

8. THE DRAMATIC LITERARY TEXT AS AN ART OBJECT IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING/LEARNING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

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Abstract: *The given article focuses on the study of the dramatic literary text as an art object used in the process of the teaching/learning French as a foreign language. The dramatic literary text, being one of the main elements of the dramatic art, which in turn is a syncretic one, requires an integrated approach in the interpretation process, both as a literary product and as a performance.*

Key words: *dramatic literary text, art object, teaching/learning French as a foreign language*

*„Just meditating on the object, subject has the increased chance of the self-discovery.”
Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique, Gaston Bachelard²⁴⁶*

1. Introduction

The statement of the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, instills in us the idea of the importance of an object in the personal development of the subject, that is, of the man himself. „*The increased chance of the self-discovery*” represents nothing else than self-knowledge - mandatory requirement in the cultivation and development of the personality. The *object*, treated as a determining element in human development, is also evoked in the work of I. Kant. Thus, analyzing the work of Kant, the authors of the philosophical anthology claim: „In whatever way and by whatever means a knowledge would be related to the object, yet the way it relates to them directly and to which all thinking tends as a means is *the intuition*. But this emerges only if the object is given to us, which in turn is not possible [at least for us humans], unless the object affects the mind in some way. The ability (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way we are affected by objects is called *sensibility*. Through sensitivity, therefore, the objects are given to us, and sensitivity alone procures us *intuitions*, but through intellect they are *thought out*, and from them the *concepts* arise.”²⁴⁷

Analyzing the given quote, we deduce that the way in which knowledge is related to objects develops intuition, which appears only as a result of human receptivity. The level of receptivity of the man to the way he is impressed or interested by the objects that surround him leads to the outlining of sensitivity. And this, in turn, fulfills the role of mediator in the transformation of intuitions into concepts, thanks to the implication of thinking. We advance by ascertaining that each person has his own way of perceiving objects. The nature of representations

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²⁴⁶ Bachelard Gaston (1884-1962) - „French philosopher, theoretician of scientific knowledge, one of the founders of the new French epistemology, carrying out studies of psychoanalysis of scientific knowledge, of the analysis of the poetic imaginary.” (LAROUSSE, available at https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/personnage/Gaston_Bachelard/107066, consulted on 09.11.2022)

²⁴⁷ Bagdasar, N. et al., (1995), *Antologie filosofică*, Editura Uniunii Scriitorilor, Chișinău, pp. 338-339

depends on her level of development. Returning to the Kantian work, we note: „The effect of an object on the representative ability, as we are affected by it, is *sensation*. The intuition which relates to the object by sensation is called *empirical*.”²⁴⁸

Thus, meditating on the object, we find out that this fact creates sensations. Such treatment of the object through intuition based on sensations involves the empirical side, which is based on experience. And the experience, in turn, appeals directly to the personality of the subject involved, to his feelings and states, generating at the same time new horizons of challenges and knowledge. Or, only such an approach to the object, which involves a deep, meticulous meditation with major resonances on the way of looking to the world and creating concepts, will ensure the subject a strong personality, giving him the opportunity to „live vertically [...]”²⁴⁹.

2. Definition of the concept

We can consider as an *object* any element in the world that surrounds us, while the phrase *art object* refers to the field of art. Etymologically coming from the Latin "*obiectum* - what is placed in front"²⁵⁰ the term of *object* has several meanings:

1. Any actual thing that can be perceived by sight, touch.
2. Solid processed body, which has a specific use.
3. What constitutes the subject of an activity.
4. The purpose of an action, a behavior.”⁸

The same source specifies that the phrase *art object* (along with the synonyms - work of art, piece of art), in the narrow sense, represents "what results from an artistic creation having aesthetic value.”⁹ Used in a broader sense, the expression *object of art* denotes: „1. a work of architecture, 2. A produce of live performance (eg: theater, ballet, opera, etc.).”¹⁰ In the field of theater, the notion of object is broad and complex: "An object in the theater is a "thing" appearing on the stage, eventually, manipulable by a comedian and finding a place in the text as a lexeme (it is a "word") .”¹¹ By *thing*, the author does not only refer to concrete objects, but notes that "anything becomes an object from the fact of being on stage and acquiring meaning from this situation: nothing on stage can be by chance, it becomes a result of an artistic activity.

Through this very thing, the object becomes a sign, in the name of its function within the ensemble of the signs of the representation: it becomes a sign among signs.”¹² Any object, regardless of its nature, represents a symbolic element in the theater. Therefore, the objects can be: "a) units of what can be called the big "text" of the representation (kinds of lexemes); b) "semiotic units", composed of distinctive features [...]”¹³, the author including in the latter category concrete objects (ex: table, chair, etc.). In the given study, I chose placing the dramatic literary text in the category of art objects, for the following reasons:

1. form;
2. content;
3. expression.

²⁴⁸ Bagdasar, N. et al., op. cit., p. 339

²⁴⁹ Gagim, Ion, (2014), *Stări de muzică*, Editura Știința, Chișinău, p. 18

²⁵⁰ Grand LAROUSSE illustré, (2014), Dictionnaires LAROUSSE, Paris, p. 789

3. The actors involved in building the meaning of the dramatic literary text

The dramatic literary text as a didactic support, explored in our case in the French class, requires a complex approach. Unlike epic or lyrical literary texts, which do not require mandatory dramatization in the process of analysis, the construction of the meaning of the dramatic literary text culminates in the staging of the performance. The interaction of the participants, involved in the reading of the dramatic literary text, will ensure a better understanding of the text. From the multitude of elements present in the dramatic literary text as an art object, we can distinguish the following hierarchy:

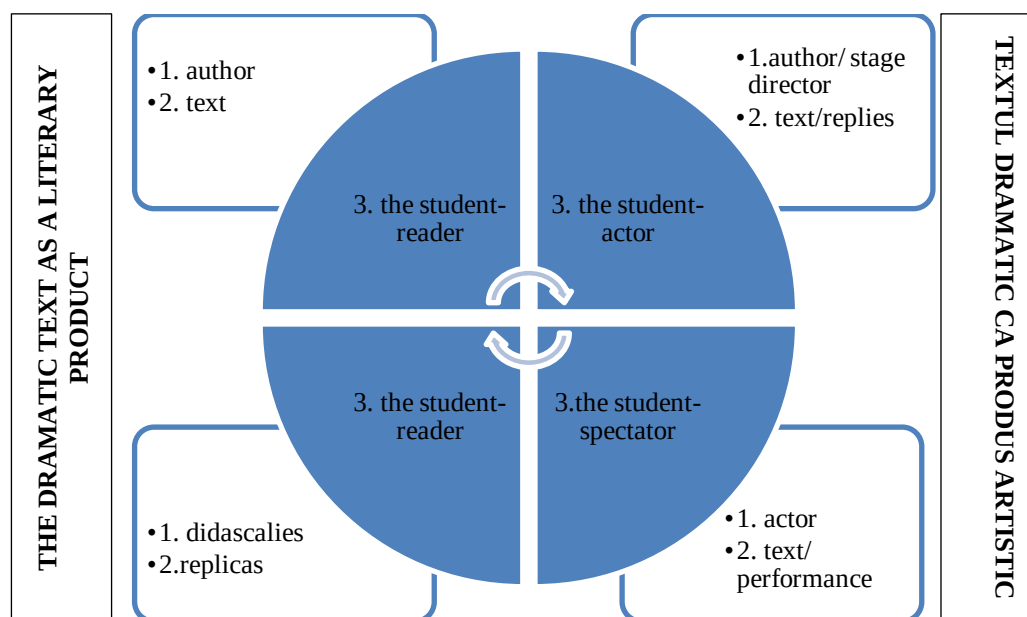


Figure 1. Matrix of the constituent elements of the dramatic literary text

Analyzing the above figure, we distinguish two main parts in the forefront:

- on the left side of the figure – the dramatic text as a literary product,
- on the right side – the dramatic text as an artistic product.

Thus, the main identified actors are: the text, the performance and the spectator. Obviously, the student, who is an art consumer, will inevitably go through all the states created by the dramatist and stage director, i.e. that of reader, actor and spectator. The three particularities of an art object – form, content and expression – transposed in the field of theater, will correspond to the following levels of exploration:

Nr.	Form – THE DRAMATIC TEXT AS A LITERARY PRODUCT	Content – REPRESENTATION (THE PERFORMANCE)	Expression – MESSAGE SENT TO THE SPECTATOR (SPECTATOR)
1.	the approach to the dramatic literary text	the character, his role and his relationships with other characters	the role of the spectator
2.	the structure of dramatic action	establishing stage time and space	the place of the spectator
3.	the space	The decor	the production of meaning
4.	the time	interpretation of theatrical signs	the pleasure of invention or reinvention
5.	the characters	the use and role of verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal language	
6.	theatrical discourse		

Table 1. Aspects studied in the process of exploring the dramatic text in the French language class

I. THE DRAMATIC TEXT AS A LITERARY PRODUCT

In order to successfully organizing the staging of the show, it is necessary, first of all, to correctly understand the dramatic text as a literary product. Referring to this aspect, we will highlight the following analysis criteria, which will be complemented by practical tasks, formulated based on the play *The Miser* (L'Avare) by Molière:

1. Addressing the dramatic literary text from the perspective of G. Genette's theory of trans textuality: „[...] trans textuality, or the textual transcendence of the text, which we generally defined, by "everything that puts it in manifested or secret relationship with other texts"¹⁴. Therefore, each element, starting with the cover of the book and ending with its last page, will constitute a path for understanding and discovering the message of the text. We will include here:

- the study of paratext, architext, intertext, etc.

Par exemple: Activité 1. *Regardez la couverture du livre (Annexe 1). Identifiez les éléments paratextuels. Quels renseignements nous offrent-ils sur la pièce? Quel est le rapport entre l'image et le titre de la pièce?*

- the structure of the text (didascalies and dialogue): „The dialogue contains the entirety of the speech spoken by the characters during the performance. Under the name of didascalies, preferable to the stage directions, we regroup everything that belongs to the order of the metatext, allowing the interpretation of the text."¹⁵

Par exemple: Activité 2. *Analysez les didascalies et les répliques de l'Acte I, Scène 1¹⁶. Quelles indications découvrez-vous sur le caractère de Valère et d'Élise?*

2. The structure of the dramatic action (fable, action, plot): „[...] the theater does not tell, it shows. It is an active fiction."¹⁷

Par exemple: Activité 3. *Caractérisez l'entrée d'Harpagon (Acte I, Scène 3). À quel moment de l'action dramatique correspond-elle?*

3. The space - one of the essential elements of dramatic art, in general, is:

- scenic/dramatic/theatrical (the place where the action described by the dramaturge takes place can be fictitious in the text, acquiring real features in the stage/theatrical space, in turn including "actors and spectators, specifying a certain relationship between them"¹⁸);

- the space in didascalies and lines.

Par exemple: Activité 4. *Identifiez les renseignements sur l'espace dans les didascalies initiales.*

4. The time - "in theater has two meanings: duration and moment"¹⁹ :

- performance time/dramatic time;

- the time in didascalies and lines.

Par exemple: Activité 5. *Argumentez la préoccupation de Molière pour le respect du temps dans l'évolution de l'action dramatique.*

5. The characters - a key element in the theater, which "is a paper human being, to which an artist will have to correspond"²⁰. Character information includes:

- the identity of the characters (name, marital status, social status, physical and moral portrait) and the relationships among them;

- actant scheme of the text.

Par exemple: Activité 6. *Faites la liste des traits d'avarice d'Harpagon. Ou Activité 7.* *Représentez graphiquement Harpagon tel que vous l'imaginez.*

6. Theatrical speech is another complex term in the theater, which "covers, at the same time, what is related to the text and what is related to the performance, what is fiction and what is performance"²¹:

- forms of theatrical speech (monologue, dialogue),
- polyphony of theatrical speech,
- the pragmatics of theatrical discourse.

Par exemple: Activité 8. *Quel est le rôle du monologue introduit entre les deux scènes? (Acte IV, Scène 7)*

Ou **Activité 9.** *Imaginez une courte scène ou vous employez le procédé du mécanisme répétitif.*

Soit **Activité 10.** *Identifiez dans la pièce d'autres procédés comiques utilisés.*

II. REPRESENTATION (THE PERFORMANCE)

- "denotes in the theatrical manifestation everything that makes the theater a visual achievement and for the artists a performance [...]"²² At this phase, we will work on the stage aspect of the dramatic text. We will use dramatic techniques to train students in stage play. In the process of learning a foreign language, particularly verbal, nonverbal and paraverbal language are the essential elements. We will use the dramatic techniques proposed by C. Grosset-Bureau ²³ (breathing training, body relaxation, miming, dramatic improvisation, diction, staging) and A. Cormanski ²⁴ (verbal communication techniques and non-verbal communication techniques). Therefore, we will analyze:

1. The character, his role and his relationships with other characters.

Par exemple : Activité 11. *Étudiez le comportement de La Flèche face à son maître. (Acte I, Scène 3²⁵) Proposez-lui des solutions pour se libérer d'Harpagon.*

2. Settling the stage time and space.

Par exemple : Activité 12. *transposez l'action de la pièce de nos jours. Vous êtes dans la maison d'Harpagon. À quoi pensez-vous?*

3. The decor.

Par exemple : Activité 13. *Que changeriez-vous dans la maison d'Harpagon au XXI^{ème} siècle? Présentez vos projets.*

4. The interpretation of theatrical signs.

Par exemple : Activité 14. *À votre avis, quel sont les traits d'une personne avare de nos jours. Quels seraient les objets présents obligatoirement sur la scène?*

5. The usage and role of verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal language.

Par exemple : Activité 15. *Analysez la dernière réplique de la pièce : „HARPAGON. Et moi, voir ma chère cassette." ²⁶Exprimez le geste d'Harpagon à l'aide du langage verbal, non verbal, paraverbal.*

III. THE SPECTATOR. The aspects we will focus on are:

- the role of the spectator;
- the place of the spectator;
- the production of meaning;
- the pleasure of invention or reinvention.

Par exemple : Activité 16. *Dresser le portrait de l'avare. Inventez des solutions pour renoncer à ce vice. Ou Activité 16.* *Organisez des débats sur le sujet : Est-ce l'avarice un défaut grave? Est-ce un défaut inné ou acquis, suit au manque de confiance en la vie?*

Soit **Activité 17.** *Après avoir dressé le portrait d'Harpagon, qui contient de nombreux traits d'avarice, vous vous êtes rendu compte qu'un de vos amis en possède certaines. Comment s'y prendre?*

Anne Ubersfeld defines the spectator as "the other alive participant of the theatrical performance"²⁷. This does not mean that the spectator must act on the stage as the actor. At first glance, he is immobile – his place is on the chair, in the theatre hall. However, before the performance, but also during the performance, as well as after the performance, he is undergoing through an intense "sensory, emotional and intellectual activity."²⁸ Therefore, after studying a dramatic text or watching the performance, the student, either as a reader or as a spectator, becomes himself a generator of ideas, concepts, patterns of communication and action. Of course, these are produced in turn, depending on his aesthetic and intellectual competence. This is why we consider the exploration of the dramatic text, with all its relevant implications, to be an important activity not only for the development of communication skills, but also of cultural ones.

4. Conclusions

Exploring the dramatic text as an art object which requires an integrated approach, involving literature, theater, psychology, the student will be able to:

- to discover the intention of the author, who created the art object (dramatic text);
- to identify the details with reference to the place, period and reason of the work;
- to transform the art object into an object of fascination and to open ways towards another world.

The meaning of a dramatic literary text, but also of its representation, is actively built and created at every interaction between the student and the art object, a fact which will necessarily lead to the multilateral personal development.

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Annex 1



„L'Avare” by Molière. Cover of book