of George "however, she then continues as before "so, anyway . . . , "refusing to endorse his authority and demonstrating the actual impotent of George's speech act" (107). Furthermore, even George's inform to warn Martha itself a sign of

powerlessness in front of her. As Austin observes "George's performative is therefore an unhappy one, a failure that illuminates his lack of interactional power." Apart from that, even anger in conversation sometimes becomes a weak point for its owner and a strong point to the other participant as Zwagerman suggests " moreover, his anger ("it's going to make me angry") is itself 'unhappy,' since one cannot threaten to bring about a state of affairs already in play" (108). Relatively, throughout the exchange George's speech act keeps on failing, Martha succeeds in ignoring his requests though he uses metalanguage "I said stop, Martha, I said don't" to "emphasize the speech acts and to attempt to endow them with power and authority" (King 28). However, George takes refuge to physical violence to dominate Martha; he "breaks a bottle against the portable bar" but his efforts undermined by Martha. Through his aggressive action, George tries to control the situation and assert his individual power that Martha has turned him out of control. In addition, about the physical rebellion that George performs Rachel King expresses it:

However, any interactional authority that he may have gained by this act of physical rebellion – which is manifested in the 'silence' that follows - is immediately undermined, firstly by his discernible distress ('almost crying') and then by Martha's disdainful response: "I hope that was an empty bottle, George. You don't want to waste good liquor...not on your salary" Not only does Martha yet again ignore George's attempt to get her to 'stop' the verbal abuse, but she uses the smashing of the bottle as cannon fodder to fuel her self-selected turn - another attack on his positive face and assert her own power over her husband.(208)

Act I, "Fun and Games," p.44-46. (The extract of the above-analyzed turn-taking)

MARTHA: That I am. So, I actually fell for him. And the match seemed...practical too.

You know, Daddy was looking for someone to...

GEORGE: Just a minute, Martha...

MARTHA: ...take over, some time, when he was ready to...

GEORGE [*stony*]: Just a minute, Martha...

MARTHA: ...retire, and so I thought...

GEORGE: STOP IT, MARTHA!

MARTHA [*irritated*]: Whadda you want?

GEORGE [*too patiently*]: I'd thought you were telling the story of our courtship, Martha...I didn't know you were going to start in on the other business.

MARTHA [*so-thereish*]: Well, I am!

GEORGE: I wouldn't, if I were you.

MARTHA: Oh...you wouldn't? Well, you're not!

GEORGE: Now, you've already sprung a leak about you-know-what...

MARTHA [*a duck*]: What? What?

GEORGE: ...about the apple of our eye...the sprout...the little bugger... [*Spits it out*] ...our son... and if you start on this other business, I warn you, Martha, it's going to make me angry.

MARTHA [*laughing at him*]: Oh, it is, is it?

GEORGE: I warn you.

MARTHA [*incredulous*]: You what?

GEORGE [*very quietly*]: I warn you.

NICK: Do you really think we have to go through...?

MARTHA: I stand warned! [*Pause...then, to HONEY and NICK*] So, anyway, I married the S.O.B., and I had it all planned out...He was the groom...he was going to be groomed. He'd take over some day...first he'd take over the History Department, and then, when Daddy retired, he'd take over the college... you know? That's the way it was

supposed to be. [*To GEORGE, who is at the portable bar with his back to her*] You getting angry, baby? Hunh? [*Now back*] That's the way it was supposed to be. Very simple. And Daddy seemed to think it was a pretty good idea, too. For a while. Until he watched for a couple of years! [*To GEORGE again*] You getting angrier? [*Now back*] Until he watched for a couple of years and started thinking maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all...that maybe Georgie-boy didn't have the stuff...that he didn't have it in him!

GEORGE [*still with his back to them all*]: Stop it, Martha.

MARTHA [*viciously triumphant*]: The hell I will! You see, George didn't have much...push...he wasn't particularly aggressive. In fact he was sort of a... [*Spits the word at GEORGE'S back*]...a FLOP! A great...big...fat...FLOP! [*CRASH! Immediately after FLOP! GEORGE breaks a bottle against the portable bar and stands there, still with his back to them all, holding the remains of the bottle by the neck. There is a silence, with everyone frozen. Then...*]

GEORGE [*almost crying*]: I said stop, Martha.

MARTHA [*after considering what course to take*]: I hope that was an empty bottle, George. You don't want to waste good liquor...not on your salary. [*GEORGE drops the broken bottle on the floor, not moving.*]

The above exchange shows that even though the number of turns Martha and George take are almost equal, but Martha can dominate and overpower George. Martha cleverly changes and raises new and different topics to breakdown George verbally. She uses her verbal mastery to deprive George from protecting himself. The final lines of the extract show that while George is defeated verbally, he uses physical reaction "breaking a bottle" to balance the situation.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Similarities and Differences

4.1. European Absurdist Drama vs. American Modern Drama

Absurd drama has always been classified as a European movement, but many American playwrights followed many of the same subject matter and motifs present in Theatre of the Absurd through different cultural and ideological perspective. While the Theatre of the Absurd is recognized by presenting illusions of the world of individuals live in, American Modern drama at this time is equally interested in how social and ideological structure affect individual's lives. As the texts in this thesis belong to European and American drama, making a comparison to indicate the similarities and differences of the two schools is necessary. The American playwright uses absurdist techniques to express ideological and social concerns; on the contrary, the European playwright uses the Absurd to reveal ontological and the existence of human condition. For example, in *Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee explores socially constructed ideology of motherhood, childlessness, failure and success in the eyes of society and criticizes the imprisonment of individuals within social norms, but Pinter's *The Birthday Party* reveals the uncertainty of human condition, and the ambiguity of human identity through the main character, Stanley. He has forgotten his past memory; he is living in uncertainty without any help, and he is collapsed and taken away by unknown forces, Goldberg and McCann.

One of the similarities between 'American and European Drama' is the use of violence among the characters but on two different bases. In American drama, the source of violence is the result of family struggle, and economy status. For instance, George's and Martha's infertility to have a

child in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* leads them to live in a verbal battle for twenty years; in addition, the struggle between George and Nick to take the head of one of the colleges comes from an economic and career background. Unlike American Drama, European Absurdist Drama depicts violence among characters from an existential point of view. The characters in European Absurdist drama struggle and use violence to find a meaningful understanding for their existence. This feature can be seen in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett's characters struggle and use violence for their own identities or against the situations in which they find themselves hopeless. For instance in *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon and Vladimir fight against their surroundings; they are even forced to attempt suicide in the purpose of establishing their identity but eventually they fail.

4.2. Edward Albee vs. Harold Pinter

As a major figure of American post war playwright, Albee is recognized by its social, surreal, existential, and realist plays; he has followed the European Absurd Drama and shaped it in an American version. Albee's early plays contain the European Absurdist elements; once he was asked his favorite playwrights; he replied 'Beckett, Gent, and Ionesco.' It must be mentioned that Albee never admitted that he categorized himself to be a member of the wave of the Theatre of the Absurd. Albee's works reveal a various stylistic diversity due to using a great number of traditions and influences. It is true that like the European absurdist Albee dramatizes the human condition, but he never skip the opportunity to criticize American social norms. Thus, it can be said that following Beckett's point of view in dealing with human existence, Albee is a social critic; he tries to build social change and reform. Throughout his plays, Albee urges individuals for self-awareness. For example, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by removing the illusion of the imaginary son, he suggests that, reunion of family, life without illusion, and change is possible.

Similar to Albee, who is considered a pioneer of American Modern Drama, Pinter, too, as a member of the second generation of the Theatre of the Absurd in Britain has contributed many masterpieces to British theatre, "he may be considered the most challenging contemporary British dramatist who revolutionized our understanding of the theatre" (Pandey, 19). Pinter produced his distinctive dramatic style both in themes and techniques. Pinter's plays are famous for their use of understatement to reveal characters' thoughts and inner feelings. His characters seek to and question their identities and ambiguous existence, "the absurdity used by Pinter can sometimes be funny and we can laugh at it, but his idea is to reflect how people felt in their own realities" (Saraci 384). Pinter in his plays depicts the sense of anguish, terror and menace. Pinter's works emphasize on the struggle for power either within human being, or between individuals through linguistic techniques.

One of the dramatic techniques that differentiate Pinter from the other playwrights is his characters' use of words as weapons to avoid being hurt and not to reveal the past. It can be said that Pinter's dramatic dialogue is an innovation in modern drama. In addition, Pinter's dramatic dialogue is based on daily speech. Pinter's power in reproducing dialogue is outstanding and this has made his dialogues more realistic. Furthermore, pause and silence are also two important features of Pinter's drama. Pinter introduced pause and silence for the first time to modern drama. Manfred Fister argues "pauses whether in dialogue or in between the dialogues, indicates a disintegration in relationship, the imprisonment of characters in his dramatic monologue, and inability to establish relationship with others are even to speak" (191). The use of silence by Pinter can be understood as his hopelessness of talking to solve problems, because the characters cannot express their intentions anymore through words.

It must be mentioned that a similar point between Pinter and Albee is that both of them follow Beckett in using dramatic dialogue like repetition,

cliché, verbal battle and also subject matters to address the uncertainty of the human condition and existence. Apart from common points, a difference between Albee and Pinter in characterization is that Albee's characters are specific members of social institutions; their background, motivation, family relationship, and history are revealed throughout his plays. On the other hand, Pinter's characters' backgrounds are not revealed; no information is given on their history and psychological motivation.

CONCLUSION

The main concern of this thesis is the analysis of expressions of dramatic dialogue as a means of power. Language plays a vital role in power struggles among individuals in drama and real world. Consequently, the thesis has provided and summarized some theories of power and its relation to language. Relatively, the paper referred to Foucault's theory of power-language relationship as the major theoretical background of this study. Moreover, since the selected texts concern with "Absurd Drama" in terms of dramatic dialogue, therefore this paper has given a general introduction to the Theatre of the Absurd. The thesis defined the term "Absurd" in a philosophical and existential view. It pointed out the main characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd as characterization, form, subject matters and then it compared them to the characteristics of conventional theatre.

As the father of traditional Absurd drama, the paper described Beckett's absurdist elements and then the paper explored Beckett's influence on the playwrights of the selected texts, Pinter and Albee. The paper has given a short biography of the two playwrights, Albee and Pinter. The study focused on their dramatic elements within the wave of the Theatre of the Absurd. The paper also gave a view of main events in plays, *The Birthday Party* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

After introducing the theoretical background, the Theatre of the Absurd, and the selected texts, the thesis analyzed the linguistic tactics and elements for power dominance through the lens of communication and speech act theory. The paper in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* through analyzing extracts of the play examined the linguistic strategies like interrogation, repetition, turn-taking, interruption, and raising and shifting topics for control and power dominance.

In *The Birthday Party*, the torturers use cross-examination to take over Stanley. Goldberg and McCann begin destroying Stanley by cross-

examining him at “a rapid fire pace.” Goldberg and McCann use interrogation to confuse Stanley’s past memory, to reduce him to an infantile fool, to accuse him of being guilty. By asking unrelated questions, Goldberg and McCann turn Stanley into complete breakdown; as a result, he is not able even to identify himself.

Another linguistic expression is practiced for dominance in *The Birthday Party* is repetition. During encounters and interactions characters repeat a certain word, phrase or a whole sentence either to control others or achieve the floor. Goldberg and McCann use repetition to gain power over Stanley; they repeat many questions and do not let Stanley to respond and reject their blames.

Further on, turn-taking, in *The Birthday Party*, is used to exercise power by some characters. Goldberg uses this verbal element purposely; he extends his turns to force the other characters to listen to him and follow his instructions. Goldberg takes the longest turns; whenever a character asks a question, he extends his turns in which he commands more orders.

Consequently, In *The Birthday Party*, two other linguistic tactics, interruption and changing topics are means for controlling and dominating. Goldberg, as the menace characters of the play, interrupts Stanley to control the situation and subjugates him. In addition, in *The Birthday Party*, raising and shifting topics as a trick of changing the subject of discourse is used for dominance among the characters. Goldberg raises those topics that are in his interest to dominate others. The more topics Goldberg changes the more power he takes over the other characters.

Another part of this study explored that how language purposely is used throughout Albee’s *Who’s Afraid*. The paper proved that characters use linguistic strategies to serve their own agenda. The paper gave and analyzed character’s speeches to find out that how characters dominate each other through reminding past failures and revealing secrets, verbal aggression and

sexual conversation, language use for creating story as a means of exercising power, and turn-taking.

Remanding past failures and revealing secrets is the first linguistic technique in *Who's Afraid* that is examined as a means of control and humiliation. Martha opposed to conventional woman of the era compensates her infertility by bringing up on-going failures of her husband, George. Throughout the play, Martha intentionally reveals a serious of secrets: the illusionary son, and George's personal and academic failures. To devalue George, Martha exposes that George failed to be the Head of the History Department and she talks on defeating George in the boxing match. The paper refers to exchanges among the characters to prove how Martha comments on George's academic failures and personal secrets to Nick, and she smartly utilizes them to humiliate and control George at the right time. One the other hand, George masterly takes advantage of Nick's marriage story to control, avenge and humiliate him in front of his wife, Honey.

Furthermore, the paper examined that how verbal aggression causes control or dominance among the characters. In *Who's Afraid*, the characters use aggressive language to humiliate and dominate each other. The thesis gave example in the play to show how Martha uses verbal aggression against all the others. She uses verbal aggressions to show George and Nick's sexual impotence. Martha reveals and attacks George's and Nick's sexual inability through verbal attacks; as a result, she overpowers them.

Jointly, the paper focuses on another linguistic strategy which is making stories and creating linguistic illusions for gaining psychic and emotional power. *In Who's Afraid* Martha and George create the story of the imaginary son. The paper revealed that Martha and George as a childless family depend on the fantasy son through their daily conversations so that they could survive and gain emotional power. Relatively, the paper also gave evidence on removing the imaginary son by a linguistic story. The paper considered killing the imaginary son as a response to Martha's verbal attacks

and humiliations. On the other hand, the paper showed that how George skillfully removes the illusionary son and returns his dominance over Martha. Respectively, the paper sees killing the son as a gate to reunion and accepting the realities of life.

The last linguistic tactic analyzed in *Who's Afraid* is turn-taking. The paper explained how Martha takes most turns and utters too many words in her turns. The number of words Martha says gives her the opportunity to dominate and overpower George. She uses her verbal mastery to deprive George from protecting himself.

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