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## SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATION OF REACTIVE UTTERANCES IN DRAMATIC TEXT

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### Abstract

This study is devoted to the linguistic analysis of reactive utterances and their semantic groups in dramatic text. In the paper, a reactive utterance is interpreted as a speech unit that is formed in semantic relation to a preceding stimulus utterance during dialogue, ensures the semantic coherence of communication, and determines the further development of conversation. The research distinguishes declarative, interrogative, and imperative types of reactive utterances, and each of them is consistently analyzed from structural-semantic, communicative, and pragmatic perspectives. In particular, interrogative reactive utterances are examined through their clarifying, confirmatory, counter-question, and doubt-assumption forms, while imperative reactive utterances are illustrated with examples of dispute-closing, soft prohibition, and emotive types. As a result, the reactive utterance in dramatic text is scientifically substantiated as an important linguistic unit constituting dialogue, while its semantic groups are identified as the main mechanisms ensuring the semantic and pragmatic development of communication.

**Keywords:** Reactive utterance, dramatic text, dramatic speech, dialogue, stimulus utterance, declarative reactive utterance, interrogative reactive utterance, imperative reactive utterance, semantic groups, communicative function, pragmatic feature, dialogic unit, speech act.

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### Introduction

**Utterance (replica)** is the direct expression of a character's speech, and the sequence of utterances constitutes the main structure of dialogue in a dramatic work<sup>1</sup>. It is well known that in the dramatic genre, character speech occupies a central position, and it is precisely this speech that serves as the primary means for the formation and development of dramatic action. Although drama, by its nature, is based on dialogic speech, the dramatic text is not limited solely to dialogue. In this regard, the representative of European linguistics, Berkner, notes the following: "Character speech manifests itself in two main forms: dialogue — a form of communication consisting of the rapid exchange of short or relatively extended utterances between two or more characters; and monologue — a relatively extended, coherent speech delivered by a character when alone on stage<sup>2</sup>." According to researchers, these two forms of speech function both as the driving force of dramatic action and as the primary means of revealing character traits.

In linguistics, the concept of an utterance has been studied from various theoretical perspectives, and its content is interpreted through several scholarly approaches. First, the utterance is interpreted as a syntactic unit, that is, a segment of speech formed in the shape of a sentence or a group of sentences; such an interpretation makes it possible to determine its grammatical structure, its nature as a syntactic unit, and its constructive features. Second, the utterance is described as a semantic unit, in which case it is studied as a component that conveys a complete idea, message, or meaning. Third, the utterance is interpreted as a pragmatic unit, since it expresses specific communicative intentions such as questioning, commanding, denying, confirming, or evaluating<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, it is necessary to analyze the utterance as a discursive unit, because it should not be regarded merely as a single instance of speech, but rather as a

<sup>1</sup> Волькенштейн В.М. Композиция драматического произведения. – Москва: Искусство, 1969. – 192 с.

<sup>2</sup> Беркнер Л. И. Язык драматургии. – Москва: Просвещение, 1982. – 128 с.

<sup>3</sup> Виноградов В. В. О языке художественной литературы. – Москва: Высшая школа, 2001. – 312 с.

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sequential and interconnected element of dialogue within discourse. As M. N. Kojina emphasizes, each element of dialogic speech is closely connected with other elements, and it is precisely this interconnection that determines the formation of communicative strategies between characters<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the utterance in dramatic text is not studied as an isolated independent unit, but within the framework of contextual relations, the overall flow of communication, the stage situation, and the interactions between characters.

**Reactive utterance** is a response-type speech unit that is formed in semantic connection with a preceding stimulus utterance in the process of dialogue and serves to continue the conversational turn. Such utterances ensure the semantic coherence of communication, determine the direction of the conversation, and shape the next stage of dialogue by expressing a corresponding reaction to the request, question, command, or evaluation conveyed in the stimulus utterance. Therefore, reactive utterances can be semantically divided into several types:

1. **Declarative reactive utterance.**
2. **Interrogative reactive utterance.**
3. **Imperative reactive utterance.**

### 1. Declarative Reactive Utterance

A declarative reactive utterance is a speech unit formed in response to a preceding stimulus utterance, which formally appears as a declarative sentence and semantically ensures the coherence of communication by confirming, denying, explaining, or expanding the previous speech. According to M. Pfister, a specialist in drama linguistics, this type of utterance is interpreted as a principal mechanism that sustains stage action, reveals a character's position, and develops conflict<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Кожина М. Н. Стилистика русского языка. – Москва: Флинта, 2003. – 180 с.

<sup>5</sup> Pfister M. The Theory and Analysis of Drama. Cambridge UP, 1988, pp. 67-70.

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Declarative stimulus utterances may either confirm or deny the speech statement expressed in the reactive utterance. For example:

Olimjon: What could I do? I'll take the remaining intact parts and use them as spare parts.

Qo'chqor: Yes, take the surviving parts and keep them — they're a souvenir... (Sharof Boshbekov, "The Iron Woman")

In this dialogue, Qo'chqor's utterance, "Yes, take the surviving parts and keep them — they're a souvenir...", appears as a declarative reactive utterance, because it is directly formed as a response to Olimjon's stimulus statement, "What could I do? I'll take the remaining intact parts and use them as spare parts." Although this utterance, structured as a declarative sentence, conveys a confirming response, its meaning is more complex than a simple affirmation.

### 2. Interrogative Reactive Utterance

An interrogative reactive utterance is a speech unit that is formed in the course of conversation as a direct response to a preceding stimulus utterance; however, instead of providing an answer, it takes the form of a question. Such an utterance reopens the semantic direction of the conversation, redistributes communicative roles and positions, and prompts the interlocutor to provide additional information. In these cases, the listener may aim to avoid giving a direct answer, change the topic, initiate an argument, or take control of the conversation by posing a question.

English scholars such as Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson characterize this phenomenon as an "unpreferred response" in conversation and emphasize that such reactive utterances are "One of the main mechanisms for avoiding an answer or taking control of the conversation"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sacks H., Schegloff E. A., Jefferson, G. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, -1974, 696-735.

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According to their semantic content, interrogative reactive utterances are divided into the following types:

1. **InterRR expressing a clarifying question.**
2. **InterRR expressing a confirmatory question.**
3. **InterRR expressing a question in response to a question.**
4. **InterRR expressing doubt or assumption.**

### 1. InterRR Expressing a Clarifying Question

This type of reactive utterance is used when some aspect of an idea, piece of information, or statement expressed during conversation is unclear, not fully understood, or insufficiently revealed semantically. It takes the form of a question aimed at clarifying meaning, supplementing information, or checking comprehension.

For example:

Suvon: ...So, you intend to replace your wife?

Qo'chqor: Pardon? What do you mean by that, sir?

(Sharof Boshbekov, "The Iron Woman")

### 2. InterRR Expressing a Confirmatory Question

This is a speech unit that emerges in the form of re-asking or verification with the purpose of confirming the information expressed in the preceding stimulus utterance. In this type of utterance, the interlocutor shows partial doubt regarding the correctness of the statement, yet still seeks to determine whether it corresponds to reality. Such reactive questions are semantically aimed at verifying ideas that have already been generally understood but still require cautious reconfirmation. In the process of conversation, they activate a chain of verification and confirmation of the information presented by the speaker.

For example:

Qalimbet: Do you recognize this one?

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Orol bobo: Who?.. ...Gulzira?  
(Erkin A'zam, "The Lonely Boat")

### 3. InterRR Expressing a Question in Response to a Question

This is a reactive speech unit that serves to change the semantic direction of communication, temporarily avoid the obligation to answer, or move the conversation to a new stage by responding to the interlocutor's question not with a direct answer, but with another question.

For example:

Qo'chqor: ...After all, I'm a man, Alomatxon...

Alomat: And what business do you have with me, "man"?

(Sharof Boshbekov, "The Iron Woman")

### 4. InterRR Expressing Doubt or Assumption

This is a reactive speech unit in the form of an interrogative sentence that is formed in response to a stimulus utterance and expresses doubt or mistrust regarding the correctness or reliability of the information contained in it. The primary function of such an utterance is not merely to confirm the message, but rather to express suspicion toward it, encourage the interlocutor to reconsider what has been said, or compel them to explain their position.

For example:

Qalimbet: And what about this one?..

Orol bobo: ...Could this be your youngest child?

(Ekin A'zam, "The Lonely Boat")

### 3. Imperative Reactive Utterance

An imperative reactive utterance is a reactive speech unit formed in response to a preceding stimulus utterance and semantically expressing meanings such as command, appeal, restriction, warning, or exhortation. It conveys a

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communicative intention aimed at stopping, continuing, modifying, or regulating the interlocutor's action in relation to their utterance. In such utterances, the speaker demonstrates an active stance toward the situation and directs the subsequent course of conversation through contextual pressure.

Semantically, imperative reactive utterances are divided into the following types:

1. **ImpRR expressing the closure of an argument**
2. **ImpRR expressing soft prohibition**
3. **Emotive imperative ImpRR**

### 1. ImpRR Expressing the Closure of an Argument

This is a reactive speech form used to stop, conclude, or reject the continuation of a dispute, argument, or heated discussion that arises during conversation. Formally expressed as an imperative sentence, such utterances serve to limit the further development of the conversation, bring the argument to a close at a certain point, and compel the interlocutor either to withdraw from communication or to terminate the topic immediately.

For example:

Qalimbet (laughing): That's all!.. If it were up to you, the whole world would consist of nothing but Orol...

Orol bobo: Get up, go away!

(Ekin A'zam, "The Lonely Boat")

### 2. ImpRR Expressing Soft Prohibition

This is a reactive speech unit that expresses a response to the interlocutor's proposal, command, wish, or action not in a direct and rigid form such as "no," but rather in a softened form that rejects or limits it. Instead of imposing a harsh prohibition, this type of utterance seeks to preserve communicative politeness through gentle warning, cautious refusal, or indirect indication of the inappropriateness of the situation.

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For example:

Qo‘chqor (reaching toward Alomat’s neck): Right away, sir!..

Suvon: “Hey, hey, hey, Qo‘chqorbek! Be patient — at least let me perform the marriage rite first!..”

(Sharof Boshbekov, “The Iron Woman”)

### 3. Emotive Imperative ImpRR

This is a reactive speech unit in which strict imperative meaning is not explicitly expressed; rather, it is softened by emotional-semantic connotative elements such as affection, tenderness, hesitation, or discomfort. Such an utterance is formed as a response to a preceding stimulus utterance and guides the direction of communication through the interlocutor’s emotional attitude.

The primary function of this type of utterance in dramatic text is to deviate from the topic, gently interrupt the conversation, or preserve the socio-psychological balance of the interaction through an emotional response.

For example:

Qo‘chqor (excited): Don’t turn it off, don’t turn it off! (To the robot.)  
Alomatxon!.. Speak, Alomatxon!.. Say those kinds of things!..

Alomat: Oh, my goodness!.. Oh, go on!..

(Sharof Boshbekov, “The Iron Woman”)

Thus, in dramatic text, the reactive utterance is formed in semantic connection with a preceding stimulus utterance and emerges as an important speech unit that ensures the semantic coherence and communicative development of dialogue. The findings of the study made it possible to distinguish declarative, interrogative, and imperative types of reactive utterances, each of which performs a specific semantic and pragmatic function in dramatic communication. In particular, declarative reactive utterances determine the further course of dialogue through affirmation, negation, and explanation; interrogative reactive utterances do so through clarification, verification, counter-questioning, and doubt or

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assumption; while imperative reactive utterances shape the subsequent direction of dialogue through command, restriction, warning, and emotive attitude. As a result, the reactive utterance has been scientifically substantiated as an important linguistic unit constituting the internal dialogic mechanism of dramatic text and revealing inter-character relations, conflict, and communicative strategy.

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