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THE ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION OF PSYCHOLINGUISTIC CONTRADICTIONS IN MEURSAULT'S SPEECH IN ALBERT CAMUS'S *L'ÉTRANGER*

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Abstract

French literature has always paid special attention to the depiction of the inner world of human beings. It is not limited to the narration of events, but deeply explores the hidden layers of consciousness, moral conflicts, inner contradictions, and existential uncertainty. In this process, language occupies a central place as the main means of expressing thought and emotion.

In this sense, **psycholinguistic contradictions**—that is, inconsistencies between thought, speech, and emotion—play a crucial role in literary characters' discourse. Through paradoxes, silences, syntactic breaks, and hesitation, writers reveal the complex psychological states of their characters. Language thus becomes not merely a tool of communication, but a mirror of the soul.

Within French literature, such contradictions often serve to express the tension between the individual and society, between personal truth and social norms. Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*) is a particularly striking example of this phenomenon, embodied in the character of Meursault.



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Keywords: Psycholinguistic contradictions, French literature, emotional experience, verbal expression, society, paradoxical happiness.

Psycholinguistic Contradictions as an Expression of Inner Conflict

Psycholinguistic contradictions arise from the tension between a character's inner desires and the moral or social demands imposed by society. As a result, speech becomes a space in which opposing forces within consciousness collide.

In classical French literature, this can be observed in Racine's tragedies, particularly in the character of Phèdre, whose language oscillates between confession and denial, revealing the struggle between forbidden desire and moral duty. In Madame de Lafayette's *The Princess of Clèves*, silences, half-confessions, and restrained expressions reflect the conflict between personal love and social obligation.

Thus, psycholinguistic contradiction is not a simple linguistic inconsistency; it is the artistic expression of a divided psyche.

Psycholinguistic Contradictions in Meursault's Speech

In Camus's *The Stranger*, Meursault's manner of speaking is radically opposed to the emotional norms expected by society. His language is simple, factual, and emotionally detached, which creates a sharp contrast with the values of the social world around him.

ANALYSIS

The novel opens with the famous sentence:

« *Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas.* »

This statement shows Meursault's emotional indifference toward his mother's death, which contradicts society's expectation of grief. From a psycholinguistic perspective, this represents a rupture between emotional experience and verbal expression.

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Another characteristic phrase is:

« *Cela m'était égal.* »

This repeated expression illustrates Meursault's emotional emptiness and his detachment from social and moral norms.

The motif of the sun also plays a crucial role in the murder scene:

« *Le soleil était écrasant.* »

« *C'était le même soleil que le jour où j'avais enterré maman.* »

Here, the external environment exerts pressure on the character's consciousness, symbolizing the conflict between human will and the forces of nature.

During the trial, Meursault is judged not only for the murder but even more for his emotional behavior:

« *On m'a reproché de n'avoir pas pleuré à l'enterrement de maman.* »

Society condemns him for failing to perform socially expected emotions, revealing the clash between individual authenticity and social formalism.

Meursault refuses to feign remorse:

« *J'ai dit que je ne regrettais rien.* »

This expresses his loyalty to truth rather than to social hypocrisy.

Finally, near death, Meursault states:

« *J'ai senti que j'avais été heureux, et que je l'étais encore.* »

This paradoxical happiness in the face of death embodies Camus's philosophy of the absurd: inner peace arises from the acceptance of life's meaninglessness.

Aesthetic and Interpretive Significance of Psycholinguistic Contradictions

Psycholinguistic contradictions greatly enhance the artistic value of the novel. They make Meursault a psychologically credible character, since real human consciousness is inherently fragmented and unstable.

Such contradictions also encourage active interpretation by the reader. Silences, ambiguities, and paradoxes transform the text into an open field of meaning. In Camus's work, tragedy is not only personal but also philosophical and social.



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Meursault becomes a symbol of the modern individual alienated from society's moral frameworks.

CONCLUSION

In *The Stranger*, psycholinguistic contradictions operate on the levels of individual psychology, social morality, and existential philosophy. Through Meursault's speech, Camus reveals the deep conflict between personal truth and socially imposed values.

Language becomes a mirror of the soul, reflecting inner division, alienation, and existential solitude. By transforming psychological inconsistency into artistic form, Camus creates one of the most powerful expressions of modern human consciousness in twentieth-century literature.

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