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## Dialogues as an Involvement Strategy in Kadare's Novel *The Fall of the Stone City*

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### *Abstract:*

Discourse is not just a form of language use, but also a cognitive and social accomplishment within a communicative context. This article aims to interpret dialogues in Kadare's novel *The Fall of the Stone City* through a combination of methods of discourse analysis and conversation analysis. The object of this analysis are the direct dialogues, in which characters are represented through their own voice, and where the narrator evades his/her own intervention during the transmission of the character's sensory experience and does not give to the reader an indication of any sort of privileged information regarding the condition of the character. The central focus of this analysis is involvement strategies, as the basic principle in both conversational and literary discourse. The spoken genre is characterized by fragmentation and involvement, whereas the written genre is characterized by integration and detachment. The comparison of spoken and written narratives suggests that normal conversation and literary discourse have many similarities between them. The examination of the dialogues in Kadare's novel *The Fall of the Stone City* clearly shows that the author combines involvement with integration in building scenes and triggering emotions. He uses familiar strategies, like repair and repetition in creating coherence and involvement, which are intentional in creating meaning.

**Keywords:** *Albanian Literature, Conversation Analysis, Dialogues, Involvement Strategies, Novel*

### *1. Introduction*

According to Benveniste (1971: 223-230) the meaning of grammatical person only includes the first and second person, since the third one is a non-person (otherness) that exists outside of discourse, a person that linguistics perceives as an absence regarding the pragmatic aspect of personal pronouns. The pragmatic aspect of personal pronouns makes them stand apart from the other lexical words: 'I' and 'you' are products of the reality of discourse and can be identified only in the

discourse containing them, whereas he/she exists outside of discourse, as a non-person (otherness), as mentioned above.

According to Bakhtin, every use of language is dialogic. In a novel, dialogue is a complex process, it is the animation of the voices that make history come alive to the reader and engage him as a role (Hymes 1973: 14-15). Dialogue is essential in interpreting prose: not dialogue *per se*, which is an exchange of spoken lines and the central object of conversation analysis, but rather the polyphonic nature of every statement and every word (Tannen 2007: 103). Dialogue structures, along with their social and interpersonal functions, are cognitively interpreted, programmed, planned, monitored, and executed [...] The argumentative and narrative structuring, starting with its style and local variations and speech, is a cognitive reflection of knowledge, beliefs and behavior, as much as mental operations or the strategies used for memorization, storing and usage in discourse (Van Dijk 1987: 2).

According to Culler (1983), the novel, more than any other literary form, perhaps more than any other type of writing, serves as a model through which society imagines itself, as a discourse in which and through which the world is articulated. From this perspective, the comparison between everyday conversation and the dialogues constructed by the author is of interest from a linguistic, as well as a literary criticism standpoint not just in describing the text's formal characteristics, but also to highlight its functional significance in interpreting it.

For Bakhtin, stylistic assessments such as "the individuality of the author's language" destroy the essence of the stylistics of a novel, since they reduce the polyphonic voices and the multilingual elements to a single system of authorial linguistic individuality. Thus, the language of the other, or the characters' speech in a novel creates dialogism and the dialogue of languages in any moment of the narration enables the author to not necessarily maintain a uniform, single and unique language and also to not conclusively define himself/herself in terms of language (Bakhtin 1981: 259-422).

## 2. *Conversational involvement*

The comparison between real conversation and prose dialogue has been at the focus of studies in the field of discourse analysis over the recent decades (Chafe 1985, Tannen; 2007, Bahktin 1975, Goodwin 1981, Merritt 1982, Duranti 1986, Scollon and Scollon 1984 etc.). Conversational involvement is the central focus in these studies. For Gumperz (1984) the foundation of language understanding is conversational involvement, i.e., active participation in the conversation.

Research has highlighted the active role of the listener in understanding and interpreting the speaker's discourse, seeing the conversation as a product achieved by the participants in it. Ron Scollon and Suzanne Scollon (1984) in their analysis of Athabaskan storytellers recount how the storytellers shape their writing in response to their listeners' feedback, because interaction with the audience is essential. In Athabaskan culture, every person hones their storytelling skills, and their stories stand out for their conversational involvement.

Dialogic involvement does not denote passive understanding, but rather active participation, something that Goodwin (1981) labels 'conversational involvement' and Merritt (1982) 'silent involvement': it is an obvious state of being coordinated in interaction, which differs from distant experiencing (Tannen 2007: 27). For Chafe, involvement is mostly an inner state of mind that is manifested through linguistic statements. Tannen adds to these interpretations the emotional aspect connecting speakers with one another as it connects them with places, things, activities, ideas, and the world.

In *The Fall of the Stone City*, the novel that we are analyzing here, dialogues have an essential function in plot construction and are not there only as an element of the structure of the novel. Their own construct, as we will observe below, not only coincides with the nature of narration, but is in many cases a constituting element.

### 3. *Partial/broken dialogues*

From the beginning of the novel up to the fourth chapter, we only encounter dialogues in which the part of the real interlocutor, i.e., the part of the second person in the conversation, is missing. According to conversation analysis, the basic unit on which a conversation is built is sequence, which is made up of at least two talking turns made by two different speakers. One of the most prominent features of the conversation is that in several turns, speaking during a conversation happens in pairs (Hutchby 1998: 43). Greeting formulas, questions and answers, invitations/acceptances or refusals are typical examples of this linguistic arrangement.<sup>1</sup> The basic features of these pairs are: "(1) They consist of two turns (2) by different speakers, (3) which are placed next to each other in their basic minimal form, (4) which are ordered and (5) which are differentiated into pair types." (Liddicoat 2007: 106). Point 4) of the above definition should be understood as one of the parts of each of the pairs always being in front of the other, i.e., in the pair question/answer, the question always comes first, whereas point 5) that some speech constructions are projected to initiate an action, while others to add to the action that has already started.

For Sacks, sequences need to be studied, as they are a way of saying something about "how the world works [...] I am saying something that has to be discovered from a consideration of the way the world works that produces these kinds of sequences" (Sacks 1992: 538). This was carried further by Schegloff (2007), who took the level of research in conversation analysis much further.

"Pass through, mister German, as you promised: transiting. You don't try me - I don't try you. Achtung! Did you tan Greece's and Serbia's hide? That's none of my business. Give me Kosovo and Çamëria, jawohl!"<sup>2</sup>

What we have here is an atypical structure of several consecutive sentences built on adjacency pairs, where the second part of the pair is missing. The context clarifies that this is not a monologue or an inner speech of the character; it is a series of spoken utterances by inhabitants of Gjirokastër, as they prepare for the impending German invasion during World War II.

These structures are direct dialogues. In prose dialogues not only does every utterance belong to the dialogue, but even the listening and understanding are an active part of it, as they require active interpretation, not just passive reception (Tannen 2007: 103). Even in real

<sup>1</sup>The concept of adjacency pairs was first introduced into conversation analysis by Sacks and Schegloff (1973) in their paper "Opening up Closings", where they state that this is one of the most basic forms of speech used to build a conversation. Research by Sacks at the time, (published in 1992) and Schegloff's article "On some Questions and Ambiguities in Conversation", written in 1972 (published in 1984), showed in various ways that adjacency pairs are a separate and strong form of sequential structuring (Arminen; 2007: 222). With this and future research, they aimed to develop a functional grammar of conversation.

<sup>2</sup>The translation of the excerpts from the novel was made by the authors of this article unless otherwise specified.

conversations, according to the basic conversation analysis model laid out by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), the roles between speaker and listener in a conversation are not purely such, as both interlocutors construct the turn-taking in a conversation.

This dialogue construction by Kadare, where the active second part is “missing”, is intentional. This “absence” is a strategy employed to engage the reader. It is precisely the absence here that is an important part of the tumultuous and rather unclear situation regarding what is happening in the city. Is Albania being invaded by Germany, or are the Germans just passing by? Or are the Germans the saviors who would make ethnic Albania a reality, as written in the leaflets dropped from airplanes? The residents’ need for answers remains suspended; it is expressed precisely through absence, through “exhausting” silence, as the most effective strategy used by the author to reach the climax of the atmosphere of the situation.

If we were to use the classification made by Tannen (2007) regarding dialogues constructed in prose, we would conclude that this is a type of choral dialogue, like that of Greek tragedies, where the statements of several speakers are included in the discourse of a single speaker representing them.

And when the author gives a voice to Colonel von Schwabe at the beginning of the fourth chapter, “Gjirokaštër... I have a friend here,” none of his companions speak. By depicting the way in which they experience this utterance, as they wonder whether the colonel is joking or being ironic, the author has done nothing else but place the reader inside the event. At this point, all the experiences of the colonel’s companions in this deeply ambiguous atmosphere are the actual questions that arise in the readers’ minds as they witness the occurrence and yet “The colonel continued in the same tone: a great friend, one from university... who was more than a brother to me”, taking the surprise much further, towards the unbelievable.

If the colonel’s companions had been active, they would have had the voice to ask all the questions themselves and all the atmosphere of surprise that they and the reader experience would not have reached this level. More than being a performing idea or a state, dialogue is a discourse strategy for offering information in a way that communicates efficiently and creates involvement (Tannen 2007: 112) These “broken” dialogues of Kadare, which substitute the absence of the second dialoging voice with the reader’s involvement, are built as a strategy that creates maximum reader involvement.

On these “broken” dialogues used by him throughout the novel, the author has built the entire theme and all the enigma of the work’s plot: “What exactly was that dinner that some called ‘the supper of shame’ and the rest called ‘the resurrection supper?’”

The entire vague atmosphere that persists until the end of the novel is built on this contradiction introduced directly in one of these dialogues.

#### 4. *Dialogues with full sequences*

The direct dialogues built with full sequences start precisely at the moment when the Colonel meets the doctor:

“*The Nibelungen*, eh? *Code of Lek Dukaxhin*, eh? Remember what you used to tell me at Widow Martha’s Tavern? The Albanian besa, the hospitality.”

“I remember, of course, I do,” Big Doctor Gurameto replied.

The dramatic and ironic language that the characters use to address one another extends the dramaticism of the events to an earthly, finally tangible footing. The colonel and the doctor,

the two representatives of both sides who will or will not be involved in the conflict are finally acting, they are talking face to face.

For Sacks, conversation is an activity through which speakers achieve things in the course of their interaction. In a given context, speakers use conversation to achieve their goals and to create specific effects. (Sacks, 1992a)<sup>3</sup>

Human communication is purposeful, it is not just a fact of coding and decoding. [...] Every semantic presentation is a scheme that needs to be completed and integrated within the hypothesis of the speaker's informative goal (Sperber and Wilson 1993[1986]: 260-261). Linguistic communication is thus profoundly connected to the goal, whether in the simplest cases of an interaction between a speaker and a listener, or in the more complex cases in which communication is seen in relation to socio-cultural systems (Baldi and Savoia 2009: 15). Kadare builds the dialogues in the novel for both of these reasons: to complete his semantic schemes through the dialogues of interlocutors, and also to create additional effects that complete these schemes by bringing them vividly to the reader's imagination.

Following a long study on the novels of Lilika Nakos and the audio recordings of the conversations that Tannen had made with her regarding the themes that the novelist had written about, Tannen concludes that real conversations were more stimulating than those that had been fictionalized in the novels. Chafe (1985: 105-23) in the comparison between real conversations and fictionalized ones, comes to the conclusion that spoken language is characterized by fragmentation and involvement, whereas written language by integration and detachment.

The doctor finally managed to speak:

"It wasn't me who hit you, Fritz."

"Ah, really? It wasn't you who hit me? Even worse this way. Your country hit me."

"I am accountable for what happens within my hearth, not within my country."

"It's the same thing."

"It's not the same thing. I'm not Albania, just like you're not Germany, Fritz."

"Ah, is that so?"

"We're something else."

The Colonel lowered his gaze and remained that way for a while, contemplating.

This part of the dialogue is very similar to everyday conversations, which are characterized by short lines, built by "incomplete" units that become meaningful only in the context of that conversation, such as [It's the same thing], [It's not the same thing] or [Ah, is that so?]. It is worth keeping in mind that these are not "pure" linguistic units, as we have become accustomed to see during the traditional linguistic formation; here we are dealing with turn-taking units (TTUs), units on which the conversation is built, which are complete in the context of

<sup>3</sup> For Sacks (1992a) the conversation is guided by a procedural rule, where the person who is the first to speak chooses the form of address. By "form" Sacks implies that a part of the linguistic exchange occurs into units, where "Hello" "Hello" constitutes a unit. These units occur in adjacency pairs.

A: Hello

B: Hello

A: This is Mr. Smith, may I help you?

B: Yes, this is Mr. Brown. (Sacks, 1992a: 3)

the given conversation (Bregasi 2012: 2001-2013). While traditional syntax units of linguistic analysis are defined in structural terms in order to be considered complete in spite of the context, TTUs are context-dependent and in order to observe the composing parts of a TTU, one must consider it in its context.

During a conversation, interlocutors project potentially complete TTUs. Real completeness cannot be predicted at any point of the conversation, as the parties can prolong their turn beyond what is needed to successfully conclude it or may not conclude it due to the overlapping of the utterance of another speaker. In the novel, the author creates these incomplete units similarly to the units of real conversations, accomplishing full sequences with them. Incomplete units here are not only fully functional, but also create contradiction and the effect of surprise in the reader who observes the dialogues as if being present.

The similarity with real conversations is a strategy used by the author to achieve maximum involvement between the two characters in the conversation; it boots the dynamics of conversational rhythm; it shows the contradiction between the characters and at the same time it shows the nature of their friendship.

### 5. *Repair*

Perhaps Sacks' most original idea is that he found "order at all points" in every conversation (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 19). What must be inferred from this notion is that in no conversation can anything be considered as trivial and unimportant before having submitted it to an analysis. In society, conversation is organized not in the way of who speaks and who they speak to, but as a simple, quiet, ratified system that ritually directs face to face interaction (Goffman 1988) For every "disorder" that may occur within this system, i.e. every time that the speakers feel that something is not working in the sequential structuring, mechanisms are activated which immediately reestablish the order in the conversation.

Repair is one of the important mechanisms of the conversation system, which is activated whenever a problem occurs in a conversation, through rules applied by the participants. In order for the wide range of repair to be emphasized, conversation analysis uses the term *repair* instead of *correction*, to denote this phenomenon that the terms "reparable" and "trouble source" to indicate what needs repairing during the speech (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 696-735).

Pauses, prolongation of sounds, interrupted words or grammatical constructs made by the speaker are mechanisms of repair and concern the projection of the following turn, all serving to delay the utterance of a problematic unit, as well as to gain time (Liddicoat 2007: 17).

"And so, as I told you, when the order came to occupy – I mean to unite Albania, my first thought was that I would visit my brother. I would find him wherever he was. And look, I have come= [-] But you—"<sup>4</sup>

"You..."

Repair often relates to units that are disliked by the speakers, units that create troubles for them during turn-taking or sequence. In the Colonel's discourse, the writer points out some issues, similarly to what happens in real conversations. The pauses expressed through ellipses

<sup>4</sup> Translation by John Hodgson. Kadare, I. *The Fall of the Stone City*. Cannongate Books Ltd, Edinburgh, 2012.

represent troubles in the Colonel's discourse, which he repairs himself. In all three cases the pauses serve to create contradictions. In the first two cases, it is the Colonel himself who contradicts and repairs himself, and in the third case it is Gurameto, who by repeating the trouble source, requests repair from the Colonel.

Repairs are thus connected to disliked alternatives of conversational sequences. The unit [You...] by Gurameto indicates exactly this alternative disliked by him, which he wants to contradict, and this contradiction continues to intensify in the course of the dialogue, simultaneously serving us as readers to prepare to enter his inner world, where dozens of other alternatives compete which Gurameto does not dare to let out.

...  
He wanted to ask *Why?* but the anesthetic prevented him.

Here the repair, from being a rule-setting mechanism of the conversation, has been used by the author as a strategy to create involvement. Through this repair, the reader enters the inner world of the character who is speaking, as well as of the other characters who are present there. This trouble source becomes a link for dozens of contemplations and guesses in the inner world of the characters, who find themselves unable to speak, as if under anesthesia.

## 6. Tropes

J. D. Sapir (1977) and Friedrich (1986) use the term "tropes" to refer to the figures of discourse that relate to meaning. Tropes are simply creative uses of a dimension that is always present in verbal communication (Sperber and Wilson 1993[1986]: 350). One of the most important tropes that is most often used in the dialogues of *The Fall of the Stone City* is metaphor. For Lakoff (2003: 3) metaphor plays a central role in our thought, and as a result, our "ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature". Lakoff and Johnson support the idea that metaphorical presentation is the most efficient way through which we make sense of abstract experiences, and as a result they cannot be understood or presented outside of their connections with experience (Baldi and Savoia 2010: 132-133).

"*The Nibelungen*, eh? *Code of Lek Dukaxhin*, eh? Remember what you used to tell me at Widow Martha's Tavern? The Albanian besa, the hospitality."

"I remember, of course, I do," Big Doctor Gurameto replied.

This sequence begins with the Colonel using several metaphors to express his profound resentment towards the treachery by the Albanians. All the metaphorical language of the Colonel: "Gurameto, you traitor, where is your Albanian *besa*, where?... I am coming as a guest. Are you receiving guests, o master of the house?... Lek Dukagjini... will you give me your *besa* (word of honor), o master of the house?" are the most effective acts that the Colonel uses to justify the taking of hostages, symbolizing the occupation of Albania, according to the Albanian canon stating that "blood is washed by blood," as well as to demonstrate the close relationship he has with Gurameto.

These metaphors that are repeated several times throughout the novel, in addition to their effect in the conversation, are also used as a connective thread passing through the plot and creating textual coherence. Their *repetition* is another device serving the speakers in their

linguistic interaction as a connective device (Schiffrin 1982, Norrick; 1987, Tannen 1987a, b, Goodwin and Goodwin 1987). In a dialogue, both the speaker and the listener “evoke scenes, and understanding is derived from scenes because they are composed of people in relation to each other, doing things that are culturally and personally recognizable and meaningful” (Kristeva 1986: 37).

### 7. Repetition

Kristeva stated that every text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; she thus sees a text as an assimilation and transformation of a different text. Becker (1984: 75-87) uses the Javanese term *jarwa dhosok* to describe “the old language” within the new context, to characterize every act of utterance. The idea that repetition is inherent in the nature of language, that every utterance in a text is derived from an earlier text is widely accepted in linguistic and literary studies. The analysis of repetition reveals the very nature of linguistic production, where repetition is a much more pervasive phenomenon than can be imagined, and it is “vastly harder to separate from the pure freedom of syntax, if indeed any such fiery zone as pure syntax exists” (Tannen; 2007: 49).

For Hymes, structure is nothing more than a model of repetition and contrast. By structure I mean here particularly the form of repetition and variation, of constants and contrasts, in verbal organization (Hymes; 1981: 42). Hymes, Becker and Bolinger suggest that repetition does not only stand in the basis of how a specific discourse is created, but it is the creating of the discourse itself (Bolinger; 1976: 3).

Why does Kadare keep repeating parts of the conversation that occurred during the wrong supper until the end of the novel?

“The investigators stared entranced, without hiding their admiration.

Let’s say, for example, the phrase ‘I’m not Albania, just as you aren’t Germany, Fritz. We’re something else...’

At this point in our analysis, we find Lloshi’s (1999) perspective interesting: he sees repetition as a device that serves “usually to emphasize, to reinforce, to contradict, but also to depict a psychological state, the persistence in one element of thought that does not move forward (an obsession)”. In *The Fall of the Stone City*, the revision of either the entire dialogues, or the metaphors and symbols is a linguistic divide that Kadare uses to return multiple times to the phenomenon that they symbolize, emphasizing it, attempting to understand it and at the same time preserving the text’s coherence.

For Tannen, repetition during the interaction has four main goals: production, understanding, connection, and interaction, and it can be a lexical or phonological repetition, or one of syntactic structures. These dimensions act at the same time to create discourse coherence and interpersonal involvement in linguistic interaction (Tannen 2007 [1987]: 101). The ways in which speakers and writers use the language to create and maintain connections between actual language of interaction (e.g. conversation) and earlier language, including the same participants, follow the same path as the ways in which listeners/readers identify these connections and use them to help themselves and reconstruct the meaning of the speaker/writer (Hamilton 1996: 64). Hamilton makes a distinction between the intertextuality that refers to the connection between interactions in a conversation and the intertextuality that refers to the connection between actual and earlier conversation.



Thus, repetition is a central strategy of the language to give meaning, and in conversations speakers use it to put together discourses and the different worlds. On the other hand, repetition itself is, in this case, a trope resulting in part as an influence of Albanian oral literature tradition which can play different functions in a text (Berisha 2008). The connection with oral tradition is one of the characteristics that describes Kadare's entire body of work.

### 8. Conclusions

In the novel *The Fall of the Stone City*, the comparison of the dialogues with real conversations indicates that the author efficiently uses dialogue structures and conversation structuring mechanisms like repair and repetition as involvement strategies. Through direct dialogues, Kadare achieves goals and effects, in line with Sacks' notion on conversations as something speakers use in a given context to achieve their goals and create specific effects.

The polyphonic nature of dialogue is used intentionally to give readers an active role in the narration. This can especially be seen in dialogues with incomplete sequences, in which the second actor in the conversation is absent. This absence seems to be created to directly assign the role to the reader. Moreover, in addition to the general feeling of vagueness in the novel, the author has built on these dialogues the theme and the enigma of the events: "What exactly was that dinner that some called 'the supper of shame' and the rest called 'the resurrection supper'?"

Whereas the dialogues with full sequences are intentionally created with incomplete units, in line with real conversations, an element that has different functions in the text, boosting the rhythm, the dramaticism, revealing the relationships between the characters, indicating oppositions, etc.

The mechanisms of sequential organization such as repair and repetition act to create coherence and cohesion in the discourse, interpersonal involvement in the linguistic interaction that the characters use to construct discourses, meanings, worlds.

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