

Language & The Expression of Anger in Osborne's Play "*Look Back in Anger*": A Socio-Lexical Study.

اللغة والتعبير عن الغضب في مسرحية أوزبورن "انظر إلى الوراء

بغضب": دراسة لغوية-اجتماعية- و معجمية"

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مستخلص

تجارب الانزعاج والمشاعر المرتبطة بالمواقف المثيرة للضيق تسمح باستمرار الغضب والمشاعر الغير المرغوب فيها. وتلعب اللغة دورًا محوريًا في إدراك وإظهار مثل هذه المشاعر والعواطف على هذا النحو. تُستخدم اللغة العاطفية، وخاصة "الصفات" الوصفية، لوصف ما يشعر به المرء تجاه شيء ما. و تقترح اللغة العاطفية أيضًا استجابة عاطفية من جانب المستمعين أو القراء بشكل عام. و تعتبر اللغة أمرًا أساسيًا في الطقوس والأفعال اليومية حيث أنها تضع سياقًا لكل ظاهرة عقلية إنسانية. و اللغة أيضًا محكومة بالقواعد المشتركة اجتماعيًا والتي يتم اكتسابها في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة حيث أنها جزء أساسي من الوظائف الاجتماعية. ومن ثم، فمن المفيد دراسة كيفية إظهار هذه القواعد وكذلك السلوك الاجتماعي للأفراد في اللغة، إذ أن اختيارات الأفراد اللغوية والمعجمية في الكلام مستوحاة من التأثير الاجتماعي. وبما أن الكلام سلوك اجتماعي، فيجب فحصه بالرجوع إلى المجتمع. علاوة على ذلك، فإن العناصر المعجمية التي يستخدمها الأفراد تحدد بواعثهم الخفية. ترتبط اختيارات اللغة وتسلسلها و تصميمها أيضًا بظروف اجتماعية محددة. والتحقيق في العمل الأدبي من منظور اجتماعي معجمي أيضًا يلقي الضوء على الظروف السياسية والثقافية والتاريخية والاجتماعية للعصر، كما يقدم تفسيرًا ذا معنى للنص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: [معجمي - لغوي-اجتماعي - الغضب - قواعد اجتماعية - مختارات
معجمية - ثقافية - تاريخية]

Abstract

Experiences of annoyance and feelings about provoking situations allow the persistence of anger and undesirable emotions. Language plays a pivotal role in the perception and demonstration of such feelings and emotions. As such, emotional language especially descriptive “adjectives” are used to describe how one feels about something. Emotional language also suggests an emotive response on the part of hearers or readers. In general, language is fundamental to everyday rituals and actions. It contextualizes every human mental phenomenon. Language is also ruled and governed by socially shared rules that are acquired in early childhood. It is an essential component of social performs. Hence, it is fruitful to investigate how such rules as well as behavior are demonstrated in language, as individuals linguistic and lexical selections in speech are inspired by social influence. And since speech is a social conduct, it should be examined with reference to society. Moreover, lexical items used by individuals outline their hidden motifs. Language selections, their sequencing and their layout are also tied to specific social conditions. And investigating a literary work from a socio-lexical perspective, sheds light on the political, cultural, historical and social conditions of the era, and yields a meaningful interpretation of the text.

Key words: [Socio-lexical – anger – social rules – lexical selections – cultural – historical].

Introduction:

Emotions are generated by inner thoughts, emotional states, physical states or exterior thoughts. Countless things can trigger irritation, including stress, family problems in addition to financial matters. For some people anger is triggered due to a primary illness; such as depression. It is also an indication of numerous psychological health conditions. It is a response to a supposed threat to oneself or to another. It is also a comeback of frustration. Experiences of annoyance and feelings about provoking situations allow the persistence of undesirable emotions. Throughout the state of anger, unconscious emotional responses appear.

Language plays a pivotal role in the perception and manifestation of emotions. It also controls the description of such emotions that are perceived or sensed in the first place. The field of language and sociolinguistics highlights the relationship between language and society. As language is essential to the rituals and actions of everyday life. Language and social interaction tackle how we use language to negotiate relations, activities and daily life events. As such emotional language is used especially descriptive words, mostly “adjectives” in order to manifest how a one feels about something. It also suggests an emotive response.

Human conduct cannot be comprehended if language is separated from social practice. It is a fundamental component of social performs. Language contextualizes every human mental phenomenon. Verbal expressions are part of the human demonstration of anger. Angry patterns of sound and tone as well as angry language escalation are used to communicate rage in humans.

Language is ruled by social common rules and anticipated conduct learnt in early childhood. Therefore, it is of vital curiosity to investigate how such rules and behavior are manifested in language. Hence, linguistic as well as lexical choices are inspired by social influences. An individual's language is constantly linked to his social status and conditions. Conclusively, there is a relationship between language, society and identity. And since speech is a social conduct, it should be examined with reference to society.

Despite of the fact that Osborne's play; Look Back in Anger narrates historical events, it portrays a modern significance. It mirrors the opinion of modern society. Russell, B. Nye (1992), asserts that history is concerned with societies and the people who live in these societies. He also emphasizes the standing of people, their distinct choices, the morals they hold and the angle of vision by which they have viewed themselves and the surrounding world. Therefore, it is vital to look at history if one is to comprehend how and why people have interacted together in society. As humans

are the only beneficiaries of history, and this is manifested through language.

History offers the opportunity to examine how societies have transformed over the centuries. Moreover, it is via history that both good and bad examples of decision making are given. This also yields political, societal and cultural agendas by which human beings organized their lives. Consequently, this will participate in discovering social evidence for the lexical and semantic choices made on the part of humans. A well written literary work which is based on historical events has the influence to endorse analysis of how change occurs in society, and how humans' purposes and needs matter. Furthermore, data from the past cater as vital evidence to figure out why individuals act as they do in numerous societal settings.

It is also argued that the author's own childhood traumas, family life, sexual conflicts are also noticeable within the conduct of characters in a literary work. The psychological evidence for this behavior is manifested directly or indirectly along with the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the characters of the literary work. In his famous psychoanalytic theories, Freud, S. (1923), tackles two separated psyches, namely the "conscious" and the "unconscious". He argues that a person has a part of the mind that he is conscious of, which he more or less can control. He adds that there is also another level of unconscious. This unconscious part of the mind holds instincts, urges and impulses. It is also argued that,

literary texts express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author or writer. It is also assumed that all the characters of a literary work are projections of the author's psyche. Hence, the unresolved emotions, psychological conflicts, guilts and inconsistencies of the characters as well as the author are demonstrated through verbal and non-verbal behavior as manifested in the play. This is explicitly said by the main character in the play "Jimmy Porter" describing the haunting anger that he had experienced at a young age when his father died, which could also be the motive of his anger and despair. He had to see his father die and this is the only experience he recalls since his childhood, as he says:

[For twelve months, I watched my father dying- when i Was ten years old. He'd come back from the war in Spain there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have Long left to live. Everyone knew it- even I knew it..... You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry and Helpless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about love... Betrayal... and death, when I was ten years old than you will Probably ever know all your life].

(Osborne, 1975, P.36)

Afterwards, in a conversation he links the experience of watching somebody die with the process of growing up. He also supposes a different treatment from people or for what he had gone through, as this is the only human experience he remembers since his childhood. He says:

[*Any one who's never watched somebody die*

Is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity]

(Osborne, 1975, P.37)

This trauma made him ready to inflict his misery on everyone who has not undergone this experience or who does not appreciate and respect this tragic experience. He always talks about himself highlighting his feelings, as he had lost belief in everything.

1- John Osborne; A Social Reformer:

John Osborne (1929-1994) is one of the most debatable playwrights in the history of modern British drama. He was the first to present the character of the “*Angry Young Man*” on stage. He portrayed characters who fail to live as and cope with the society, and they undergo pain in order to survive. He was mainly interested in presenting the individual dilemma of oddities and outsiders, and those who decide to live in isolation away from a frightening and an incomprehensible world. His theatre has shown traces of the

“*Theatre of The Absurd*”. Hopelessness, lack of communication and the sense of worthlessness are all themes that are conveyed in his plays. He was concerned with social issues and social problems. He showed his attempt to fulfill the role of a social reformer and a leader of post-war angry youth.

Osborne’s theatre was strongly affected by the social, political and economic circumstances in Britain in the aftermath of the second World War. *Look Back in Anger* is also considered a symbol of a generation protesting against the social, political and economic conditions after the second World War. The play *Look Back in Anger* and the issues it raised labelled the play as a “*social phenomenon*”. The playwright was also viewed as the first of the “*Angry Young Men*” and a representative of them as well. As the influence of the new materialistic society which emerged in England in the aftermath of the second World War had a paramount influence on the social and economic conditions which led to the resentment and anger in a large sector of the youth.

The individual in Osborne’s theatre demonstrates violence, anger, disillusionment and protests against a world full of defeats, uncertainties and failures. The setting of “*Look Back in Anger*” is a one room attic flat that belongs to a newly married couple and their friend *Cliff*. As such Osborne’s play the poverty in the fifties and an intensely the personal yell against ridiculousness and worthlessness of human existence. The play also represents a kind of anger

which is triggered by social and political conditions which in turn lead to hostility on the part of young people who were left to suffer from the consequences of the war. Poverty, food-rationing, boredom and severe identity crises all characterized the fifties in England. The characters of the play are members of the generation who lived in an everlasting state of suffering, as such the play presents the current situation of England in the aftermath of the Second World War.

2- The Language of Anger and the Scope of Language & Society:

This research is mainly concerned with the study of Osborne's technique in dealing with the war dilemma, by exploring the lexical choices used by "Jimmy Porter" the main character of the play, or rather the anti-hero who is desperate and annoyed all the time because of his failure to find a place for himself in society and because of his failure of being able to cope with truth and deal with the load of surviving. He demonstrates his constant attacks on the press and social insincerity all the time. Jimmy Porter is a twentieth century scoundrel who expresses his anger, his feelings of nothingness, the futility of the world and lack of enthusiasm in long passionate speeches, in which he discusses politics, sociology, culture and human emotions. He is not only a representative of the young generation in the fifties but also of modern man at large. He presents the image of a touchy,

defensive, defeated male protagonist and raise social, political and economic issues at a time of major transformations in England and the world. He represents the young generation of the 1950s who had to deal with life in a world overwhelmed by a major world war that left its impact on social, political and economic conditions in addition to the psychological state of people. He discussed the hardships that were familiar to people and gave rise to issues of excessive interest and importance to them.

War as an upsetting experience has left a tremendous effect on Osborne's theatre. John Osborne, Jimmy Porter and the audience all have gone through the experience of witnessing a major war. In "*Look Back in Anger*", he explored the effect of the war on an imaginative character as "*Jimmy*" and on other young people as "*Cliff* and *Alison*". They all lived in a continuous state of suffering. Their words, decisions, opinions, feelings and appearance mirror the kind of world they came from. Jimmy is the frankest resident of this world. He talks and protestors as he says:

[No body thinks, nobody cares. No
beliefs,

No convictions and no enthusiasm.

Just another

Sunday evening. Cliff sits down
again.....]

(Osborne, 1975, P.11)

Jimmy's anger with this world is manifested through the use of short rapid sentences and through the repetition of the word "no" throughout the speech. He is angry, malicious and violent. He is also bitter, disappointed and has a negative lens of the world. Jimmy does not do any action in the play. His anger is not translated into political action. He may have some political views, but it seems that he has lost faith in political parties and organizations. He keeps his political opinions to himself, his wife and his friend Cliff. His negativity makes him a representative of the young people of the fifties. Jimmy Porter is also contemporary villain, an anti-hero who is always haunted by worries and frustration.

Trudgill, P. (2002), argues that there is a close connection between language and society. He further states that there are numerous factors that affect the way we speak and use language. These factors comprise gender, environment, age, race, region, religion and politics. Hence, the analysis of discourse is necessarily the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purpose or function which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs. Thus, analyzing discourse with reference to the social factors and background that led to such discourse, would explain their strong effect on people and stresses the crucial role of social context in the analysis of discourse.

Language is the most important of all forms of human communication. Hudson, R. A. (1990), states that every language seems to have linguistic items that reflect social characteristics of the speaker, of the addressee or of the relation between them. Consequently, speech which contains such items tells a hearer how the speaker views these characteristics and how misuse constitutes a violation of the norms that govern speech. Language is a central characteristic of human identity. When we hear someone speak, we immediately make predictions about his or her gender, education level, age, profession and role in life.

In communication, non-verbal messages interact with verbal ones in a number of ways. Negotiating body language is an important part of communication. Social cues, different stances and various poses provide important non-verbal communication information. Our messages may be understood or distorted if our non-verbal behavior fail to support what we say. Facial expressions serve as an important mean of communication, employing all the muscles that control the mouth, lips, nose, forehead and jaw. Human faces are capable of showing different expressions. Furthermore, many of emotions including sadness, anger, fear, disgust, shame and agony are universally recognized. Equally important is the role of "eye contact" in communication. The length of gaze, the frequency of glances, the pattern of fixation and blink rate are all important cues in non-verbal communication. The tone of the voice as well as vocal

characterizers, such as “laugh, cry, yell, moan, whine, yawn and belch” also send different messages in different situations.

3- The Language of Anger and the Scope of Language & Identity:

Making our lexical selections are of paramount importance to our identity construction. Goffman (1963), argues that our identities are defined by how others recognize us, not how we recognize ourselves. He adds that the “self” is built totally through discourse. This means that the hearer is able to construct an identity for the speaker which may be totally different from the his or her real identity, the matter that allows the hearer an excessive amount of power and weakens the autonomy of the speaker. In his book; Language and Identity, Edwards, John (2009), argues that we all possess a number of identities or facets of one dominating identity, which can change according to circumstances and context. Beyond this individual matter, language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity. According to Spolsky B. (1991), language is not only a mean for us to present our notion of “who we are”, but it is also a way for others to project onto us their own beliefs of the way “we must be”. In other words, our speech can be seen as an “*Act of Identity*”.

[People like me aren't supposed to be very patriotic.

Somebody said -what was it- we get our cooking from

*Paris (that's a laugh), our politics from
Moscow, and our
Morals from Port Said.....the old
Edwardian brigade do
Make their brief little world look
pretty tempting.....what
A romantic picture.....but I must say
it's pretty dreary living
In the American Age unless you're an
American of course.
Perhaps all our children will be
Americans.]
(Osborne, 1975, P.11)*

This speech by Jimmy sums up the play and perfectly portrays its social, economic and political background. Jimmy is frank, angry and disappointed. He dominates the stage remarking on the current situation. Jimmy's voice is Osborne's himself. The reference to America in "Look Back in Anger", reflects the anti-American feelings as a result of America's political and economic influence on Britain. Moreover, Britain lost her majestic power and was forced to give away some of her colonies. There were only two ways to flee from this world; either to look back to the Edwardian period or to look forward to the future. Both the past and the future are disappointing. The English individuality and pride were threatened by the American influence whether cultural or economic. Jimmy's sense of frustration and his

disappointment in both the past and the future contribute to his role as a representative of young people.

4- The Language of Anger and the Scope of Power & Solidarity:

Power and solidarity relations have provided the field of sociolinguistics with one of the most dominant, analytic perspective for the study of language. Brown & Gilman (1960-1972), assert that solidarity is concerned with the degree of distance between interactants, which may range from intimacy “solidarity relationship” to unintentional acquaintance to disinterest “non-solidarity relationship”. Power and solidarity are part of the social perception, the system of categories that we apply in general social interaction and which governs all aspects of our behavior. Power is always related to unevenness and inequality; one party is older, richer, stronger, superior in status, rank or professional standing. In such a case he or she holds power over the other party. This is the case with Jimmy and his wife Alison. He is unable to engage himself in a pleasing relationship with his wife.

*[She just devours me whole every time,
as if i*

*Were some large rabbit. That's me that
bulge*

*Around her navel – if you're wondering
what*

*It is – it's me. Me buried alive down
there, and*

Going mad.....]

(Osborne,

1975, p.28)

Hence, to Jimmy, the whole process of love making is alarming and damaging to the male. He indicates that his wife is the controlling partner in their relationship. Jimmy's failure to manage life, his feelings of anger, weakness and hopelessness are clearly manifested through his words.

5- The Language of Anger and the Scope of Thought & Context:

Another linkage between language and thought is manifested through “connotations”, which are the associations that the words themselves create in readers' or listeners' minds. Hence, lexical items or words also convey personal and emotional meaning and which are “connotations”. Moreover, some words convey strong connotations which are generally agreed on by the users of the language. Such words are often described as “loaded”. Loaded words also have strong negative or positive connotations and can also have a powerful emotional impact. Hence, different impressions can be formed in the readers' or listeners' minds based on the associations connected with the lexical components selected. This is manifested by Porter's words about life as he says:

[life is terrible and death is worse.
There is the gravy so don't ask
 anybody

To pass it. Life is terrible and death
is worse.

You are unconnected to the past.
Hopeless about the
future.....]

(Osborne, 1975, P.40)

Different links have also been indicated between language, context, thought and culture. According to Halliday & Hasan (1985), language only makes sense when it is placed within some context or situation. In fact, language “text” and “context” are two sides of the same coin. Texts and contexts are inseparable. The cycle encompasses the text itself, thoughts as well as contextual factors related to situation and culture. It is also argued that “the context of culture” is one part of the cycle of text and context, which must be interpreted in order to interpret the meaning of a given instance of language. This indicates that there is a close connection between language and culture. In fact, it is claimed that language is the carrier of culture. As Jimmy Porter has always been an outsider. A person who does not share much with others. His words indicate that he ran away from a terrifying and an incomprehensible society.

[A world that can be explained by reasoning, however

Faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly
Deprived of illusions and of light, man
feels stranger.....
He is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as such he
Lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce
Between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly
Constitutes the feeling of absurdity].

(Osborne, 1975, P.41)

6- The Language of Anger and The Scope of Lexemes:

Lexical items of a literary work, outline the hidden motifs of writers. The selection of lexemes expresses how the events of the literary work are real and how they mirror society. In theatrical performances, messages are transmitted by means of verbal and non-verbal codes. Writers use various parts of speech such as; nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs in order to send verbal codes to the audience and readers. Such lexical items help in depicting images and building characters. They also manifest how characters think, speak and interact with each other in society.

The use of nouns covers every feature of human beings. These features place a depth in words and permit the readers

and audience to visualize, sense and even realize what is happening such as: “*death, betrayal, stranger, unconnected, divorce and absurdity*”. The use of adjectives is also pivotal and most of them are negative in nature; such as: “*dying, helpless, angry, gravy, terrible, worse, hopeless, buried and deprived*”, as manifested in the play. Such negativity reflects the pessimistic nature of the Jimmy Porter, the main character in the play, they also convey the attitude, general atmosphere as well as the psychological state of the characters in the play. Lexical analysis is pivotal to appreciate the literary text and evident without it, the text could not be construed. Hence, a language is a mix of connotative and denotative interpretation of lexical items. Examining lexemes also reveals out other important facts related to the text. The focus of interpretation is on core meaning, core sense and the motifs of different parts of speech especially lexicons used by “Jimmy Porter” comes to the conclusion that the use of nouns, verbs, and negative adjectives contributes in abundance in order to comprehend and deduce the real motifs hidden behind the play. The function of images in the figures of speech used in the play makes the readers and audience approach the connotative sense and portrays the issues which were prevailing in the society at that time. This yields a meaningful interpretation of the literary work, its ideological as well as its sociological significance. Furthermore, it provides a sociocultural vision and highlights the interface and

interaction of language, culture and thought in this interdisciplinary literary work.

Conclusion:

Literature is a manifestation of human's ideology and desires. Its content is unlimited as the thoughts and desires of human beings are also unlimited. It is the manifestation of life through words. It is also an influential tool for the transmission of culture, heritage as well as the history of a society. Analyzing literary work helps in interpreting the particular characteristics of a society or a social group, in terms of spirituality, intellect, emotion and physical environment. As all social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are produced and different interests are served. Therefore, it is necessary to explore literary work in order to achieve coherent interpretation of it.

Literature, culture and history are closely connected to each other. Culture penetrates every aspect of human life. It moreover influences the structure and functions of a community's language, which in turn influences the individual's language, interpretation of reality and his character as well. A person's language can exert a dramatic influence on his perception and thought. In fact, an individual's specific language selections, their sequences and their layout are tied to specific social conditions. Researching literary work also sheds light on the cultural, intellectual and historical aspects of the time. It also helps to demonstrate how

a literary work comprises a specific socio-cultural vision of the world.

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