



Analysis of tragic deaths reflected in Eugene Eunesco's the lesson

'Pioro Benevolent Lariesto

Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas, Medan'

Corresponding email: pioro_lariesto@ust.ac.id

KEYWORDS

Play,
Death,
Modern Day,
Absurd,

ABSTRACT

The play titled "The Lesson" by Eugene Eunesco serves as a literary portrayal of inexplicable and jarring modern-day deaths, illustrating the societal complexities, notably poverty-induced suffering and social scorn, that contribute to such tragedies. This analysis, employing library research, delves into the demise of a determined young pupil receiving tutoring from her professor. Initially vibrant and ambitious, she meets an untimely end amid the professor's relentless teaching approach. This narrative unveils the nonsensical realities of contemporary society, where deaths arising from frustration and ridicule prevail. Examples include a student's suicide due to financial constraints and a mother's tragic end alongside her children due to economic strains.

KATA KUNCI

Drama,
Kematian,
Dunia Modern,
Absurd,

ABSTRAK

Drama berjudul "The Lesson" karangan Eugene Eunesco berfungsi sebagai gambaran sastra tentang kematian-kematian di dunia modern yang tak terduga dan mengguncang, mengilustrasikan kompleksitas sosial, terutama penderitaan yang disebabkan oleh kemiskinan dan hinaan sosial, yang berkontribusi pada tragedi-tragedi tersebut. Analisis ini, dengan menggunakan penelitian perpustakaan, meneliti tentang kematian seorang murid muda yang bersemangat yang sedang menerima bimbingan dari profesornya. Awalnya penuh semangat dan ambisius, ia mengalami akhir yang prematur di tengah pendekatan mengajar yang tak kenal lelah dari sang profesor. Narasi ini membuka tabir realitas yang tak masuk akal dari masyarakat kontemporer, di mana kematian yang timbul dari frustrasi dan ejekan berlaku. Contoh-contoh termasuk bunuh diri seorang mahasiswa karena tekanan finansial dan akhir tragis seorang ibu bersama anak-anaknya karena tekanan ekonomi.

APA 7th Citation:

Lariesto, P.B. (2024). Analysis of tragic deaths reflected in Eugene Eunesco's the lesson. *Wacana: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra dan Pengajaran*, 22(1), 84-95

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33369/jwacana>

INTRODUCTION

A work of literature represents the social life of the people and their problems and is concerned with all aspects of human life. It has a close relationship between the individual and the society in getting along with the situation of their environments. Literary works imitate the facts of human behavior such as conflicts or clashes, feelings, and all the relationships of the society (Welleck Rene, 1979).

The kind of drama that presents a view of the absurdity of the human condition by abandoning usual or rational devices and by using the non-realistic form is "The Theater of The Absurd". Absurd has taken on the sense of "devoid of justification,

meaning or purpose." Absurd designates the general condition of mankind, to the extent that is experienced and considered unjustified. According to Camus, the absurd was most clearly perceptible in the relationship between man and the world, in the profound breach between man's aspirations and his condition, death being its incomprehensible conclusion (Esslin, 1960). It portrays not a series of connected incidents telling a story but a pattern of images presenting people as bewildered beings in an incomprehensible universe (Anderson, 1971). The meaning of human life has become the background of the writing of the absurd play. Theater of the Absurd tends to depict man as isolated in a purposeless and incomprehensible space and time. Lacking any essential motive or guiding principles or incoherent sense of truth or meaning, man's existence is characterized by anguish anxiety, and absurdity (Gray, 1985). The nature of Theater of the Absurd in general, is an absurd play that reveals five characteristics, they are, human being in despair, illogic action, humor, verbal nonsense, and fantastic happenings. The illogic and the violence of the absurd plays, furthermore, give the play an affinity with dreams, animated cartoons, and antics. The existence of human beings seems like a horrifying puzzle, whereas jokes lead not to merriment but to frustration, sadness, and sorrow (Di Yanni, 1986).

The Theater of The Absurd presents the pessimism, frustration, and hopelessness of man due to the post-war. This sense is being out of harmony, of being at odds of life, is both the cause and consequences of the desperate loneliness and alienation. During the first half of the twentieth-century playwrights experienced the feeling of the absurd and a favorite theme in the Theatre of The Absurd is that communication between people is impossible (Gray, 1985). In contemporary drama or The Theater of The Absurd, tragic comedy takes several forms. One is the play whose seriousness is relieved by a comic moment; another is a play whose comic structure absorbs a tragic moment and continues to express affirmation. Yet another is the dark comedy whose sardonic humor leaves us wondering how we can laugh at something that is ultimately frightening. This is the case with some absurdist comedies, which insist that there is no meaning in events other than the meaning we invent ourselves.

Nevertheless, the term The Theater of The Absurd since the publication of Martin Esslin's study by that name (1961) has been applied to the works of certain specific playwrights who dominated the world of theater during the 1950s and 1960s. At the forefront of this group in France are Samuel Becket, Eugene Ionesco, and Arthur Adamov. Playwrights in this theater see no logic and feel that only the presentation of absurdity can make sense (Anderson, 1971). Eugene Ionesco is a Romanian playwright, born on Nov 26, 1912, in Slatina, Romania to a Romanian father and a French mother. He was one of the foremost playwrights of the Theater of The Absurd. He spent most of his childhood in France, and, while there, had an experience he claimed affected his perception of the world more significantly than any other. He saw that the real world is full of decay, corruption, and meaningless repetitive action. This also coincided with the revelation that death takes everyone in the end. Much of his later work, reflecting this new perception, demonstrates a disgust for the tangible world, a distrust of communication, and the subtle sense that a better world lies just beyond our reach (Anoulih, 2007).

Ionesco thinks that absurd is a term used originally to describe a violation of the rules of logic. It has acquired wide and diverse connotations in modern theology, philosophy, and art, in which it expresses the failure of traditional values to fulfill man's spiritual and emotional needs. Absurd views man to indicate a vision of human beings as isolated from another, as powerless to undertake any truly significant action, and as victims of forces beyond their control. According to him, the theater of the absurd of human experiences is seen as fragmented and purposeless. The search for the truth characteristic of Romantic drama is rejected (Yelland, 1983). Ionesco's works as a whole consist of the depiction of a stifling terror provoked by everything in the world that is absurd and uncontrollable. Both comedy and pathos are created by man's inability to rise above his condition. As Ionesco's play becomes increasingly ambitious, specific obsessions become more and more integrated into two great absurd themes: a thirst for the absolute, which leads to the discovery of being and nothingness, both equally unjustified, and a fear of inexplicable death. Ionesco's art consists of embodying that fundamental anguish in a variety of forms, from dream-like images to intellectual allegories. According to this theory, the invisible must be made visible (Anderson, 1971).

The Lesson's main themes are the absurdity of life, lack of communication and meaning of language among others, and the inexplicable death. The absurdist sees that human lives are essentially without meaning, all human actions are senseless with death as the final incomprehensible conclusion. Death is a feared event in human life, but it is one of the certainties in human life, every living thing must die, there is nothing special about this because it is fate, and the fact that no one in this world can reject it. What makes it special is the way it comes, because death differently comes in every human. Some people may die because of disease, others because of accidents or natural disasters, but some deaths happen because of the ridiculousness and frustration of human beings in the modern world. Death cannot be perceived by common sense, because we find there is no reasonable cause. Death causes shocks because it comes in unpredictable times. This study aims to uncover the death in this play which causes shock, unreasonably, and unperceivable, caused by the frustration of human beings in facing the complexity of the modern world and of being ridiculed by other people.

METHODS

This study applies library research method. This research is carried out through the activities of taking materials collected from several sources—the play written by Eugene Ionesco. The Lesson is treated as the primary source of data for the study, supporting data are taken from books concerning the biography of Eugene Ionesco, some essays and criticism on him, his works, and sociological writings.

DISCUSSION

The Lesson is one of the Absurd plays written by Eugene Ionesco in 1950. It is the story of a young girl pupil who wants to get her total doctorate but is killed by her professor. The young girl pupil has got her science diploma, and arts diploma and has a private professor to give her lessons to achieve her total doctorate three times a week because her parents are fairly rich and want her to get a high advance in education. Her

ability to count is praised by the professor, but the pupil cannot do subtraction, she tends to count. She has memorized all the products of all possible multiplication, then about the fundamental principles of linguistics and comparative philology until the pronunciation problem. During the lesson on pronunciation, the pupil appeared to be unwell, she felt irritated and could not follow the lesson anymore but the professor became more enthusiastic about teaching about pronunciation, the situation then became more strained for the pupil was forced to continue the lesson and to pronounce the clause knife kills, when the professor hears it, he suddenly kills the pupil.

The central character in this play is the pupil, a young girl 18 years old, wearing a gray student's smock, a small white collar, and carrying a student's satchel under her arm. She is a well-brought up girl, polite, but lively, gay, and dynamic, a fresh smile is on her lips but during the lesson, she becomes progressively morose. In the beginning, she was very optimistic that she could get her total doctorate, she was pleasantly welcomed and followed the lesson in the professor's house. She was asked about geographic questions, the name of the capital city of France, the names of the four seasons, and was asked to do a very simple arithmetic. She was asked to add one plus one until one plus seven which she answered correctly and made the professor very impressed with her ability to count, but the problem occurred when the pupil was asked to do subtraction, she didn't know how to subtract three from four. She tends to count.

The pupil was then asked to do multiplication which she could do well, amazingly and quickly, she can multiply until a great number, for she has memorized all the products of all possible multiplication, but her ability to multiply does not satisfy the professor. She feels disappointed because the professor said that she may not be able to qualify for the total doctor's oral, but the partial doctorate, though the pupil felt disappointed, she kept following the lesson about the elements of Linguistics and Comparative Philology of the Neo-Spanish languages. During the lesson, the pupil got toothaches, but the professor did not care and kept continuing the lesson with pronunciation problems. The pupil was forced to pronounce the word knife while the professor brandished the knife under her eyes.

The pupil suffered more and more suffer of toothaches, headaches, and earaches. She got pain in her throat, her neck, her shoulder, but still, the professor continued the lesson and forced her to pronounce the word knife, after successfully pronouncing the word knife, and the pupil was forced to pronounce the clause knife kills. With a very weak, the pupil finally pronounced the clause. When the professor heard that clause he suddenly killed the pupil with that knife. From being very lively at the beginning, she becomes more and more passive. She is almost a mute and inert object until finally, she dies in the professor's hand.

The second character is the professor, an old man aged 50 to 60 years old who has lived in that town for almost 30 years and is usually to receive the pupil who wants to get the lesson. He is a little old man with a little white beard. He wears pince-nez, a black skull cap, a long black school-master's coat, trousers and shoes of black, a detachable white collar, and a black tie. Excessively polite, very timid, his voice deadened by his timidity, very proper, very much the teacher, he even stuttered to talk with the pupil, but during the play, his timidity disappeared progressively and imperceptibly. The professor becomes more and more sure of himself, more and more

nervous, aggressive, and dominating until he can do as he pleases with the pupil, who has become a pitiful creature. He kills the pupil when he teaches the pupil to pronounce the clause knife kills. The professor not only kills the pupil but also strikes her dead body with a second slash of the knife, from the bottom to the top. After killing the pupil, the professor is agitated and calls his maid. He did not admit that he had killed the pupil, he said that it may be the cat who killed the pupil. The professor then even tried to kill the maid with the same knife he used to kill the pupil, but after he was given two loud strong slaps by the maid, the professor fell onto the floor, on his part ss; he sobbed. At the end of the story, together with the maid, the professor buried the pupil's body and then it is known that the pupil was the fortieth pupil who died in the professor's hand.

The minor character in this play is Marie, a stout woman, aged 45 to 50 with red-faced and wears the peasant woman's cap she is the professor's maid. During the Lesson, the maid several times came to the professor's office where the lesson took place to warn the professor about the way the professor taught the pupil. She said that philology would lead to calamity, but the professor did not care for her and asked her to go. After knowing that the professor had killed the pupil, she got very angry with the professor. She said that the professor was a murderer, a bastard, and disgusting but at the end of the story, she kept helping the professor to bury the pupil's body together with another 39 coffins.

Aggressiveness

Aggressiveness is an action to dominate by attacking, domineering, enterprising, and forceful. It is a desire to have control or power or a very strong influence on somebody or something; behaving forcefully without considering the wishes, opinions, or feelings of others. Aggressive people are the people who have power and influence on somebody or something. In this play, Ionesco presents the professor as an aggressive person who wants to dominate his pupil, but his aggressiveness is escorted by ridiculous or illogical actions and verbal nonsense which then caused the death of the pupil at the end of the play. His aggressiveness is started by giving hope and support to the pupil's ambition to get her total doctorate.

Through the dialogue between the professor and the pupil, Ionesco presents the professor as the person who gives chance and support to the pupil's ambition.

Professor : The total doctorate?... You have great courage, young lady, I congratulate you sincerely. We will try; miss, to do our best. In any case, you already know quite a bit, and at so young an age too.

Pupil : Oh, Professor.

Professor : Then, if you'll permit me, pardon me, please. I do think that we ought to get to work. We have scarcely any time to lose. (P 575)

From the dialogue above, Ionesco shows the professor's aggressiveness by agreeing with the pupil's ambition to get her total doctorate, though he knows that the pupil's ambition

is far from reality. With this agreement of the professor, the lesson then starts which then makes the pupil trapped in a situation where the professor dominates the pupil, until finally the pupil dies in the professor's hand.

Professor (marveling at THE PUPIL'S knowledge): Oh, but that's very good. You appear to me to be well along in your studies. You should easily achieve the total doctorate, miss.

Pupil : I'm so glad. Especially to have someone like you tell me this. (P 576)

From the dialogue above, Ionesco presents the Professor as the person who gives big hopes and chances to the pupil's ambition to get her total doctorate, though he knows that the pupil's ambition is far from reality. The action of the professor is irrational because though he knows that the pupil's desire is far from reality, she still agrees with the pupil's ambition and gives big hope to the realization of that ambition. Professor symbolizes the institution that gives chance or hope to society by showing the exaggerated advertisement that seems to bring good things but brings destruction.

The aggressiveness of the professor is covered with his kindness which tends to be ridiculous, but then this ridiculous kindness finally causes the death of the pupil. In the very first beginning of the story, the professor is presented as a foolish creature:

"The professor enters. He is a little old man with a little white beard. He wears pince-nez, a black skull cap, a long black school master's coat, trousers and shoes of black, detachable white collar, a black tie. Excessively polite, very timid, his voice deadened by his timidity, very proper, very much the teacher." (P 572)

Professor : that's fine miss. Thank you, you didn't really need to hurry. I am very sorry to have kept you waiting...I was just finishing up...well...I'm sorry...You will excuse me, won't you?..

Pupil : Oh, certainly, professor. It doesn't matter at all, Professor.

Professor : Please excuse me...Did you have any trouble finding the house? (P 573)

From the dialogue and the quotation above, Ionesco presents the professor as a foolish creature whose actions are ridiculous, especially through the way the professor speaks which is stuttering. The professor is a person with a high level of education and experience in teaching, but the way he speaks to the pupil shows that the professor is a foolish person.

Professor : Perfect, miss. This is perfect. Now if this doesn't bore you...shall we begin?

Pupil : Yes, indeed professor, I am at your disposal.

Professor : At my disposal? (a gleam into his eyes and is quickly extinguished, he begins to make gesture that he suppresses at once) Oh, miss, it is I who am at your disposal. I am only your humble servant. (P 575)

The dialogue above shows the verbal nonsense of the professor. He is a professor who gives lessons to the pupil to achieve her total doctorate, but through the dialogue above,

the professor says that he is only a humble servant of the pupil. The professor symbolizes the people who usually want to dominate, for the first time they act to be humble, but actually, this is their way to dominate.

In real life, it is shown through the campaign of many political figures who always say that they are just servant society who want to work for the prosperity of the society, but the fact it is just their way to make society sympathize with them to have authority on the society so that they will have domination on the society until they can do what they please.

The aggressiveness of the professor is also escorted with illogical actions in the way of the professor's teaching the pupil.

- Professor : No. I don't know it either, young lady, but if you'll permit me, can you tell me, Paris is the capital city of...miss?*
- Pupil (searching her memory for a moment, then happily guessing): Paris is the capital city of ...France?*
- Professor : Yes, young lady, bravo, that's perfect. My congratulations. You have your French geography at your finger tips. You know your chief cities. (P 573)*

Through the dialogue above, it is shown the illogical action of the professor who asks the pupil about the capital city of France. As French and educated people, certainly, they know their chief city.

- ...
- Professor : Seven and one?*
- Pupil : Eight*
- Professor : Seven and one?*
- Pupil : Eight again.*
- Professor : Very well answered. Seven and one?*
- Pupil : Eight once more*
- Professor : Perfect. Excellent. Seven and one?*
- Pupil : Eight again. And sometimes nine.*
- Professor : Magnificent. You are magnificent. You are exquisite. I congratulate you warmly, miss. There's scarcely any point in going on. At addition you are a past master. (P.577)*

Through the dialogue above, it is shown the illogical action of the professor by asking that easy subtraction is appropriately addressed to the elementary school pupil, not to the pupil who has her science and arts diploma and wants to achieve her total doctorate. The way that the professor praises the ability of the pupil to do subtraction is also shown by the illogical action of the professor. The way the professor praises the pupil seems that she has done a great job, while the pupil's ability to answer the question of the professor is not a special thing, but instead tends to be ridiculous that she deserves to get the praise from the professor. The way the professor gives praises to the pupil symbolizes people who like to exaggerate someone's ability by giving excessive praise, but actually, it is the way to dominate. All the ridiculousness, verbal nonsense, and illogical actions of the professor are the way of the professor to have domination on the

pupil. The aggressiveness of the professor which then causes the death of the pupil at the end of the story is covered by ridiculousness, verbal nonsense, and illogical actions of the professor. This condition then causes the death of the pupil as a shock event.

The change of the professor from seeming like a foolish creature at the beginning of the story to being an aggressive person who dominates the pupil during the lesson is the way Ionesco mocks the stability of the modern world, where everything can change fast. The professor is an old man who has a lot of experience in teaching his pupils, but in this play, the professor is presented as a person who can change fast, a person who has no stability in emotion and behavior. It shows that he cannot control himself, he becomes an uncontrollable person. The change of the professor is also a way Ionesco emphasizes his declaration that 'We cannot be sure of anything in this world', because although the person that is considered to be a good person and has a lot of knowledge and experience can be changed to be aggressive and kills another. It is a declaration of Ionesco about the situation of the modern world where everything is questioned and doubtful. We even cannot believe the people who are close to us. It is now a fact that we easily find in our environment that a father kills his son or instead a son kills his father just because of a simple problem.

The aggressiveness of the professor becomes more and more serious during the professor giving the lecture about linguistic and philology. He terrorize his pupil by showing his authority.

Professor : I want you to listen now with the greatest possible attention to a lecture I have prepared.

Pupil : Yes, professor.

Professor : ...Thanks to which, in fifteen minutes' time, you will be able to acquire the fundamental principles of the linguistic and comparative philology of neo- Spanish languages.

Pupil : Yes, Professor, oh good! (She claps her hands.)

Professor (with authority): Quiet! What do you mean by that? (P 582)

Through the dialogue above, Ionesco presents the aggressiveness of the professor which is become more and more real. He shows his authority which then he used to dominate the pupil until the pupil suffers and become a pitiful creature in his hands. This episode is the beginning of the situation which shows death of the stability between the professor and the pupil.

Professor : Say: Knife...kni...fe...

Pupil : No! My ears hurt, I hurt all over...

Professor : I'm going to tear them off, your ear, that's what I'm going to do to you, and then they won't hurt you anymore, my pet.

Pupil : Oh...you're hurting me, oh, you're hurting me...

Professor : Look, come on, quickly, repeat after me: "kni"...

Pupil : Oh, since you insist...knife...knife... (in a lucid moment, ironically) Is that neo-Spanish...?

Professor : If you like, yes, it's neo-Spanish, but hurry up...we haven't got time...And then, what do you mean by that insidious question? What are you up to?

Pupil (becoming more and more exhausted, weeping, desperate, at the same time both exasperated and in a trance): Ah!

Professor : Repeat, watch. (He imitates a cuckoo :) Knife, knife... Knife...knife, knife...knife, knife...

Pupil : Oh, my head...aches... (With her hand she caressingly touches the parts of her body as she names them :)...My eyes...

Professor (like a cuckoo): Knife, knife...knife, knife... (P592)

The professor does not care at all about the condition of the pupil, though the pupil has told him for several times that she is not in good condition, but the professor keeps continuing the lesson. He even intimidates the pupil by saying that he will tear of the pupil's ear. The pupil then becomes a pitiful creature in the Professor's hand without she can do anything.

Professor : Repeat, repeat: knife...knife...knife...

Pupil : I've got pain...my throat, neck...oh, my shoulders...my breast...knife...

Professor : Knife...knife...knife...

Pupil : My hips...knife...my thighs...kni...

Professor : Pronounce it carefully...knife...knife...

Pupil : Knife...my throat...

Professor : Knife...knife...

Pupil : Knife...my shoulders...my arms, my breast, my hips... Knife...knife...

Professor : That's right...Now; you're pronouncing it well...

Pupil : Knife...my breast...my stomach...

Professor (changing his voice): Pay attention...don't break my window...the knife kills...

Pupil (in a weak voice) : Yes, yes...the knife kills?

Professor (striking THE PUPIL with a very spectacular blow of the knife): Aaah! That'll teach you! (P 592)

The episode above is the climax of the aggressiveness of the professor. He forces the pupil to pronounce the clause knife kills and kills the pupil with a knife which he used during the lesson of pronunciation. Finally, the aggressiveness of the professor with his ridicule, illogical action and verbal nonsense in teaching the pupil causes death of the pupil. At the end of the play it is said that this pupil is the fortieth pupil that has been killed by the professor.

Through the play, Ionesco wants to show the death of stability, self-control, common sense, and finally death physically as the result of the ridiculousness and the frustration of human beings in the modern world. The changes of the professor from very timid at the beginning of the story to an aggressive person in teaching the pupil symbolizes the government which acts like a servant society and gives imaginary hope to the society but then uses the authority to dominate and cause great suffering to the society which then leads to the destruction.

Ambition

Ambition is an eagerness or a strong desire to achieve something. Ambition can bring positive or negative effects on the person who owns it. In positive effects, ambition usually gives encouragement and spirit to do best to achieve what is become the ambition, but in negative effects, ambition can bring disaster or even death if it becomes a strong excessive desire to achieve something, especially the ambition to achieve something which is far from the reality or absurd.

In The lesson, Ionesco presents the pupil as an ambitious girl. She wants to get her total doctorate though she has got her science diploma and arts diploma. She wants to qualify for her total doctorate in a very short time, which is in 3 weeks which brings her to the professor's house to get the lesson to realize her ambition, but her ambition finally brings her to death.

- Professor* : And you wish to qualify for...?
Pupil : Just as soon as possible, for the total doctor's oral. They're in three weeks' time.
Professor : You already have your high school diploma, if you'll pardon the question?
Pupil : Yes, professor, I have my science diploma and my arts diploma, too (P 574)

From the dialogue above, Ionesco shows the ridiculous ambition of the pupil who is very optimistic that she wants to get the doctor's oral three times a week though she has her science diploma and arts diploma. The pupil presents the condition of modern people who have never been satisfied and have no limited desires, but to possess as much as they can.

In real life, it is proved by the development of technology, especially the development of technology which develops fast to fulfill the desires of human beings who have never been satisfied.

- Pupil* : Oh, I do hope Professor. I have a great thirst of knowledge. My parents also want me to get an education. They want me to specialize. They consider a little general culture, even if it is solid, is no longer enough, in these times.
Professor : Your parents, miss, are perfectly right. You must go on with your studies. Forgive me for saying so, but it is very necessary. Our contemporary life has become most complex.
Pupil : And so very complicated too... My parents are fairly rich, I'm lucky. They can help me in my work, help me in my very advanced studies (P 574)

From the dialogue above, it is shown that the ambition of the pupil not only comes from herself but also from the encouragement of her parents and the chance that she has,

because her parents are fairly rich which gives her has chance to have her private professor to give her lesson to achieve her total doctorate.

- Professor* : Ah, you're very advanced, even perhaps too advanced for your age. And which doctorate do you wish to qualify for? In the physical sciences or in moral philosophy?
- Pupil* : My parents are very much hoping - if you think it will be possible in such a short time - they very much hope that I can qualify for the total doctorate (P 575)

From the dialogue above, Ionesco once again emphasizes the ambition of the pupil to get her total doctorate in a short time, because of the encouragement of her parents. The pupil's parents symbolize the situation of modern society that forces human beings to possess everything as much as they can achieve to exist in the modern world. As it is said by Ionesco in this play our contemporary world has become more complex, because in this modern world, there is hard competition among modern people, so people must have knowledge or skills to exist in the competitive modern world.

At the beginning of the story, Ionesco presents the pupil as an optimistic young girl. Her ambition to get the total doctorate makes her to be a very enthusiastic and confident girl.

"She seems to be a well- brought - up girl, polite, but lively, gay, dynamic, a fresh smile is on her lips" (P572)

It can also be seen through the dialogue between the pupil and the professor at their first meeting.

- Professor* : Good morning, young lady. You...I expect that you...that you are the new pupil?
- Pupil (turns quickly with a lively and self-assured manner; she gets up, goes Towards THE PROFESSOR, and gives him her hand) : Yes, professor. Good morning, Professor. As you see, I'm on time. I didn't want to be late. (P 573)*

From the dialogue above, we can see that the way the pupils speak to the Professor shows her self-confidence. She made a very good performance in the first meeting with the professor.

The pupil is the symbol of the modern people or society whose ambition is far from reality. It happens not only because modern people have unlimited desires and have never been satisfied with what they have got, but also because of the complexity of the modern world which forces human beings to have everything to be able to exist in the modern world competition. Both these two factors cause human beings to have the ridiculous ambitions of modern people.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the deaths of the pupils in Eugene Ionesco's The Lesson are used to represent unperceivable, unreasonable, and shocking deaths. The pupil died when she came to the professor's house to get the lesson to achieve her total doctorate

three times a week because of the encouragement of her parents. At the beginning of the story, she is very ambitious, lively, gay, dynamic, and optimistic but during the lesson, she feels irritated because of the aggressiveness of the professor, who forces her to continue the lesson though she is not in good condition, until finally she died in the professor's hand.

The play reflects the absurd reality in modern times about the unperceivable, unreasonable, and shocking death of modern people. Deaths do not happen because of natural disasters, illness, accidents, or conflicts but because of the frustration of human beings in facing the complexity of modern times and being ridiculed by other people. The suicide of a student because of the inability of his parents to pay the school fee is one of the examples of unperceivable, unreasonable, and shocking deaths. The pupil's action which finally leads to his death happened because of the pressures of being ridiculed by people in his school. Another example is the suicide of a mother and her children because of poverty that become a very serious problem, especially in this modern world. Both these two cases above are the deaths of modern people which are reflected in the deaths of the pupils in this play.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, M. e. (1971). *Crowell's Handbook Of Contemporary Drama; A Critical Handbook of Plays and Playwriting Since The Second World War*. United States: Crowell Company, Inc.
- Anoulih, J. (2007, - -). *Eugene Ionesco-French dramatist*. Retrieved from Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/art/dramatic-literature>
- Di Yanni, R. (1986). *Literature Reading; Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Essay; Second Edition*. McGraw: Hills Inc.
- Esslin, M. (1960). The Theatre of the Absurd. *The Tulane Drama Review*, 3-15.
- Gray, M. (1985). *A Dictionary Of Literary Terms* . Hongkong: Longman York Press.
- Welleck Rene, A. W. (1979). *Theory of Literature*. London: Hard Court, Brace and World Inc.
- Yelland, P. (1983). *The World from The Twenties of The Eighties*. New York: Harper Publisher.