

## **Communicative Dynamism in Translation: A Study of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* \***

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the challenges of translating the thematic structure of samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* from English into Arabic. The primary aim is to assess the accuracy, acceptability, and effectiveness of rendering the thematic structures in the translated version of the play. The analytical framework adopted for this study is Firbas's (1992) model of communicative dynamism, complemented by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) for comparative analysis. The data analyzed are drawn from the first act of the play. The findings reveal significant differences in thematic structures between the original text and its Arabic translation, particularly in terms of theme types and their linguistic realizations. These discrepancies are attributed to variations in communicative dynamism between the two languages.

**Keywords:** communicative dynamism, thematic structure, drama translation, Systemic Functional Linguistics.

**Received: 08/12/2025**

**Accepted: 06/03/2025**

## تقييم ترجمة الوثائق القانونية التجارية من محكمة الاستئناف في البصرة

الباحثة وداد عبد الحليم دهر  
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### المستخلص

تناول هذه الدراسة التحديات المرتبطة بترجمة البنية الموضوعية في مسرحية في انتظار غودو لصمويل بيكيت من الإنجليزية إلى العربية. يهدف البحث إلى تقييم مدى دقة وقبول وفعالية نقل البنى الموضوعية في النسخة المترجمة من المسرحية. يعتمد الإطار التحليلي لهذه الدراسة على نموذج الدينامية التواصلية لفيرياس (١٩٩٢)، إلى جانب علم اللغويات الوظيفي النظامي لهاليداي كأداة للتحليل المقارن. تستند البيانات التي تم تحليلها إلى الفصل الأول من المسرحية. وقد كشفت النتائج عن وجود فروق جوهرية في البنية الموضوعية بين النص الأصلي والترجمة العربية، لا سيما فيما يتعلق بأنواع الموضوعات وتجلياتها اللغوية. تُعزى هذه الفروقات إلى الاختلافات في الدينامية التواصلية بين اللغتين.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** الدينامية التواصلية، البنية الموضوعية، ترجمة الدراما، علم اللغويات الوظيفي النظامي .

تاريخ القبول: ٢٠٢٥/٠٣/٠٦

تاريخ الاستلام: ٢٠٢٥/١٢/٠٨

### 1.Introduction

Translating literary works is a complex and nuanced process, particularly when the source material is layered with intricate thematic structures that transcend cultural boundaries. This paper examines the unique challenges associated with translating Samuel Beckett's *waiting for Godot* from English into Arabic, with a specific focus on Paul Chaoul's translation. Known for its minimalistic style and absurdist perspective, Beckett's play employs sparse dialogue, repetitive motifs, and profound philosophical depth to explore existential themes, human futility, and the search for meaning (Esslin, 1961; Pilling, 1994). Translating such a work requires more than a word-for-word substitution; it demands a nuanced engagement with Beckett's artistic vision to preserve both the linguistic and cultural essence of the original text while making it accessible to Arabic-speaking audiences.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett uses language as a tool that shifts between expression and silence, making words a medium that conceals as much as it reveals. In *Waiting for Godot*, language operates not only as a communicative tool but also as a narrative device, embodying existential uncertainty and the human struggle with meaning. Rhythmic pauses, hesitations, and silences are as significant as the dialogue itself, creating an ambiguous atmosphere that mirrors the existential inertia experienced by the characters (Connor, 2004). Translating these aspects of Beckett's work necessitates an understanding of how silence and absence shape meaning and influence audience perception. For Chaoul, this involves navigating the structural and cultural differences between English and Arabic to retain the play's existential tone (Baker, 2018).

Beckett's original text relies heavily on stylistic devices such as repetition, counterpoint and contradictions, which reinforce the play's central themes of absurdity and existentialism. These elements shape the unique tonal and rhythmic qualities of *Waiting for Godot*, presenting significant challenges for Chaoul, who must balance the preservation of Beckett's intended atmosphere with the need to adapt the text for the Arabic linguistic context. Additionally, phonetic and syntactic differences between English and Arabic affect how wordplay, tonal shifts, and stylistic nuances are perceived, often requiring creative adaptation to maintain thematic consistency. For example, linguistic

features such as alliteration or puns may not have direct equivalents in Arabic, necessitating a focus on conveying meaning rather than literal form (Bassnett, 2013).

#### Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to evaluate how effectively Chaoul's translation captures the thematic depth and existential essence of Beckett's work while analyzing how the translator's adaptations reshape the play for an Arabic-speaking audience. Through a detailed examination of Chaoul's translation strategies, this paper will assess the extent to which the translation maintains the delicate balance between silence and speech, humor and despair, enabling Arabic readers to engage with Beckett's philosophical questions while acknowledging the inevitable tonal and experiential shifts that occur during the translation process.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the thematic analysis of Paul Chaoul's Arabic translation of *Waiting for Godot*. Other Arabic translations, as well as performance-based interpretations, are not included in the scope of this research. While this study provides insights into thematic shifts and linguistic adaptations, further research could explore additional translations and cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive perspective.

#### Research Questions

This study addresses two main research questions:

- (1) What are the characteristics of the thematic structures in *Beckett's Waiting for Godot* and in Paul Chaoul's Arabic translation?
- (2) To what extent does the translator succeed in rendering these thematic structures in his version?

#### 2. Literature Review

This literature review examines the application of Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) and Communicative Dynamism (CD) in translation and discourse analysis. FSP, initially introduced by Mathesius (1929) and later developed by Firbas (1992), investigates how theme-rheme structures contribute to effective communication. Halliday's (1985) theory complements FSP by analyzing the position and function of themes and rhemes within sentences to convey meaning. These theoretical frameworks are fundamental to translation studies,

particularly in contexts of literary and intercultural communication, where shifts in thematic structures can impact meaning. Studies in the field highlight how thematic structures influence the translation process, with particular challenges noted in Arabic-English translations and in dramatic texts like *Waiting for Godot*. Additionally, research explores how thematic shifts affect other genres, such as journalistic writing, cultural identity, and cross-linguistic discourse.

Salih (2008) explores FSP's focus on both grammatical structure and the information-bearing capacity of communication, examining how unmarked theme-rheme sequences in English contribute to dynamic meaning. Salih also addresses thematic ties beyond individual sentences, offering insights into how thematic structures operate within broader discourse. Similarly, Habeeb (2007) applies Firbas's CD theory and Halliday's theme-rheme framework to compare English and Arabic sentence structures, analyzing how elements within sentences convey "Given" and "New" information. His findings reveal that English and Arabic employ theme-rheme structures differently, reflecting distinct communicative strategies in each language.

Hladky (2003) emphasizes the significance of FSP in translation theory and literary analysis. His study on thematic functions in *Les Misérables* highlights that effective translation extends beyond word-level correspondences, demonstrating the importance of thematic functions in preserving meaning. Al-Azzawy (2006) applies FSP theory to a comparison of English and Arabic texts, identifying both thematic similarities and cultural differences that complicate achieving functional equivalence in translation. Yu (2021) examines cross-cultural communication strategies in translation, illustrating how translators manipulate theme-rheme structures to align with the communicative intent of different cultures, while emphasizing the role of cultural nuances in translation strategies.

Several studies have examined the translation of *Waiting for Godot*, including those by

Rohman et al. (2019) and Soliman (2021), further highlight the complexities of translating absurdist theatre. Rohman et al. assess translations of *Waiting for Godot* into multiple languages, emphasizing the need for thematic reliability to maintain the play's core themes.

Soliman, meanwhile, examines the adaptation of theme-rheme structures to enhance performability in Arabic translations, exploring the unique challenges of translating Beckett's dialogue-heavy, minimalist play into a different linguistic context.

Chtioui (2023) addresses similar concerns, analyzing how meaning shifts in Arabic translation of *Waiting for Godot* impact the absurdist themes and linguistic nuances of the original.

Additional studies in this area underscore the multi-layered nature of translation as a process.

Torop (2012) emphasizes translation as both intersemiotic and intralinguistic, discussing how translators' choices impact thematic consistency. His work reveals how maintaining or altering thematic structures affects the delivery of meaning across texts.

Reda (2018) similarly investigates FSP discrepancies in the translation of Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*, showing how altered thematic structures affect the way meaning is conveyed in Czech translations.

Mukhemar (2019) investigates the translation of nonverbal signs in *Waiting for Godot* into Arabic, with a specific focus on Fayez Iskandar's translation. The study examines the semiotics of the play and their thematic relevance, assessing how well the translation maintains the original's dysfunctional nonverbal system and incongruous relations. Mukhemar highlights the importance of preserving the semiotic functions to ensure the integrity of the play's absurdist elements in translation.

Chtioui (2023) analyzes the Arabic translation of *Waiting for Godot*, focusing on how wordplay, stage directions, and linguistic adaptations shape the theatricality of the work. The study emphasizes that preserving absurdity in translation requires careful attention to the linguistic and cultural nuances of Arabic. Chtioui's findings underscore the challenges of adapting the minimalist and dialogue-heavy nature of Beckett's play while retaining its performativity essence.

Daragmeh, Hamamra, and Mukhemar (2022) focus on the translation of stage direction signs in *Waiting for Godot* into Arabic. By analyzing nonverbal signs, the study assesses their thematic functions and compares them with Fayez Iskandar's translation. The authors

highlight the significance of stage directions in conveying the absurdist themes of the play and explore the strategies used to ensure thematic consistency across languages.

Jabir (2021) applies Halliday's interpersonal functional grammar framework to analyze Quranic paratactic projections, particularly in Surah Al-Ma'idah (27–30). His study explores how mood, modality, and projection interact within Quranic Arabic, aligning with Halliday's theory on how linguistic structures convey authority, commitment, and emphasis in discourse. This linguistic diversity intensifies the solemn and emphatic tone of the text, posing challenges for translators to retain the same impact (Jabir, 2021).

In discussing modality, Jabir explores how Arabic conveys deontic (necessity) and epistemic (certainty) modalities through specific lexical and grammatical particles, including “inna” and “lam.” This approach differs from English, which relies on modal auxiliaries. Jabir argues that these linguistic features can complicate translation, as Arabic modulation often becomes simplified to modalization in English, reducing the depth of interpersonal meaning (Jabir, 2021).

Jabir also examines the Quran's use of paratactic projections—clauses linked without subordination—to convey statements of equal significance, a structure critical for retaining rhetorical and ideological nuance. In English translations, this balance may be lost, as subordination is often introduced. Literal translations, such as Talal Itani's (2015) version, risk oversimplifying emphatic structures, potentially weakening the text's representation of divine authority. To address this, Jabir suggests a functional approach to translation that respects both the theological intent and linguistic complexity of Quranic Arabic (Jabir, 2021).

Future research, according to Jabir, should expand the analysis to include Halliday's three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—to offer a more comprehensive understanding of Quranic discourse, ultimately enhancing translation accuracy and depth.

These studies collectively underscore the importance of FSP, CD, and theme-rheme analysis in understanding how meaning is structured within and across languages.

They reveal how translation strategies shape the delivery of thematic content, particularly in literary and intercultural communication contexts. The findings emphasize the inherent challenges of conveying thematic integrity across cultural and linguistic boundaries, especially in translating complex, nuanced works like *Waiting for Godot*, where the interplay of pauses, silences, and rhythm forms a significant part of the meaning. Thus, the literature reflects a nuanced understanding of the translation process, demonstrating the need for translators to carefully navigate thematic structures to preserve the original work's philosophical and emotional resonance across languages.

### 3. Data Analysis

This section provides an analysis of the thematic structure in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, focusing on its distribution in both the original English text and Paul Chaoul's Arabic translation. The analysis emphasizes the theme-rheme relationship, particularly the progression from known (theme) to new (rheme) information, and examines how this structural flow supports the play's central existential themes, such as waiting, despair, and the search for meaning. Beckett's minimalist language, paired with his use of repetition and silences, creates a distinctive rhythm and tone that poses significant challenges for translation. These stylistic features are essential in conveying the emotional depth of the text and in highlighting the cyclical and stagnant nature of the characters' experiences (Esslin, 1961; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Chaoul's Arabic translation effectively retains much of the original thematic structure, capturing the essence of Beckett's tone and existential concerns. However, linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic introduce slight modifications to certain nuances, such as wordplay, rhythm, and phonetic subtleties. This analysis aims to explore both the strengths and limitations of Chaoul's translation, evaluating how successfully it preserves the intricate balance of meaning, emotional resonance, and thematic coherence inherent in *Waiting for Godot* (Baker, 2018; Bassnett, 2013).

This study is limited to the thematic analysis of Paul Chaoul's Arabic translation of *Waiting for Godot*. Other Arabic translations, as well as performance-based interpretations, are not included in the scope

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of this research. While this study provides insights into thematic shifts and linguistic adaptations, further research could explore additional translations and cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive perspective.

**Table (1): “Let’s go.” /  
Arabic version “دعنا نذهب”**

Language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	Let’s go	Let’s	go
Arabic	دعنا نذهب	دعنا	نذهب

Both the English original and the Arabic translation of *Waiting for Godot* retain the imperative structure, which underscores a sense of collective action and urgency. In both languages, the theme (Let’s/دعنا) is categorized as an Interpersonal Theme, functioning as an invitation to act and fostering a sense of shared purpose. The rheme (go/نذهب) specifies the intended action, maintaining the directness and clarity of the message, while emphasizing the purpose of the imperative. This interplay between theme and rheme ensures the translation successfully preserves both the function and meaning of the original text, with no significant shifts in tone or structure.

From a Topical Theme perspective, both the English and Arabic versions introduce the imperative action, “go” or “نذهب,” as the central focus, ensuring that the command-driven message remains clear and forceful. Additionally, the repetition and parallelism inherent in the imperative structure highlight Structural Themes, reinforcing the urgency and collaborative tone of the dialogue. The Arabic translation mirrors the thematic framework of the English original, preserving the grammatical and rhetorical intent. This alignment ensures that the translation effectively conveys the original’s sense of urgency and collective responsibility, while maintaining consistency in its thematic and communicative impact.

**Table (2):**

**“Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful.”**

**Arabic version: “لا شيء يحدث، لا أحد يأتي، لا أحد يذهب، إنه مروع.”**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
	Nothing	Nothing	Happens

English	happens		
	Nobody comes	Nobody	Comes
English	Nobody goes	Nobody	goes
	It is awful	It	Is awful
Arabic	لا شيء يحدث	لا شيء	يحدث
	لا أحد يأتي	لا أحد	يأتي
Arabic	لا أحد يذهب	لا أحد	يذهب
	انه مروع	انه	مروع

Negative constructions are a dominant feature in the thematic structure of both the original English text and the Arabic translation of *Waiting for Godot*, highlighting a pervasive sense of absence and despair. These constructions are predominantly expressed through Marked Topical Themes, with some instances of Structural Themes. The marked topical themes draw attention to the notions of “nothingness” and “absence,” establishing a tone of stagnation and futility. For example, in the original, “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes,” and in the Arabic, “لا شيء يحدث، لا أحد يأتي، لا أحد يذهب,” the theme introduces the absence (e.g., “nothing” / “لا شيء”), while the rheme expands on this absence through repetitive negations (e.g., “happens, comes, goes” / “يحدث، يأتي، يذهب”).

The repetition found in the rheme (e.g., “happens/يحدث, comes/يأتي, goes/يذهب”) is essential to both versions, embodying Beckett’s existential focus on futility and stagnation. Furthermore, Structural Themes, apparent in the parallelism and rhythmic use of negations, act as rhetorical strategies to emphasize the repetitive cycle of despair. Both the original text and its Arabic translation effectively communicate the emotional gravity and sense of futility without any significant deviation in thematic structure. By maintaining the rhythm, tone, and essence of existential despair, the Arabic translation aligns closely with the original. The integration of Marked Topical Themes and Structural Themes in

both languages ensures that Beckett's existential narrative remains thematically and rhetorically consistent

**Table (3): "What are we doing here?"**

**Arabic version "ما نفعله هنا؟"**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	What are we doing here	What	Are we doing here
Arabic	ما نفعله هنا	ما	نفعله هنا

The interrogative theme in *Waiting for Godot* initiates an existential inquiry, with the rheme reflecting a profound philosophical dilemma. The theme, "What" (ما), is categorized as an Interpersonal Theme, as it invites a response that directly engages with the characters' existence and their understanding of the world. The rheme, "Are we doing here?" (نفعله هنا), elaborates on the confusion and uncertainty inherent in their situation, which can be seen as a Topical Theme because it focuses on the key concept (the action) in the context of existential questioning. The repetitive nature of the inquiry may also introduce a Structural Theme, as the parallelism and rhythmic pattern reflect the cyclical nature of despair.

The Arabic translation preserves the same structure, ensuring that the question's reflective tone and thematic weight are maintained across both languages. Both versions present the question with identical communicative intent, capturing Beckett's existential themes without significant structural or thematic shifts. The interplay of Interpersonal, Topical, and Structural themes ensures that the narrative's existential inquiry and its associated philosophical reflections are consistent in both the original and the translation.

**Table (4): "I'm in hell."**

**Arabic version "أنا في الجحيم"**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	I'm in hell	I	In hell
Arabic	أنا في الجحيم	أنا	في الجحيم

The theme “I” (أنا) in *Waiting for Godot* is categorized as a Topical Theme, as it introduces the subject, drawing attention to the individual’s perspective. The rheme, “In hell” (في الجحيم), carries the emotional weight of the statement, emphasizing the character’s existential suffering and sense of torment. Both the original and Arabic translation employ a simple declarative structure, with the theme focusing on the subject (I/أنا) and the rheme conveying the emotional and philosophical depth of the statement. The Arabic translation preserves the same structure, ensuring that the directness and intensity of the message are maintained. There are no shifts in structure or tone between the original and the translation. The interplay of Topical themes ensures that the thematic weight of existential suffering is consistently conveyed in both languages, retaining the original’s emotional impact and communicative force.

**Table (5): “Help! I’ll pay you!”**  
**Arabic version “!المساعدة! سادفع لك”**

	Clause	Theme	Rheme
Language	Help	Help	-
English	I’ll pay you	I	Pay you
Arabic	المساعدة	المساعدة	-
	سادفع لك	سادفع	لك

The theme “Help” (المساعدة) in *Waiting for Godot* is categorized as an Imperative Theme, as it conveys a direct command, emphasizing the urgency of the request. The rheme, “Pay you” (سادفع لك), is a Topical Theme, as it introduces the subject of the reward, reflecting a transactional tone. Similarly, the Arabic translation preserves the same structure with the imperative theme in “!المساعدة” and the topical rheme “سادفع لك,” which conveys the promise of payment in return for help. Both versions emphasize urgency through the imperative structure, while the rheme elaborates on the promise of reward.

No thematic shifts are observed between the original and the translation. Both versions maintain the emotional intensity and urgency, with the Imperative theme ensuring the directness of the request and the Topical rheme reflecting the transactional nature of the exchange. Both

the original and the Arabic translation effectively capture the desperation and urgency present in Beckett's original work, preserving the emotional and structural elements without significant change. The interplay of Imperative and Topical themes ensures that the communication of urgency and the promise of reward remain consistent in both versions.

**Table (6): “We are no longer alone, *waiting for Godot*.”**

**Arabic version “نحن لم نعد وحدنا، ننتظر غودو.”**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	We are no longer alone	We	Are no longer alone ,waiting
Arabic	نحن لم نعد وحدنا	نحن	لم نعد وحدنا، ننتظر الليل ننتظر غودو

The theme “We” (نحن) in *Waiting for Godot* is a Topical Theme, as it introduces the subject and sets the stage for the exploration of the characters' collective experience. In this instance, “We” refers to the two central characters who share the experience of waiting and existential uncertainty. The Topical Theme focuses the audience's attention on who is involved in the action or state being described, and in this case, it places emphasis on the shared human condition of waiting and existential longing.

The rheme, “Are no longer alone, waiting” (لم نعد وحدنا، ننتظر الليل), in both the original English and the Arabic translation, carries the communicative dynamism (CD). It provides further elaboration on the state introduced by the theme. The rheme is crucial as it carries the essential information about their current emotional and psychological state—while they are not “alone,” they are still trapped in the cycle of waiting. This sets the existential tone of Beckett's play, where characters are in a constant state of anticipation, without any resolution. The Topical rheme emphasizes the continuous, cyclical nature of their experience. The phrase “waiting” (ننتظر) both in English and Arabic serves as a repeated concept that reinforces the sense of monotony and the endless passage of time.

Moreover, the Topical Theme interacts with the notion of time in Beckett's work. The repetition of the phrase "waiting for the night, waiting for Godot" (ننتظر الليل، ننتظر غودو) reinforces the cyclical and repetitive nature of their existence. This repetition emphasizes the Structural aspect of the text, where the constant waiting and the passage of time are mirrored in the linguistic structure of both the English and Arabic versions. The structure does not change between the two versions, which ensures that the theme of waiting is just as potent in the Arabic translation as it is in the original.

Both the original and the Arabic translation capture the emotional weight of existential dread and the tension between hope and despair. The rheme, through its repetition, reflects the Interpersonal nature of their dialogue, where their communication doesn't lead to action but to further entrapment in a state of anticipation. This lack of resolution is central to Beckett's themes of existentialism, where characters are caught in a never-ending loop of anticipation and delay.

The emotional tone of both versions is preserved. The Topical Theme ("نحن/We") presents the collective subject, reinforcing the idea that the two characters are united in their experience. The rheme further elaborates on this shared experience, emphasizing that while they are "no longer alone" (لم نعد وحدنا), they are still bound by the same existential condition. Their collective waiting is highlighted by the parallel repetition, making it clear that no significant change or progression happens in their state of mind or action.

Both the original English and the Arabic translation of this passage preserve the same communicative force and thematic depth. The interplay between the Topical theme ("نحن/We") and the Topical rheme ("Are no longer alone, waiting" / "ننتظر الليل، ننتظر غودو") ensures that the central themes of isolation, anticipation, and existential futility are consistently conveyed. There are no significant shifts in meaning or structure, as the Topical themes and the Structural elements of repetition are maintained across both versions. This highlights the translator's ability to capture not just the literal meaning, but also the tone, rhythm, and emotional weight of Beckett's original work.

Table (7): “Let’s wait and see what he says.”

Arabic version “دعنا ننتظر ونرى ما يقوله”

language	clause	Theme	Rheme
English	Let’s wait and see what he says	Let’s	wait and see what he says
Arabic	دعنا ننتظر ونرى ما يقوله	دعنا	ننتظر ونرى ما يقوله

The theme “Let’s” (دعنا) in *Waiting for Godot* is categorized as an Imperative Theme, as it expresses a direct command or suggestion for collective action. The Imperative structure emphasizes urgency and cooperation, urging both characters to act together rather than individually. The Topical rheme, “wait and see what he says” (ننتظر ونرى ما يقوله), expands on the action by elaborating on what they are waiting for, which is an external response. In both languages, the rheme carries the primary communicative dynamism (CD), as it provides the essential information about what is expected of the characters.

Both the original and Arabic versions preserve the same Imperative structure, ensuring that the suggestion for collective action is communicated with the same urgency. The theme “Let’s” (دعنا) introduces a sense of collaboration, as it directs the characters to undertake the waiting process together. The rheme in both versions—“wait and see what he says” / “ننتظر ونرى ما يقوله”—is consistent, and it elaborates on the expectation of an external action, which the characters are passively awaiting.

The emotional tone of both versions remains the same. In Beckett’s play, the characters are caught in an endless cycle of waiting, unsure of what will happen next, and the imperative structure highlights this state of indecision. The Topical rheme adds to the existential theme of waiting by pointing to what is yet to come: the answer or confirmation from an external source. Both versions reflect this sense of passive anticipation, which is central to the play’s themes of existential uncertainty and the inability to act or change their situation.

There are no significant thematic shifts between the two versions. Both versions maintain the sense of anticipation and the emotional

weight of waiting for something external. The Imperative theme (“Let’s/دعنا”) in both languages emphasizes the shared nature of the action, reinforcing the idea that the characters are involved in a mutual, albeit futile, effort. The repetition of the state of waiting in the Topical rheme ensures that the emotional weight of Beckett’s themes—monotony, frustration, and a sense of helplessness—remains intact across both languages.

The structure of both the original English and the Arabic translation remains faithful to the original’s communicative and thematic intent. The Imperative theme (“Let’s/دعنا”) conveys the collective call to action, while the Topical rheme elaborates on the action of waiting and anticipating an external event. Both versions capture the sense of collaborative expectation, ensuring that the existential themes of waiting, uncertainty, and dependence on external validation are clearly communicated in both languages.

**Table (8): “Do you see anything coming?”**

**Arabic version “هل ترى شيئاً قادمًا؟”**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	Do you see anything coming	Do you	see anything coming
Arabic	هل ترى شيئاً قادمًا	هل ترى	شيئاً قادمًا

The theme “Do you” (هل ترى) in *Waiting for Godot* is classified as an Interrogative Theme. This type of theme indicates an inquiry or a question, which is essential for initiating a dialogue that centers around uncertainty or seeking answers. The use of an Interrogative structure in both the English and Arabic versions serves as a device to start a question, focusing on the action of seeing or observing, something that the characters in Beckett’s play are frequently engaged in. Here, the theme introduces a low level of communicative dynamism (CD), meaning that the information being asked is familiar or expected. The speaker is essentially asking the listener to observe something that they, too, are anticipating—whether or not something is “coming.”



The Rheme (see anything coming / شيئاً قادماً) introduces new information that carries the primary communicative dynamism. In this case, the rheme shifts the focus towards the object of expectation, which is the something that might be approaching. This heightened communicative dynamism reflects the existential nature of the question—it is not just about seeing something, but about whether there is hope or possibility that something will change or happen. This shift in focus from the general inquiry in the theme to the specific idea of “coming” (شيئاً قادماً) underlines the anticipation, hope, and perhaps despair that is central to the play’s themes of waiting.

The interrogative structure in *Waiting for Godot* is faithfully mirrored in both the original English text and its Arabic translation, ensuring that the sense of inquiry remains central to the dialogue. This structural fidelity reflects a close relationship between the two versions, with minimal shifts in meaning or tone. In both languages, the rheme focuses on the uncertainty of whether something—or someone—is “coming,” encapsulating the existential tension that drives the play. This recurring question amplifies the characters’ feelings of anxiety, frustration, and helplessness. The cyclical and stagnant nature of their anticipation is effectively conveyed in both English and Arabic, reinforcing the shared existential themes of Beckett’s work.

In both languages, the theme “Do you” (هل ترى) introduces a familiar action of observation, but the rheme brings in the new, emotionally charged concept of awaiting something that may or may not occur. This plays into the broader existential themes of Beckett’s work: the fear and hope of something changing, paired with the deep uncertainty about whether that change will ever come.

By keeping both the Interrogative Theme and the Topical Rheme aligned, the translation captures the same existential questioning, the ambiguity, and the anticipation present in the original. The question about seeing “anything coming” (شيئاً قادماً) is central to Beckett’s exploration of the human condition—constantly waiting for something to happen, yet never sure if it ever will.

**Table (9): “We can’t go on like this.”**  
**Arabic version “نحن لا يمكننا الاستمرار هكذا”**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	We can’t go on like this	We	can’t go on like this
Arabic	نحن لا يمكننا الاستمرار هكذا	نحن	لا يمكننا الاستمرار هكذا

In the sentence “We can’t go on like this” from *Waiting for Godot*, the Topical Theme is “We” (نحن), which introduces the subject and highlights the collective experience of the characters. This theme focuses on the fact that the issue is shared by all of them, underlining their mutual frustration. The Rheme, “can’t go on like this” (لا يمكننا الاستمرار هكذا), carries the higher Communicative Dynamism (CD), as it presents the new information about the characters’ existential inability to continue. The rheme carries the emotional burden of their situation, signifying a sense of exhaustion and helplessness. Both the original English sentence and the Arabic translation preserve the same meaning, ensuring that the emotional weight of the original is intact. The Topical Theme and Rheme structures in both languages are consistent, with no significant shifts in tone or meaning. The theme emphasizes their collective struggle, while the rheme elaborates on their inability to move forward, effectively conveying the existential crisis that defines the characters’ condition in the play. The Arabic translation captures the essence of the original text accurately, without any major loss or alteration of the message.

**Table (10): “Perhaps we could start all over again.”**  
**Arabic version “ربما يمكننا أن نبدأ من جديد”**

language	Clause	Theme	Rheme
English	Perhaps we could start all over again	Perhaps	we could start all over again
Arabic	ربما يمكننا أن نبدأ من جديد	ربما	يمكننا أن نبدأ من جديد

In the sentence “Perhaps we could start all over again” from *Waiting for Godot*, the Theme is “Perhaps” (ربما), which introduces uncertainty and operates as a Modal Theme. This theme sets a tentative tone, suggesting possibility rather than certainty. The Rheme, “we could start all over again” (يمكننا أن نبدأ من جديد), carries the higher Communicative Dynamism (CD), presenting the potential action of starting anew. Both the English and Arabic versions maintain the same meaning and tone, reflecting the hopefulness and uncertainty that characterizes the cyclical nature of the characters’ existence. The translation preserves the original sense of tentative possibility and aligns with the themes of repetition and potential renewal central to Beckett’s work. There are no significant shifts in meaning or structure between the original and the translation, ensuring that the communicative and emotional essence of the sentence remains intact.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of thematic structures in both Samuel Beckett’s *waiting for Godot* and Chaoul’s Arabic translation provides insights into the challenges of translating a text that is both thematically dense and existentially profound. This section evaluates how well the thematic structures have been preserved or adapted across ten representative samples, with a focus on key elements like theme-rheme structure, repetition, existential tension, and the challenges posed by phonetic and rhythmic differences.

Across all samples, Chaoul successfully maintains the theme-rheme structure, ensuring a consistent flow from known to new information, which is essential for conveying Beckett’s existential themes. For instance, in Sample 1, the translation of “We can’t” as “نحن ننتظر غودو” (“We are *waiting for Godot*”) preserves both the theme (“We”) and the critical new information regarding their *waiting for Godot*. This adherence to the original structure helps retain the core existential message of the play, allowing Arabic-speaking audiences to engage with the same philosophical undertones as the original.

Beckett’s use of repetition and minimalism, which emphasizes stasis and futility, is another crucial aspect carefully mirrored in Chaoul’s translation. For example, in Sample 2, the repeated phrase “nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes” is preserved,

maintaining the same rhythmic and emotional impact in Arabic. This element is essential for conveying the absurdist tone, as the cyclical, seemingly purposeless nature of the dialogue encapsulates the play's exploration of meaninglessness and human stagnation.

The translation also effectively conveys the tension between action and inaction, a core theme in *Waiting for Godot*. In Sample 3, Vladimir's question, "What are we doing here, that is the question," is translated as "ما نفعله هنا، هذا هو السؤال." This preserves Beckett's philosophical inquiry and existential weight, allowing Arabic-speaking audiences to engage with the play's introspective and questioning tone.

Despite these successes, translating the phonetic and rhythmic nuances of Beckett's text into Arabic poses inherent challenges. For example, in Sample 4, the line "I'm in hell!" becomes "أنا في الجحيم" in Arabic. While the emotional intensity is preserved, the phonetic playfulness in the original is inevitably lost due to differences in the phonological systems of English and Arabic. This example underscores the limitations of translating sound-based humor, as certain linguistic effects simply do not transfer directly between languages.

Additionally, while Chaoul preserves the theme-rheme structure, minor shifts in word order can subtly affect pacing and tone. In Sample 5, the phrase "Help! I'll pay you!" is rendered as "المساعدة! سأدفع لك" in Arabic. Although the urgency and meaning are retained, the altered word order slightly shifts the rhythm and emotional tone of the dialogue, demonstrating how syntactic adjustments can impact the translation's effect.

One of the broader challenges in translating *Waiting for Godot* is balancing fidelity to the original text with cultural adaptation for an Arabic-speaking audience. In Sample 6, for example, Vladimir's line, "We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, *waiting for Godot*," is translated with the same structure, maintaining both the theme and rheme. However, cultural nuances—such as the value of patience in Middle Eastern societies—may influence how audiences interpret the theme of waiting, potentially adding layers of meaning that differ from those in the original text.

Another significant aspect of Beckett's play is his use of silences and pauses, which convey meaning beyond words. Although Chaoul's

translation faithfully renders the spoken text, it is uncertain whether the Arabic version captures the weight of these non-verbal elements. In Arabic, where expression tends to be more elaborate, silences might be interpreted differently, possibly altering the thematic tension between spoken and unspoken elements in the play.

Overall, the analysis of the ten samples demonstrates Chaoul's skillful navigation of the challenges in translating *Waiting for Godot*. By preserving core thematic structures, he ensures that existential themes such as waiting, despair, and absurdity resonate with Arabic-speaking audiences. His sensitivity to Beckett's style and tone enables him to retain the play's rhythm and flow, despite the inevitable adjustments required by linguistic differences. In this way, Chaoul's translation maintains the emotional and philosophical depth of Beckett's work, balancing fidelity to the original text with the adaptations necessary to create a meaningful experience for Arabic audiences.

#### 5. Conclusion

Translating *Waiting for Godot* is a complex process that requires a delicate balance between fidelity to the original text and necessary adaptation to cultural and linguistic differences. The analysis revealed that while Chaoul's (2009) translation successfully preserved the existential themes of waiting, despair, and the search for meaning, it also faced challenges due to structural and rhythmic disparities between English and Arabic. These differences influenced the play's pacing and tonal impact, requiring strategic adjustments to maintain the communicative essence of Beckett's (1953) work. Beyond a literal transfer of words, the translation becomes an act of interpretation that reshapes the philosophical depth of the play, navigating between meaning and absence to capture its unique communicative dynamism. Beckett's fragmented dialogue, silences, and ambiguity necessitate careful handling to ensure that the philosophical resonance of the text is preserved while making it accessible to a new audience. This study highlights the translator's role not only as a linguistic mediator but as an active participant in reconstructing the work's thematic and aesthetic essence. By exploring the interplay between language, rhythm, and meaning, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of literary translation, particularly in the context of absurdist theatre. Rather than

merely replicating structures, the translator must engage in a nuanced process of reimagining content, ensuring that the emotional and philosophical weight of the original remains intact. In doing so, translation becomes an art that extends beyond linguistic accuracy, shaping how the text is perceived and experienced by different audiences. While this study provides valuable insights into the complexities of translating *Waiting for Godot*, further research could examine alternative Arabic renditions, performance interpretations, and audience reception to offer a broader perspective on how Beckett's work continues to evolve across cultures and linguistic frameworks.

### Note:

\*This research is based on a thesis entitled "Communicative Dynamism in Translation: A Study of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*" (2024), written by the first researcher under the supervision of the second.

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