

**IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION  
IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S *WAITING FOR GODOT***  
**Konstruksi Identitas dalam *Waiting for Godot* Karya Samuel Beckett**

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**Abstrak:** *Artikel ini mengkaji pembentukan identitas karakter dalam drama terkenal *Waiting for Godot* karya Samuel Beckett. Salah satu karakter yang dikonstruksi identitasnya adalah Godot, sosok misterius yang tidak pernah muncul. Karakter lain, seperti Vladimir dan Estragon secara aktif mengonstruksi identitas Godot. Oleh sebab itu, pembentukan identitas tidak dapat dipisahkan dari konstruksi sosial yang dimasuki banyak karakteristik oleh anggota masyarakat luas. Teori identitas Stuart Hall dan Erikson digunakan untuk menganalisis drama tersebut. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa identitas Godot dan karakter lain tidak stabil dan cair. Karakteristik identitas mereka ambigu dan bahkan meragukan.*

**Kata-Kata Kunci:** *identitas, ambiguitas, Godot*

**Abstract:** *This paper scrutinizes the formation of identity of the characters in Samuel Beckett's famous play *Waiting for Godot*. One of the characters whose identity is constructed is Godot, a mysterious absent figure. The other characters, such as Vladimir and Estragon actively construct Godot's identity. Thus the formation of identity cannot be separated from the social construction in which a lot of characteristics are attributed by the members of large community. The theory of identity elaborated by Stuart Hall and Erikson is employed to examine the play. The study shows that Godot and other characters' identity is unstable and fluid. The characteristics of their identity are ambiguous and even challenged.*

**Key Words:** *identity, ambiguity, Godot*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Identity is a concept which is basically interwoven with the features of the individual, groups of people, nations, and cultures. It also involves how human beings dynamically communicate with each other. In constructing identity, some resources such as gender, race, family, history, language, attitudes, behaviours, and social involvement, are usually taken into consideration (see Hall, 1996). Talking particularly about social involvement, the formation of identity is absolutely indispensable, as the existence of 'outsiders' is immensely considered. In short, one's identity is a

subject for other people's identification. Regarding the dynamic discourses of identification, identity is then supposed to be an on-going and unstable entity.

Identity in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is somehow enthralling. It is to be meticulously scrutinized because readers and critics are often perplexed about Godot, a mysterious absent figure, who only appears within the dialogues among characters and whom the two characters of the play, Vladimir and Estragon, commit to await loyally despite not being acquainted. Very often the readers and critics have an inquiry about the indefinite identity of Godot.

Unfortunately, Samuel Beckett refuses to provide information about who Godot exactly is. As cited in Graver and Federman (1979:177), Beckett states, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play." Thus, Godot's identity is constructed in an uncertainty, which potentially leads to ambiguity. However, this construction to some extent cannot be separated from Beckett's insistence on making the readers actively involved in characters identification. Simpson (1991:82), as cited in Lawley (2008:35), claims that Beckett's refusal to give firm answer is his way of putting his audience in the same universe, intellectually and emotionally that his characters inhabit.

This is not to argue that there are no attributes of Godot's identity that can be further investigated. Instead of being passive, the characters of the play, Estragon and Vladimir, curiously search for Godot's identity through simultaneous investigation. Boy, Godot's messenger who meets Vladimir and Estragon, also renders to reveal Godot's identity by giving information about Godot's physical characteristics and behavior to Vladimir and Estragon. Thus the absence of Godot throughout the play does not automatically bring about the absence of Godot's identity.

However, the construction of Godot's identity considers split, uncertain, and unstable. Godot is only imbued with very restricted attributes without clear description. Vladimir and Estragon also have difficulties to synthesize the information Boy gives. As a result, Godot's identity remains questionable from the beginning to the end of the play. Gordon argues that lacking a social history or identity, Godot is being or existence without essence. He stands before us asking to be understood (2002:61). Thus, Godot is consciously created by Beckett within multi-layered meanings.

Along with Godot's identity, this essay will also examine Vladimir and Estragon's identities considered ambivalent. When Vladimir and Estragon talk to each other, they consciously realize that 'Vladimir (Didi)' and 'Estragon (Gogo)' are their names. Yet, when other characters call Vladimir and Estragon with the different names, Estragon and Vladimir do not refuse. This phenomenon really underpins the understanding that identity is not a matter of 'being' but 'becoming'. It is a social construct which dialogically and dynamically mutates and unfolds.

Postmodernism and identity theories are employed in this essay. Postmodernism, particularly in relation to the study of literature is applied because some of its characteristics, such as antithesis, anti-narrative, open-ended ending, deconstruction, absence, signifier, and ontological uncertainty (see Woods 1999; McHale 2001), can be found in the play. For instance, Godot's absence and indefinite identity that remains until the end of the play indicates that *Waiting for Godot* is a postmodern text. There is no exact conclusion about Godot at the end. Mason in his book *Historical Dictionary of Postmodernist Literature and Theatre* claims that the textual ambiguities of *Waiting for Godot* correspond with a postmodern articulation of indeterminacy of truth and reality (2007:34).

Meanwhile, the theory of identity, which focuses on how social entities influence the construction of identity, is elaborated in an attempt of understanding identity formation of Godot as well as Vladimir and Estragon. Through this perspective, the dialectics of the self and others in constructing identity is pondered upon. Thus, how social context affects the identity of both Godot and Vladimir and Estragon, which in turn entails indeterminacy, is

examined through this theory. In some cases, the integration of post-modernism and identity theories is applied to analyze the play, notably in the context that the uncertainty and ambiguity of Godot and characters' identities embrace the features of postmodern text.

Based on the above rationale, the aim of this essay is to scrutinize how the uncertainty and ambiguity of the identity of Godot as well as of the characters embodied in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are constructed. To begin with, the essay presents the theories of postmodernism and identity. Then it turns to the analysis of identity which I divide into two parts (1) the uncertainty of Godot's identity and (2) the ambiguity of Vladimir and Estragon' identity.

## **THEORY**

### **Postmodernism and Literary Drama**

Some critics use the term 'postmodernism' to refer to critics and theorists who have a 'postmodern' and poststructuralist philosophy that focuses on the privileging of deconstruction, fragmentation and decentralization. This notion basically believes that 'truth' and 'reality' do not exist as objective forms, but are called into existence in the act of representation through which they are created as discursive systems of meaning by language and narrative (Mason, 1999). Thus, instead of proposing single and absolute interpretation which relies on fixed and stable meaning, postmodern texts tends to challenge 'conventional' narrative strategy through discursive forms and contents. Elucidating this perspective, Parvish (1986), as cited in Woods (1999:81), asserts that the text in postmodern literature "is maintained as an object of questioning, the working of codes, rather than a series of situations and allusions to a subtext which the spectator ought to feel." In other words,

what is depicted within postmodern text always leads to a variety of interpretation. It is really different from modern texts which mostly present reality as it is.

It is true that exploring postmodernism theory cannot be separated from the tenets of modernism. However, there is a vivid distinction between modernism and post-modernism. Brian Mc. Halle (1987), as cited in Mason (1999:xxxix), argues that postmodernism significantly differs from modernism because it deals with ontology and the textualization of reality, different types of textual world, whereas modernism is more concentrated with questions of how reality or the material world are understood and perceived. While most modernist writers still feel that reality exists, postmodernist writers are less certain that the ontology of the world exists. As a result, according to Mason (1999:xli), self-conscious fictionality and the foregrounding of the text as a text, the problematization of "reality," as well as self reflexive strategies that dwell on the text's status as a linguistic construct, are important processes in certain forms of postmodern literature.

In accordance with postmodern literary drama (theatre), Woods (1999:81) claims that such genre of theatre "was treated as a discursive space which refused any clear-cut consciousness of character". He furthermore claims that texts, in postmodern theatre, possess an infinite openness to significance and a space for the perpetual deferment of conclusive meaning (1999:81). Therefore post-modern plays are imbued with uncertainties and ambiguities as they offer multi-layered interpretation. Classifying postmodern theatres, Mason argues that the major written experiments in the late 20th-century

drama that display postmodernist features occur in the works of the theatre of the Absurd and in the development of a postwar “anti theatre” (1999:li). As a consequence, it is worth noticing that playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, and Samuel Albee have all experimented with such genre.

Samuel Beckett is regarded as a postmodern dramatist since he tends to reject logical construction, clear character identity or coherent relations between cause and effect (McDonald, 2006:24—25). For instance, in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* that I am going to discuss in more detail later, the information about the identity of Godot and of characters considers confusing. There is also no single constructed identity that could be figured out. Furthermore, the plot, which is often created in cyclical form, cannot render the readers to achieve the final conclusive meaning. The end of story is the beginning of the story itself. There is no resolution at the end so that the questions of who Godot is and when he will appear are kept in the readers’ mind.

### **Concept of Identity: Unstable and Ongoing Process**

Fearon defines identity as “personal characteristics or attributes” (1999:2). Yet, how is identity constructed? Identity has been critically discussed by some scholars in the field of psychology, sociology and culture. Erik H. Erikson, a psychologist, Woodward, a sociologist, and Stuart Hall, a culture critic, to name a few, are concerned with the study of the construction of Identity. All these three scholars basically agree that social dynamic, in which interaction among human beings occurs, affects the construction of Identity. Though Erikson considers the psychological factor paramount, he profoundly embraces the

role of social entity. Erikson (1995) as cited in Bloom (1999:25), argues that identity formation is an evolving configuration responding to inner drives and social pressures changes at different stages in the life cycle. Thus, inner drives which represent ‘the self’ cannot be separated from social entity.

Whereas Woodward in his book *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class and Nation* (2004) claims that identities are produced in a social context and through the individual thinking about what links him/her to the world. This process is carried out through symbolizing. “We symbolize the sort of person we want others to think we are through the clothes we wear and the way we behave.” (Woodward, 2004:12). Thus it can be figured out that ‘outsiders’ as a social factor in constructing identity will make identification through some social attributes, such as attires and behavior of the person whom they attempt to recognize.

Regarding to the construction of identity which cannot be separated from the social context which simultaneously unfolds, Hall states:

The concept of identity [.....] is therefore not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one. That is to say, directly contrary to what appears to be its settled semantic career, this concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from the beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change [.....]. (1996:3)

Hall in the above description emphasizes that identity is an ongoing entity which is never stable. He claims the construction of identity challenges the essentials. This notion to some extent pertains to Erikson’s opinion. Erikson (1995), as cited in Bloom (1990:39), also argues that a change of

historical circumstances will affect and threaten the identity of each individual within a certain that group. Furthermore, according to Hall, identities are never unified and increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed. They are constantly in the process of change and transformation (1996:4). (Emphasis added) From this elaboration, it can be pointed out that the construction of identity is engulfed by the social factor that is other people. Moreover, the identity itself is a subject to change over time since circumstances in which human beings live always alters gradually.

In the context of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the construction of Godot's identity is intermingled with the existence of the characters such as Vladimir, Estragon, Boy and Pozzo who actively discuss Godot. Moreover, the identity of Vladimir and Estragon is also influenced by the existence of Boy and Pozzo. Thus the domain of 'outsiders' considers paramount in the construction of identity in *Waiting for Godot*. Further analysis of this identity construction as well as how it relates to the concept of postmodernism as previously discussed is presented in the following sections.

## METHOD

The concept of qualitative research is employed as the focus of the research is to delineate the formation of identity in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Data collection is carried out through reading the play comprehensively and selecting some excerpts from the play which are relevant to the issue of identity. Before analyzing, note taking on those excerpts is done as a preliminary attempt to foreground the hypothesis and make sure that there is a profound nexus between the theory and those excerpts.

Theory of identity is then used to analyze and interpret the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Uncertainty of Godot's Identity

Godot's identity is uncertainly constructed throughout the play. There is no exact 'truth' regarding Godot's identity that Beckett intends to explicitly reveal. Godot is set up within discursive and very restricted attributes which are simultaneously questioned by characters within their dialogues. Unfortunately the answers and responses given—in relation to Godot—are also vague and even inadequate. Beckett seems to provide Godot with 'blurred' attributes as a 'thesis'. Yet, he then challenges it with 'antithesis' to obscure Godot's identity. Thus Beckett's refusal to provide Godot with clear identity by all means strengthens the justification that *Waiting for Godot* is a postmodern text.

To begin scrutinizing the indefinite identity of Godot, it is worth to have a look at Godot's first appearance within the dialogues between characters. In the very beginning of the play, Godot is depicted as a nebulous figure whom the two characters, Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo), insist to await on the country road. Though Vladimir and Estragon do not know exactly who Godot is and when he will definitely appear, they seem dedicated to wait for his arrival:

- Vladimir : He didn't say for sure he'd come.  
 Estragon : And if he doesn't come?  
 Vladimir : We'll come back tomorrow.  
 Estragon : And then the day after tomorrow.  
 Vladimir : Possibly.  
 Estragon : And so on.  
 Vladimir : The point is—  
 Estragon : Until he comes.

(8)

Using pronoun 'he' to denote Godot, Vladimir and Estragon, to some extent, slightly reveals the identity of Godot. However, 'he' in this case is applied in the very general and discursive sense. 'He', a signifier that lexically refers to male first person singular, could refer to every individual; it could represent human beings and even God as well. Thus, 'he' in the above passage evokes multi signified. 'He' also creates mystery because Godot himself either has not been depicted or has not appeared. Furthermore, the signifier 'he' tends to entail a suspense, which engenders the indefinite identity of Godot, notably due to the fact that Godot doesn't tell Vladimir and Estragon when he will definitely come and who he really is.

Godot's identity furthermore remains enigmatic, particularly in the case that Godot's name is destabilized by Vladimir who asks Estragon, "His name is Godot?" (21). Here Vladimir shows his doubtfulness about the exact name of Godot. Such a question to some extent proves that Godot's identity is constructed indefinitely within the 'zone' of instability. By doubting about Godot's name—'Godot' is regarded as a thesis as well as a signifier in this case—, Vladimir automatically deconstructs Godot's attribute through antithesis. This phenomenon is related to the notion of postmodern-identity scholars that, according to Cerulo, tend to "deconstruct established identity categories" (1997:391). In the case of Godot's name which is questioned by Vladimir, the attribute of identity then seems to be neither essential nor fundamental. It is set up in the paradigm of 'becoming' rather than 'being' or 'given'. As a consequence, Vladimir is not able to convince himself that the name of the figure for whom he is waiting is Godot.

Furthermore the name 'Godot' will entail many possible meanings if it is

observed within the context of French—Beckett's first language—and of Irish—a language of a country where Beckett spent his childhood. According to Graver, there are some common French words and phrases which begin with 'god'. Godillot in French for 'old shapeless boot'; Godasses are 'military boots', Godailler is 'to go pub-crawling'. Goder means 'to pucker' and Godet is the name of a popular cognac, and also the French word for 'a wooden bowl'. In addition, 'Godo' is spoken Irish for God (2004:41—42). Thus, as a 'signifier', 'Godot' potentially will result in many debatable and fractured interpretations. For instance, it would be problematic to interpret 'Godot' as 'an old shapeless boot' because the pronoun which denotes to Godot is 'he', as it is previously discussed. However, 'boot' itself is actually connected to the play, notably due to the fact that, in some parts of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett narrates how Vladimir and Estragon make a useless talk about the old boot, like in this dialogue: Vladimir: "Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?" Estragon: "Boots must be taken off every day, I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me?" (2). Yet, despite making 'boot' as the central theme and attention, Beckett tends to focus on Vladimir and Estragon's determinant intention to wait and meet Godot.

Being curious with and 'haunted' by Godot, Estragon and Vladimir, as the outsiders, who significantly contribute to the construction of Godot's identity, then insist to deliberately delve into the identity of Godot through more investigation:

- Estragon : That he couldn't promise anything.  
 Vladimir : That he'd have to think it over.  
 Estragon : In the quiet of his home.

Vladimir : Consult his family.  
 Estragon : His friends.  
 Vladimir : His agents.  
 Estragon : His correspondents.  
 Vladimir : His books.  
 Estragon : His bank account.  
 (18)

Here Vladimir and Estragon attempt to search for Godot's identity through social entities that are existent around Godot. They are committed to investigate Godot's family, friends, agents, and correspondents. Moreover, Godot's books and bank account are also supposed to be helpful sources of Godot's identification. So in this phase, it is conspicuous that Godot's identity is not presented in an empty entity. Godot is depicted as a figure that has wide relationships with others. Vladimir and Estragon also act as if they are detectives who try to discover Godot's mystery. Unfortunately family, friends, correspondents, and agents who are mentioned in the above passage never come up in the rest of the story. Moreover there is no information given whether Vladimir and Estragon are eventually able to consult Godot colleagues and family. In other words there is no clear 'cause and effect' as well as continuation in the above planned investigation. The absence of Godot's colleagues as well as of Godot himself throughout the play are very pertinent to one of the characteristics of postmodern text; that is absence, as already mentioned in the introduction of this essay. These absences of course give significant impact on the uncertainty of Godot's identity and of the indeterminacy of the story.

While Estragon and Vladimir still have no idea about who Godot is, another character, Boy, comes and says that he has a message from Godot. Boy in this case is also regarded as an outsider functioning as an informant in the

construction of Godot's identity. Boy seems to have been acquainted with Godot:

Vladimir : You work for Mr. Godot?  
 Boy : Yes Sir.  
 Vladimir : What do you do?  
 Boy : I mind the goats, Sir.  
 Vladimir : Is he good to you?  
 Boy : Yes Sir.  
 Vladimir : He doesn't beat you?  
 Boy : No Sir, not me.  
 Vladimir : Whom does he beat?  
 Boy : He beats my brother, Sir.  
 (51)

Godot, in the dialogue above, has a title 'Mr', instead of 'Mrs' or 'Ms'. It keeps the information that Godot is a male figure as in the beginning of the story the pronoun 'he' is used to denote Godot. The dialogue above also reveals that Godot has a servant, Boy, who looks after Godot's livestock. Thus Godot might also be a 'landlord'. Moreover the personality of Godot is also delineated. Godot, according to Boy, has ambivalent personality. In one side, Godot is a cruel and hostile. He treats Boy's brother violently. On the other hand, Godot does something good to Boy. Thus the appearance of Boy to some extent can be a 'key' in divulging Godot's identity. Unfortunately, Boy's information still cannot be sufficiently used to point out who Godot exactly is.

Another character in the play questioning the identity of Godot is a stranger named Pozzo. He shows curiosity regarding the existence of Godot. In response to Pozzo's inquiry about Godot, both Vladimir and Estragon just give vague information.

Pozzo : (peremptory). Who

is Godot?  
 Estragon : Godot?  
 Pozzo : You took me for Godot  
 Vladimir : Oh no, Sir, not for an instant, Sir  
 Pozzo : Who is he?  
 Vladimir : Oh he's a ... he's a kind of acquaintance.  
 Estragon : Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.  
 Vladimir : True ... we don't know him very well ... but all the same .  
 Estragon : Personally, I wouldn't even know him if I saw him.

(23)

(Emphasis added)

Here, the identity of Godot is more enigmatic. There is a contradiction regarding Godot's identity. In one side Vladimir claims that Godot is an acquaintance and on the other side Estragon deconstructs Didi's statement by arguing that they have difficulties to recognize Godot. Sherzer also argues that the ambiguity in the above dialogue is created by the word 'acquaintance' which means 'somebody one knows' (1978:147). If Godot is well-known, it would be therefore contradictory to Estragon's statement "Personally, I wouldn't even know him if I saw him". Thus, it could be figured out that Godot's identity is esoteric and less concrete.

Furthermore Godot's indefinite identity makes the characters misidentify each other. Both Estragon and Vladimir, who do not have accurate and comprehensive information about Godot, think Pozzo as Godot. This misidentification somehow explains that there is no single 'truth' of characters identification within postmodern text. Pozzo himself can be seen as a figure

whose function is to challenge the certainty of Godot's identity. In this case Pozzo assertively declares that he is not Godot:

Vladimir : Godot?  
 Estragon : Yes  
 Pozzo : I present myself: Pozzo.  
 Vladimir : (to Estragon). Not at all!  
 Estragon : He said Godot.  
 Vladimir : Not at all!  
 Estragon : (timidly, to Pozzo). You're not Mr. Godot, Sir?  
 Pozzo : (terrifying voice). I am Pozzo! (Silence.) Pozzo! (Silence.) Does that name mean nothing to you? (Silence.) I say does that name mean nothing to you? Vladimir and Estragon look at each other questioningly.

(22)

Pozzo's refusal of course becomes the antithesis of Vladimir and Estragon's thesis. Because Pozzo vividly says that he is not Godot, the identification made by Vladimir and Estragon is then automatically deconstructed. There is therefore no more argument that could be made by Vladimir and Estragon to claim that Pozzo is Godot. In another part of the dialogue, Pozzo also embraces the uncertain identity of Godot, notably in relation to the name of Godot. Pozzo brings Godot's name into more discursive and heterogeneous construction by saying to Vladimir and Estragon, "What happens in that case to your appointment with this Godet Godot Godin"(P29). (emphasis added). Mentioning "Godet Godot Godin", Pozzo



seems to highlight the unstable attributes that Godot has.

Besides through Godot's name and personality, Godot's identity is also constructed through physical features:

Vladimir : (softly). Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?  
 Estragon : Yes Sir.  
 Pozzo : Fair or ... (he hesitates) ... or black?  
 Vladimir : I think it's white, Sir.

(100)

Godot is now depicted having a beard, which has been further identified by its color. Here, the color, which normally could be used as a source of both distinguishing and identifying things, becomes one of the characteristics of Godot's physical identity. However, it cannot be used to completely claim that Godot is a human being or even God, since the physical features of Godot presented in the dialogue above is not thorough. Yet, to some extent such interpretation could be made with the different basis of argumentation. Lawley argues that it might be naïve to identify Godot with God; it would be equally naïve to pretend that the play does not invite the identification (2008:32). However, in my opinion, identification that is made would still vary according to the readers' concern and intention.

In the last part of the play, the construction of Godot's identity that has been presented is deconstructed through new discursive information given by Boy. Vladimir asks Boy, "What does he do, Mr. Godot? (P100). Then Boy answers, "He does nothing, Sir." (P100). Boy's answer could entail new confusion and potentially engenders a counter to the previous construction. If Godot has nothing to do, it could be assumed that he might be nobody. It is,

of course, contradictory to the information Boy gives that Godot has livestock and Boy himself is Godot's servant. Moreover it is also incompatible with the information that Godot has agents and correspondents. However, though Godot is hard to identify and seems to be a puzzling subject, he is considerably important in relation to human beings' existence and expectation:

[.....] Godot can hardly be considered a figure in a realistic narrative or even in coherent allegory [.....]. Godot has become a concept, an idea of promise and expectation, of that for which people aware of the absence of coherent meaning in lives wait in the hope that it will restore significance to their existence. (Graver 2004:40)

Thus it is important to highlight that Vladimir and Estragon's eager desire to see Godot basically implies human beings' strenuously attempts to fight against uncertainty. Although Boy says that Godot has postponed his arrival, Vladimir and Estragon still commit to wait for Godot. Godot's uncertain identity and arrival of course must be responded to through patience and investigation. By so doing the existence of human beings would be achieved.

Ultimately, until the end of the play, there is no conclusive identification of who Godot is. There is also no exact information about when Godot would come to see Vladimir and Estragon. Interestingly, despite moving from the place they used to waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon remains quiescent. They still insist to await Godot as they do in the beginning of the play. Thus, the end of the play seems to be the beginning of play; this is very cyclical. Vladimir and Estragon start waiting again and Godot remains mysterious. This is, of course, interwoven with the

concept of post modernism text which does not give obvious ending.

### **Ambiguity of Vladimir and Estragon's Identities**

Besides the split and uncertain identity of Godot that has been presented, the construction of Vladimir and Estragon's identity is worth to be examined. The basic reason for this scrutiny is the fact that Vladimir and Estragon make their identities ambiguous. Both Vladimir and Estragon seem to confront their 'real' names with the new ones which are mentioned by other characters. This phenomenon resembles postmodern text in which two entities are often confronted (see McHale 2001:152). For example, although Estragon knows that his name is Estragon (Gogo), he tells Pozzo that his name is Adam:

Estragon : But take the weight  
off your feet, I  
implore you, you'll  
catch your death.

Pozzo : True. (He sits  
down. To  
Estragon.) What is  
your name?

Estragon : Adam.

(37)

'Adam' does not resemble Estragon's real name that Vladimir has used to refer to him in their conversations. For instance, Vladimir says to Estragon, "Ah Gogo, don't go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better" (53). It is clear here that Estragon's nick name is 'Gogo', not 'Adam'. This contradiction indicates that the name as a part of identity seems unimportant and unessential for Vladimir. It could be easily changed and challenged in the social context in which human beings potentially undergo mutability of identity.

A similar case also occurs to Vladimir. Estragon has called Vladimir 'Didi', like in this utterance, "Don't torment me, Didi" (67). Like nick name 'Gogo' for Estragon, this suggests Vladimir's nick name is 'Didi'. Yet when Boy enters and asks whether Vladimir is 'Mister Albert', Vladimir spontaneously answers 'yes'. Thus Vladimir explicitly deconstructs his own identity and makes other people confused:

Boy : (off). Mister!  
Estragon halts.  
Both look towards  
the voice.

Estragon : Off we go again  
Vladimir : Approach, my child.  
Enter Boy, timidly.  
He halts

Boy : Mister Albert...?  
Vladimir : Yes.

(49)

Vladimir's response to Boy's question in the above passage tends to lead Boy to misidentification bringing about ambiguity. The person Boy is searching for is Mr. Albert, not Vladimir. By agreeing to be called 'Mister Albert', Vladimir creates floating and 'doubled' identity. Moreover, the fact that there is no confirmation about Vladimir's exact name, whether Vladimir (Didi) or Mister Albert, makes Vladimir's identity more uncertain.

Relating to misidentification, in the following passage Vladimir and Boy have difficulty in recognizing each other even though they just met before and talked about Godot. Vladimir hesitates whether he has met Boy or not, while Boy says that he does not know Vladimir:

Vladimir : I've seen you  
before, haven't I?

Boy : I don't know, Sir.

Vladimir : You don't know  
me?

Boy : No Sir.

Vladimir : It wasn't you came  
yesterday?  
Boy : No Sir.

(50)

Vladimir's bad memory results in the difficulty in recognizing Boy. And vice versa, Boy also claims that he has not known Vladimir before. Thus both Vladimir and Boy distort the reality that they have met before. They deconstruct the 'normal' understanding that people must have been familiar to each other after they have met many times. In fact, the identity of Boy revealed in their previous meeting, that Boy is Godot's messenger, cannot be memorized by Vladimir. It is transparent that Vladimir has met Boy before and discussed about Godot: "You have a message from Mr. Godot?". Then Boy answers, "Yes sir" (49).

Later on Vladimir cannot recognize Pozzo and Lucky as well, even he has met them before as well. They seem to be constructed in uncertain relationships resulting in a failure to identify and recall others' identity:

Vladimir : It is Lucky?  
Pozzo : I don't understand.  
Vladimir : And you are Pozzo?  
Pozzo : Certainly I am  
Pozzo.  
Vladimir : The same as  
yesterday?  
Pozzo : Yesterday?  
Vladimir : We met yesterday.  
(Silence.) Do you  
not remember?

(96)

Ironically Vladimir and Pozzo also forget the time they met. This implies that they have difficulties in recalling both the time left and the features of the people they meet. The fact in the above dialogue is also evidence that the identity of the characters is ambiguous and uncertain. It is dialogically

constructed within discursive and dynamic social contexts as well.

## CONCLUSION

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is postmodern drama which depicts uncertain and ambiguous identity. Without conclusive ending, the play tends to let the readers make their own interpretation. From the beginning to the end of the play, Godot cannot be definitely identified because his given attributes are always deconstructed by the characters. Moreover the dialogues containing the attempts of the identification and investigation of Godot are presented incoherently. Before the characters obtain the clue of who Godot is, the dialogues moves to another topic which is not relevant to Godot's identification. As a result, there is no determinacy and coherence within the play. This really underpins the game of the language and the concept of anti narrative—fight against conventional plot—that is used to obscure certain message or information. As consequence, the construction of Godot's identity becomes uncertain and unstable.

Vladimir and Estragon's identities are also ambiguous. Vladimir and Estragon let other characters call them different names (Albert and Adam), instead of their names: Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo). Moreover, Vladimir and Estragon seem to have a problem of memory which exacerbates the identification of the identity of other characters. Thus there is a dialectics of split identities among characters which brings about difficulties in recognizing each other. It is also worth noticing that the name is regarded as a signifier which cannot represent the fixed identity of an individual. It could be easily challenged in the purpose of deconstructing the 'truth' of individual's attributes. As a

result, the identity of Vladimir as well as Estragon entails discursive meanings which are open to critical and multi judgments.

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