

A linguistic Study of Euphemistic Expressions in Shakespearian Tragedies

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Abstract

Nowadays, people use euphemism just to avoid naming abstract things and objects directly, since they do not like just to impress other people. By attempting to avoid hurting the emotion of others, there is an attempt to reduce the depressing effects of the words by using another substitution this indicates that at whatever time people approach a responsive topic; they try to use such expression to reduce the harsh influence on listeners. However, the major aim of this research is to analyze the uses of euphemisms in Shakespearian tragedies such as Othello, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra. The research consists of two parts. The theoretical part which provides an introduction about the meaning of euphemism, types, origin, etymology and its functions, while various examples from Shakespeare's tragedies will be discussed in the practical part. It ends with a conclusion which sums up the main findings of the research.

Keywords: Euphemism, Shakespeare, Tragedies, Politeness, Unpleasant

Research Questions

1. Why did Shakespeare use euphemistic expressions in his tragedies?
2. What is the purpose of using euphemism by Shakespeare?
3. What kind of euphemistic expressions that were used by Shakespeare in his tragedies?

1. Section One

1.1 Introduction and Background

1.1.1 What is Euphemism?

Webster (428) defined Euphemism as the replacement of a pleasant or mild word. For one that may upset or suggest something disagreeable. It is a refined expression that are used to refer to things which may embarrass people to talk about, like death, sex, or human body.

1.1.2 The Origin of Euphemism

Pinker (1994) defined euphemism as an expression whose accurate meaning has been lost. For example, “kicke the bucket” may be referred to the bucket from which slaughters pig were hung in East Anglia. This example has taken on the meaning “passed away,” even though the primary reference to pig slaughtering has forgotten. Sometimes euphemism takes the form of a technical term, like “civilian casualties” instead of "death" or "murder".

1.1.3 Etymology of Euphemism

“euphemismos,” came from a Greek expression “euphemism” which means the substitution of a pleasant word instead of unpleasant one. “Eu” is a Greek word means “good,” while “pheme” means “to speak.” It is the opposite word of “dysphemism,” which means saying negative thing in place of a politer term, like “tramp” instead of “a promiscuous person”. The prefix “dys” expresses “bad” or “unusual” (Keyes,2010:8).

Keyes (2010: 8) mentions that euphemism is the result of too much prudery and politeness, however it may express good humor and creativities. There is a new inclination to sustain communal skill in courteousness and communication (Ibid). Thus, it is a crucial thing to believe that euphemizing may serve good intentions and the speaker is almost uses euphemism with an honest aim, when their purpose is not to hurt someone's feelings. However, this research attempts to give a panoramic view about the employment of euphemistic expression in Shakespeare's tragedies. As a number of critique, blogs or comments indicate, people are too much sensitive to avoid naming. things. directly so they avoid this matter by making the offensive appear pleasant, the unattractive appear attractive (Ibid).

Words were not regarded as different from what they called. The irrational need not to use particular kind of words that illustrate like sacred things or evil spirits is even now repeated nowadays in certain proverbs or expressions, as “hit on wood “or “speak of the devil...” (Ibid). So, it is so hard to stay away from talking about disagreeable things totally. That is the

reason of humans have every time felt the support to Find a way to speak about incident they scared, taboo or worshipped, whereas not naming them directly.

1.1.4 Why Do We Need Euphemism?

It seems a very easy and simple question which is asked and answered hundreds and thousands of times. Cumming mentioned: "euphemism is used as a substitution to a negative expression just to be away from the loss of face: either one's own face or, through giving offence, some third party or that of the audience" (Cumming,2012: Nop.).

1.1.5 Formation. And Classification of Euphemism

There are different techniques of euphemizing an expression. Euphemisms can be divided into two parts. Rawon (1981:1) differentiates "two parts of euphemism; negative part and positive one". The negative euphemism eliminates all things that do not like to contact with directly, like striped which means tiger and DEVIL which symbolize Satan. The positive type overestimates euphemized items and make them extravagant they refer to occupational title as working girl forswore or sustaining servant (Ibid).

Rawon (1981) suggests another type which deals with the use of euphemism either consciously or unconsciously. For instance, of an unconscious euphemism is a *cemetery* that substituted the word graveyard. This modification made long ago and it is difficult for anyone to remembers its motivation. In terms of conscious euphemisms and their procedure shows a sum of compassion and togetherness of the speaker. For example, a correct choice of words when condoling upon the loss of somebody, where loss signifies death which points out the skill of that somebody.

1.1.6 Functions of Euphemism

Euphemism tries to help people to communicate thoughts that have become unacceptable, and are offensive to speak directly. Certain Writers attempt to use a suitable term to stand for a subject, but indirectly that might not have published because of a strict common restriction, as for religious reasons or for other devotional reasons, and may be for death, political theories or sexuality. So, it is a device that helps authors to write down. Allegorically about the difficult subjects ([https://literarydevices.net/euphemism /](https://literarydevices.net/euphemism/)).

2. Section Two

2.1 *Euphemism in Shakespearian Tragedies*

2.1.1 Euphemism in Othello

Shakespearian tragedies are filled with euphemisms, especially when talking about sexual intercourse, as in "Othello" through a conversation Iago tells Brabantio that the Moor and his daughter "are now making the beast with two backs". The euphemisms "ruin" for describing a woman's loss of eligibility of marriage because of premarital sexual exploits of any type (even only perceived exploits) is popular in Victorian novels as those by Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, the Bronte sisters and Charles Dickens.

Certain instances of Euphemism which are used to refer to sexual intercourse are existed in Shakespeare's. Othello exactly in Act 1, Scene 1, Iago tells Brabantio:

"I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs".

The phrase "making the beast with two backs" referring to the sexual intercourse act.

2.1.2 Euphemism in Shakespeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra'

It is so clear that Shakespeare often uses the act of euphemism for sexual intercourses in his drama Antony and Cleopatra". exactly in Act 2, Scene 2, "Agrippa" says talking about Cleopatra:

"Royal wench!

"She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed".

"He plowed her, and she cropped".

"plowed" in this context is referring to the act of sex. And "cropped" is a euphemism means becoming pregnant.

2.1.3 Euphemism in Macbeth

"LADY MACBETH: To beguile the time,

Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,

Your hand, your tongue. Look like the' innocent. flower,

But be the. serpent under't. He that's coming

Must be provided for; and you shall put

This night's great business. into my dispatch,

Which shall to all our nights and days .to come

Give solely sovereign swayand masterdom". (Macbeth by Shakespeare).

William Shakespeare used and invented many euphemistic instances. This extract which is quoted from his drama Macbeth, in which Lady Macbeth is trying to encourage 'Macbeth' to murder Duncan in the afternoon. This is a sensitive matter, since both of them are conspiring in order to assassinate the king, therefore, Lady Macbeth does not mention clearly that Macbeth must murder Duncan, but that Duncan "must be provided for". Macbeth understands her euphemisms, and knows she wants. Duncan dead by the morning.

2.1.4 Euphemism in Romeo and Juliet

Shakespeare also used euphemism in Romeo and Juliet in a clever way just to beautify the unpleasant expressions. For example:

Star-crossed lovers (in the prologue describing Romeo and Juliet's relationship) means Un-lucky in love.

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet". (Juliet's soliloquy describing how she feels after discovering Romeo is a Montague) means your family name does not matter to me.

I am fortune's fool! (Romeo says this after he has killed Tybalt in blind rage) means I am the victim of fate.

I see Queen Mab has been with you! (Mercutio says this to Romeo before going to the Capulet party) means Romeo, you are delusional.

Then I defy you, stars! (Romeo says this after hearing Juliet is dead) means I will not willingly submit to destiny. Then she is well (Balthasar tells Romeo this to let him know that he saw Juliet's funeral).

3. Conclusions

language is just like a game which takes the focus on change, changing the impolite perception to polite ones, making the unpleasant facts pleasant for others. This change is called euphemism which is often of foreign origin giving a view of grace, graciousness and professionalism. Its influence is that they depart unobserved by the audience which is in fact deceived.

Shakespeare used euphemisms throughout his tragic plays for two reasons: Firstly, to make situations sound more poetic, especially when trying to fit a certain meter or rhyme scheme in the wording, and secondly, he could get into legal trouble if he was too blunt in talking about something offensive. So, he used euphemism cleverly in his tragedies making them more interesting to the audience in every time even in the modern time.

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