

Conversational Analysis in Harold Pinter's play: The Homecoming

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المخلص :

لقد حقق الكاتب الانكليزي هارولد بنتر شهرة عالمية في كتابة المسرحية وهو يعتبر أحد أفضل كتاب المسرحية في نهاية الحرب العالمية الثانية ، لقد أتسمت مسرحياته بالكلام القليل وحتى الصمت في التعبير عن الأفكار العميقة لشخصيات المسرحية . يحتل الخطاب مكانة مهمة جداً في مسرحيات هارولد بنتر وقد يكون الخطاب هو السمة المهمة في نجاح بنتر ، لقد أتسم كلام شخصيات بنتر بعدم الترابط والتناقض الغريب الذي كان مصحوباً بالصمت المتكرر ، لقد كان كلام شخصيات بنتر وتردهم بالكلام يعبر ليس فقط عن وحدتهم أو الصعوبات التي يواجهونها في التفاهم ولكنها تبين الحالة النفسية للإنسان بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية .

تعنى هذه الدراسة بتحليل الخطاب في مسرحيات بنتر ولقد وضح البحث مكونات تحليل الخطاب

وبناءً على ذلك يكون الهدف من الدراسة هو تحليل كلام شخصيات بنتر طبقاً إلى مكونات تحليل الخطاب فضلاً عن تحديد الأسباب التي تقف وراء هذا الأسلوب الأدبي . ولقد خلص الباحث إلى جملة نتائج مهمة التي أفرزها التحليل الأسلوبي للدراسة .

Abstract :

Harold Pinter is the English playwright who achieved international renown as one of the most complex and challenging post-world war II dramatists. His plays are noted for their use of understatement. Small talk, reticence and even silence to convey the substance of character's thought, which often lies several layers beneath his speech.

Dialogue is of central importance in Pinter's plays and is perhaps the key to his originality. His characters' colloquial speech consists of disjointed and oddly ambivalent conversation that is punctuated by

resonant silence. The characters' speech , hesitation and pauses reveal not only their own alienation and the difficulties they have in communication but also the many layers of meaning that can be contained and even the most innocuous statement.

This study deals with the conversational analysis in Harold Pinter's play. The research clarifies the different types of components of the conversational analysis.

The aim of the study is to analyze the characters' speech in Harold Pinter's play according to the components of the model. Moreover, the study determines the reasons behind this analysis.

Introduction:

Conversational interaction can be described as an activity where, for the most part, two or more people take turns at speaking. Typically, only one person speaks at a time and there tends to be an avoidance of silence between speaking turns(Yule, 1988: 134).

It is worth mentioning that a conversation is characterized by turn-taking. One participant(A) talks, stops and then (B) talks, stops and so one can obtain an A,B,A,B, distribution of talks across two participants.

The aim of this study is to examine how the participants violate the rules of speaking. Such kind of conversation is used in absurd theater and ,hence, is incoherent and problematic, especially for the non-native reader.

It is hypothesized that Pinter's characters violate the rules of normal and coherent conversation. In this study, the procedure followed in this study makes use of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's model to undertake a conversational analysis of Harold Pinter's play *The Homecoming*.

1-1 Language of the Absurd Theater

Despite its reputation for nonsense language ,much of the dialogue in absurdist plays is naturalistic. The moments when characters resort to nonsense language or clichés when words appear to have lost their denotative function, thus creating misunderstanding among the characters make theater of the absurd distinctive. Language

frequently gains a certain phonetic ,rhythmical ,almost musical quality, opening up a wide range of often comedic playfulness(Esslin,1970:40).

Distinctively absurdist language will range from meaningless clichés to misunderstanding. *The Bald Soprano*, for example, was inspired by a language in which characters would exchange empty clichés that never ultimately amounted to true communication or true connection.

In other cases , the dialogue is purposefully elliptical. The language of the absurdist becomes secondary to the poetry of the concrete and objectified images of the stage. Many of Beckett's plays devalue language for the sake of the striking tableau. Harold Pinter presents more subtly elliptical dialogue, often the primary character is replaced by ellipsis or dashes. Much of the dialogue in absurdist drama (especially in Beckett's and Harold Pinter , for example reflects this kind of evasiveness and inability to make a connection(ibid:45).

1-2 Conversational Analysis and Rules for Interaction

Conversational analysis as defined by Crystal(1978:87) a term is used in linguistics and associated disciplines to refer to a method of studying the sequential and coherence of conversation usually employing the techniques of ethnomethodology. The approach studies recording of real conversations to establish what properties are used in a systematic way when people linguistically interact

Conversation is a general term that refers to a state of talk which generally proceeds so that one person talks at a time and all members in the particular group are attending the same conversation(Schglhoff,1972:4).

In the social psychological sense, conversation refers to the study of interaction between language and social behavior. Social psychologists concentrate on three main issues: 1- the segmentation of speech into appropriate units 2- the classification of these units, and the formation of rules which generate the orderly behavioral sequences which can do and can occur(ibid:7).

There are certain rules or norms which are generally abided during a conversation. These rules, usually, shape the structure of most conversation that take place. They govern who speaks, for how long and when they speak. A long side these rules are set formulae and strategies for:

- 1-Opening and closing a conversation.
- 2- Changing the subject.
- 3- Interrupting
- 4- Holding the floor and turn-taking.
- 5- Repairing conversation.

1-3 The Components of Conversational Analysis

Turn taking: is the process of alternating between speakers in a conversation. Native speakers automatically recognize opportunities to take a turn during conversation and can do this without causing misunderstanding (Roach, 2002:84).

Thornbury (2005:8) suggests that there are two main rules for turn-taking:

- 1- Long silences are to be avoided.
- 2- Listen when other speakers are speaking.

Turn-taking in conversation occurs through nomination by the speaker or by self selecting by the new speaker. The strategies needed to adhere to the rules of turn-taking include:

- 1- Recognizing when to take a turn.
- 2- Signaling that you want to speak and interrupting.
- 3- Holding the floor during your turn.
- 4- Recognizing when others want to speak.
- 5- Yielding a turn.
- 6- Signaling that you are listening (ibid:9).

1-4 Adjacency Pairs

A kind of paired utterances of which question-answer, greeting-greeting, offer- acceptance, apology- minimization are prototypical (Levinson, 1983: 303).

Adjacency pairs system is considered to be a fundamental unit of conversational organization to the degree that they are deeply interrelated with turn-taking system as techniques for selecting a next speaker (ibid:304).

Sequential order in conversation is realized especially through the concept of adjacency pairs which consist of a set of sequences (Gees, 1995: 191).

The term "sequence" refers to the events that occur as a serial unit which belong together and follow one another. They do just happen to occur one after another (Jefferson, 1972:304). Consequently, sequences in adjacency pairs have the following features or structural regularities:

- 1- They are adjacent.
- 2- They are two utterances.
- 3- They are produced as a first part and second part.
- 4- They are produced by different speakers.
- 5- They are types, i.e. a particular first part requires a particular second

1-5 Preference Organization System

Preference organization system is a structuring system wherein utterances can be classified into preferred and dispreferred categories on the basis of structural format (Levinson, 1983:333).

Preference is not intended as a psychological concept, but rather as a technical means of referring to sequence and turn-organizational features of conversation and to describe the systematic features of the design of turns in which certain alternative but non-equivalent actions under the preferred and dispreferred distinction.

The same opinion is adopted by Levinson who states that preference is not a psychological notion in the sense that it does not refer to speaker's or hearer's individual preferences. Rather it is a structural notion that corresponds closely to the linguistic concept of "markedness".

In essence, preferred seconds are unmarked and dispreferred seconds are marked by various kinds of structural complexity.

Preference organization system is classified into three parts:

- Acceptance(preferred)
 - Offer[
 - Refusal (dispreferred)
 - Denial (preferred)
 - Accusation{
 - Admission (dispreferred)
 - Expected answer(preferred)
 - Question {
 - Unexpected answer(dispreferred)
- (ibid:108)

1-6 Inserted Sequences

Schegloff(1972:45) calls these embedded pairs insertion sequences, because the speaker doesn't understand ,or because he doesn't want to commit himself until he knows more, or because he is simply stalling ,a next speaker produces not a second pair but another first pair part. For example:

H----	Why do you stay with me?	Q
C-----	Why do you keep me?	Qi
H-----	There is no one else.	Ai
C-----	There is no one else.	

(Q and A) means question and answer while (Qi and Ai) means inserted question and answer.

Insertion sequences occur between two parts of an utterance pair,i.e. between two utterances the second of which is' conditionally relevant given the occurrence of the first(Schegloff,1972:106).

There are two main types of insertion sequences :

1-Schegloff's (1972) insertion sequences of the form {Q, Qi, Ai , A}

2-Jefferson's misapprehension sequence: it has four part structures, consisting of a statement , misapprehension, clarification and termination for the conversation.

There are suggestions of mixing the first and third types to get these forms(Q, Misapprehension, clarification, Termination and A).Or (Q, Qi, Ai, Termination, and A).

1-7 Topic and Topic Change

Sacks(1968:54) stresses, talking topically and talking about some topic chosen by another speaker is not the same thing at all. One can perfectly well have Q sequence in which successive speakers talk in a way topically coherent with the last utterance, but in which each speaker talks on a different topic.

Some topics are not relevant to a particular conversation because it is a general rule about conversation that is your business not to tell people what you can suppose they knew, and the suitability of other topics depends on the person one talking to(ibid:57).

There are two points that one has to take into consideration when dealing with conversational discourse. *First*, topics are not fixed beforehand, but are negotiated in the process of conversation. Throughout a conversation, the next topic of conversation is developing. Each speaker contributes to the conversation in terms of both the existing topic framework and his personal topic(Dijk,1993:202).

Second, personal topics are frequently introduced through first person reference in one form or another.

In a conversation a new topic may be introduced:-

- 1- After a pause
- 2- After specific boundary or linking signals.

Topic can change through a conversation and there are topic change members at the beginning of new episodes:

- 1- Change of possible word.
- 2- Change of time period.
- 3- Change of place.
- 4- Introduced new participants.

1-8 Pre- Closing and Closing Sequence

Linguists who study conversational speech agree that bringing conversation to an end is usually done by the use of possible pre-closings and closings. Possible pre-closing indicate that a speaker has nothing more to add to the topic and he is willing to close the conversation. They indicate expressions like "alright" "okay" , "so" , anyway(Levinson,1993:317).

To close a conversation ,it is important to determine precisely where closing signals begin. Pre- closing signals such as "well" , "so" and "okay" used with falling intonation are among the signals given by each participants when she or he is ready to close the communication channel. A number of researchers have noted that "thanking" plays an important role in closing conversation. This view is also implicit in conversational analysis of closing procedures, which treat "thanking" as one of a series of action which potentially enable participants to terminate a conversation or wind up part of it.

It seems that closing a conversation is complicated and more elaborated than opening.. It is more complicated since bringing a conversation to an end must be done by coordinated activities of participants, thus a conversation is the process where one speaker's completion will not occasion another speaker's talk and will be regarded as speaker's silence.

Closing is elaborated since the social bonds effected or reinforced by the discourse as it has developed must be temporarily served without hurt to any party involved. Thus, characteristically, speakers signal to one another that they ought to come to an end(ibid:318).

1-9 The Model Adopted and Text Analysis

The selected Model:

The selected model is Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's model , because this model is the most suitable model for this analysis, but this model needs some addition which will make it fit or more suitable for the analysis of dramatic texts.

Topic and Topic Change.

This addition is taken from Coulthard's model. This addition is for making the analysis more suitable and more accurate for the dramatic analysis.

The main components of the adopted model are the following:

- 1- Turn- taking.
- 2- Adjacency Pair.
- 3- Preference Organization.
- 4- Insertion Sequences.
- 5- Pre-Closing and Closing Sequences.
- 6- Topic and Topic Change.

Conversational analysis of "The Homecoming"

2-1 Turn-Taking: is the process of alternating between speakers or participants in conversation.

Text(1): Teddy: Hullo-----Dad-----We overslept.

Pause. adopted model

What is for breakfast?

Silence.

Teddy: We overslept.

Max: Did you know he was here?

Sam: No

Max : Did you know he was here?

I asked you if you know he was here?

Sam: NO.

Max: Then who knew?

Pause.

Who knew?

Pause.

The Analysis

It is obvious here that the conversation can be continuous or discontinuous. The turn may be one word or more than one word. Silence in this conversation means that a speaker has nothing to say. Interruption may occur in certain cases because of the absence of sentence completion.

Text(2): Sam : How could he speak if he was dead?

Max: Before he died, Sam, just before. They were his last words. His last sacred words, Sammy. A split second after he said those words---- he was a dead man . you think I'm joking? You think when my father spoke on his death bed.

The Analysis

This proves also that talks can be continuous or discontinuous. This is because that turns vary in length from one word turns to more than two paragraphs turns.

Text(3): Sam: What?

Max: What are you doing in here.

Sam: Washing up.

Max: What else?

Sam: Getting rid of your leavings

Max. Right in.

The Analysis

As it clear from the above example, speaker-change recurs. Each character keeps his turn even by one word sentence.

Table (1) Turn-taking Elements and their Occurrence

Types	Frequency of Occurrence	Causes
Long turns (more than three sentences)	8	To pass time
One word turns	30	To keep the turn
Short turns (less than three sentences)	20	To exchange information
Pauses after turns	80	Sometimes to change topics

2-2 Adjacency Pairs

A kind of paired utterances of which question-answer, greeting-greeting, offer-acceptance and apology are prototypical.

Text(4):Lenny: Hullo, Uncle Sam. (greeting)
 Sam : Hullo. (greeting)
 Lenny: How are you, Uncle?
 Sam: Not bad. A bit tired.
 Lenny: Tired? I bet you are tired. Where have you been?
 (question)
 Sam: I have been to London Airport. (answer)

Text(5) Sam: I will give you nothing more to eat. (Offer)
 Max : Then we will be die. (acceptance)

Text(6): Max: would you give me the sheet. (request)
 Sam: Yes. Uncle Sam. (acceptance)

Text(7): Max: Have you not had enough? (question)
 Sam: Yes(pause) of what? (question repeat)
 Max: Of this---this ----thing. (repetition)

Table (2) Adjacency Pairs.Types and their Occurrences

Types	Frequency of occurrences	Causes
Question- answer	20	To get information
Request- accept or refuse	30	To make the listener do something
Offer- accept or refuse	6	To encourage the listener to do or say something

2-3 Preference Organization

Preference Organization system is a structuring system where utterances can be classified into preferred and dispreferred categories on the basis of structural formal(Levinson,1983:333).

Text(8): Max: Kiss me (pause) Will you not kiss me?
 (question)
 Sam : NO (refusal) (dispreferred)

Max: On the forehead. (request)

Sam : I will not kiss you anywhere
(refusal)(dispreferred)

Text(9): Ruth : I 'd like something to eat. I'd like a drink. Did you
get

any drink? (request)

Lenny: We have got drink. (refusal) (dispreferred)

Ruth: I'd like one, please. (request)

Lenny: What drink ? (question)

Ruth: Whisky.

Lenny: I've got it. (refusal) (dispreferred)

Text(10) Lenny: Where is the money going to come from?
(question)

Max: Well, how much is she worth? What we talking about,
three figures. (misapprehension to expresses refusal)

Lenny: I asked you where the money is going to come
from. (repetition)

Max: I don't know. (refusal) (dispreferred)

Text(11): Sam: Is he her lawful husband? (question)

Max: Yes (preferred)

Table(3) Preference Organization System and their Occurrences

Types	Frequency of Occurrence	Causes
Preferred second	3	Acceptance of the offer, or , order , or question.
Dispreferred second with pause as delay signal	20	Refuse to do or don't accept offer or request.

2-4 Insertion Sequences

Insertion sequences occur between two parts of an utterance pair, i.e. between two utterances the second of which is conditionally relevant given the occurrence of the first (Schegloff, 1972: 106).

In the inserted sequences analysis, there are two main types of insertion sequences: 1-Schegloff's insertion sequences of the form { Q, Qi, Ai, A } 2- Jefferson's Misapprehension sequence. It has a four part structure, consisting of a statement, misapprehension, clarification and termination for the conversation.

Text(12): Max – Why do you stay with me ? Q
 Sam : Why do you keep me ? Qi
 Max : There is no one else. Ai
 Sam: There is nowhere else. A

It is clear this is Schegloff's insertion sequences. The suggestion here is if you answer my question, I will answer yours.

Text(13): Lenny: I am going out . I am going out to buy myself a proper dinner. (Statement)

Max : What did you say? (Misapprehension)
 Lenny: You will go before me.(Clarification)
 Max : I will.(Termination)

In the text (13) above it is Jefferson's misapprehension sequences. This happens when there is something unclear and needs clarification.

Text(14) : Max: Would you give me the oilcan? (request)
 :Sam : What for? (Misapprehension)
 : Max : To oil the castors (Clarification)
 : Sam: I oiled them yesterday (Termination)

In this example, there is Jefferson's misapprehension sequences of oiling something which has been oiled before. So the action has been done and no need to do it again.

Text(15): Max: That is my father's chair. (Statement)
 Sam: That one? (Misapprehension)
 Max: Yes, that is it . Shall I go up and see if my room is
 still there? (Clarification)
 Sam: It cant have moved. (Termination)

Table(4) Insertion Sequences and their Occurrences.

Types	Frequency of occurrences	Causes
Schegloff's Insertion sequences	1	If you answer my question I will answer yours
Jefferson's Misapprehension sequences	3	To clarify something unclear

2-5 Pre-Closing and Closing Sequences

To close a conversation it is not always easy to determine precisely where closing signals begin. Pre -closing signals such as "well" "so" and "okay" used with falling intonation are among the signals given by each.

Text(16): Teddy: Have you got a clock in your room?
 Lenny: Yes.
 Teddy: Maybe it is the clock.
 Lenny: Yes, could be ,I suppose.
 Pause
 Well, if it is the clock I'd better do something about it.

The analysis

Pinter uses " well" as possible pre-closing a conversation after a pause.

This makes the speakers don't know where the conversation will be closed. For this, the silence or pauses are the expected thing to be found because the transition relevance places are unknown for the speakers.

Text(17): Max: Sit on it.

Teddy: I can't sit.

Max: So it is.

The Analysis

Pinter uses "so" as possible pre-closing a conversation. In this conversation the speaker uses "so" because he knows where the conversation should be ended.

Text(18): Ruth: I think I'll have a breath of air

Teddy: Air ?

Pause

What do you mean

Ruth: Just a stroll.

Teddy : At this time of night ? But we ---- have -only just.got here. We have got to go to bed.

Ruth: I just feel like some air.

Teddy: But Iam going to bed.

Ruth: That is all right.

The Analysis

Pinter in this text uses the phrase {" all right"} to close the conversation.

Table (5) Pre-closing and Closing Sequences

Types	Frequency of Occurrences	Causes
Pre- closing devices	3	To close conversation
Closing sequences		Absence of closing sequences

2-6 Topic and Topic Change.

Sacks et al.(1992:319) clarify that if a speaker or listener wants to change the topic there are certain phrases that can be used ,such as : that reminds me-----, By the way ----, I am sorry but can we change the subject.

Text(19): Ruth: What is there to keep me here?

Teddy: The dialogue ,I have got on with my story

Ruth: Oh, by the way, your story?

Teddy : Surprised what story?

The Analysis (57)

The use of " by the way " is a desire to change the topic to another one.

Text(20) Ruth: Apart from that, don't you like your family?

Teddy: Which family?

Ruth: Your family here.

Teddy: Of course I like them. What are you talking about?

The Analysis

Pinter uses the phrase " apart from that " as a device for topic change besides he uses the sentence " What are you talking about" as misapprehension from the listener to close the conversation and begin a new topic.

Text(21): Teddy: I was born near here.

Pause

Then ---- six years ago, I went to America.

Pause

It is all rock . And sand. It stretches ----- so far ----

every where you look. And there is lots of insects there.

Pause

The Analysis

Pinter uses pauses as the only devices for topic change. Participants don't know where the conversation will be closed. This

will arouse confusion about where the topic will begin and where the topic will end.

Table (6) Topic and Topic Change

Types	Frequency of Occurrences	Causes
Pre-topic change devices	2	Ordinary closing of the topic
Topic change devices (pauses signal)	20	Pauses are used to change the topic

Table (7) A breakdown of Conversational Analysis Occurrences in *The Homecoming*

Component of the model	Frequency of Occurrences	Types	Causes
Adjacency Pairs	80	Mostly question-answer or request or acceptance and refusal	To get information or to pass turns in a conversation
Preference organization	30	Preferred and dispreferred seconds	To expect acceptance or refusal of something
Inserted sequences	4	Scheagloof's insertion sequences or Jefferson's misapprehension sequences	To clarify or answering under condition
Pre-closing and closing sequences	3	Possible pre-closing	To close a topic
Topic and topic change	20	Pre-topic change (topic change (pause signal)	To change a topic
Turn-taking	137	Different types	conversation

Conclusion

It is worth mentioning that Pinter's characters colloquial speech consists of disjointed and oddly ambivalent conversation that is punctuated by resonant silences.

The character's speech, hesitation, and pauses reveal not only their own alienation and the difficulties they have in communication but also the many layers of meaning that can be contained even in the most innocuous statements.

Mostly, Pinter presents elliptical dialogue ,often, the primary character is replaced by ellipsis or dashes.

In such a case, much of the dialogue in Pinter's play *The Homecoming*, presents some kind of evasiveness and inability to make a connection.

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