



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 11. Issue.1. 2024 (Jan-March)

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF WORDS IN “MACBETH”

Dr. Amol Ramesh Rao Bute

Sr. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Basic Sciences & Humanities,

GMR Institute of Technology, Rajam, Andhra Pradesh

Email: buteamolr@gmail.com

doi: 10.33329/ijelr.11.1.119



Article information

Article Received:17/2/2024

Article Accepted:20/03/2024

Published online:26/03/2024

ABSTRACT

Language is a multifaceted human phenomenon that encompasses more than just the mere exchange of words. It serves as the foundation of communication, facilitating the expression of thoughts, emotions, and ideas. Language is a fundamental aspect of human existence, influencing every facet of our lives. Words are the building blocks of language. By using strong words in communication, one can accomplish anything. Language is the basis of literature, which acts as a mirror reflecting society. The writer presents what happens in the society. While many writers have contributed to English literature, William Shakespeare stands out as one of the most influential. He created numerous characters and depicted societal realities. Through his characters, Shakespeare employed powerful words that influenced the course of events. The present study focuses on Shakespeare's character Lady Macbeth, who employs effective words during conversations with her husband, convincing him to kill King Duncan.

Keywords: communication, language, words, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, Duncan

Introduction

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a word as “a single unit of language that has meaning and can be spoken or written.” Words serve as the building blocks of language, enabling humans to communicate ideas, emotions, and experiences effectively. Proper selection of words in communication assists speakers in achieving their objectives. Language, formed through the use of words, is utilized by writers for literature. Many writers have given various definitions for the literature in different ages but great writers have something in common: they understand the value of word choice in writing. The selection of appropriate words is crucial for creating powerful and vivid effects. Among the many great writers in history, Shakespeare undoubtedly stands out as one of the greatest writers of the English language. His dialogues have had a magnificent impact on readers, evident in the enduring popularity of his works even after 400 years. The present study aims to understand the fundamentals which motivates the protagonist be become over ambitious to kill the King and achieves the so called success.

Significance of the Study:

The study contributes significantly. The words are more important in the communication. This study shows that by the use of effective words we may change the mind of other person and motivate him or her to work.

Literature Review:

Language is argumentative and has the ability to change the minds or people's behaviours. It is a very powerful tool in the hands of a skilled language user in getting what he or she wants (Rabiah, 2012). Literature is the outcome of the writer's artistic imagination. The writer observes the society keenly and communicates with the readers through use of vivid imagination and creative use of language. The writer uses his / her skills and allow his characters often step into a poetic realm, in which the language, words and sentence structure is very precise, to best to express the entirety of the situation (Kellock, 2009). We can see this quality effectively in the works of William Shakespeare who was a king of words and his work is a true repository of lexical treasure. He was a grand master of lining words, intertwining them, culling them, weighing them, toying with them, using them in unusual positions, functions and forms to give the effect.

Research Methodology:

In this proposed study, a literary qualitative methodology was employed, primarily utilizing content analysis as the overarching approach. To conduct this analysis, both primary and secondary sources were consulted. The primary source consisted of the main text of Shakespeare's "Macbeth", while secondary sources included printed and online research journal articles, as well as occasional online books. After reading the collected sources, the paper has tried to compile the relevant information to support the research goal.

Summary of Shakespeare's Macbeth

Macbeth displays courage and skills as a warrior in fighting against the Norwegian army. After a victorious battle, Macbeth encounters three witches who prophesy his ascent to the title of Thane of Cawdor and eventual kingship. These predictions, coupled with Duncan's reward of the Thane of Cawdor title to Macbeth, plant seeds of ambition in his mind. Influenced by his ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth begins to contemplate regicide to fulfill the witches' prophecy.

Driven by ambition, Macbeth succumbs to his wife's persuasion and murders Duncan while he is a guest at their castle. The murder sets off a chain of events, with Macbeth ascending to the throne while Duncan's sons flee, becoming prime suspects. Macbeth's paranoia deepens as he eliminates threats, including Banquo, who suspects him due to the witches' prophecy. Macbeth seeks further guidance from the witches, who provide cryptic messages about his fate, leading him to believe he is invincible.

As Macbeth's tyranny grows, opposition mounts, with Macduff and Malcolm rallying forces against him. Lady Macbeth's descent into madness and eventual death exacerbate Macbeth's isolation and despair. Despite his defiance, Macbeth is, ultimately, defeated by Macduff, fulfilling the prophecy of the witches that no man born of woman can kill him. With Macbeth's demise, Malcolm assumes the throne, restoring order to Scotland.

Power of the Words:

In "Macbeth", Macbeth is the protagonist but the real driving force is Lady Macbeth. Her role is to convert the prophesy made by the witches for her husband into reality. It can be seen her effective use of words in her communication with her husband. She puts all the efforts to convince her husband, Macbeth to kill the King and achieve the goal.

In the beginning of the drama, Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches. They prophesy that Macbeth will become the Thane of Cawdor and later the King of Scotland, and in state of Banquo, his descendants will become kings. After the witches vanish, King Duncan's messengers inform them that Macbeth has indeed been named Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth starts to think about the second prophecy made by the witches—that he will be crowned king—might be true. He reports the incident to his wife, Lady Macbeth, and informs her that King

Duncan will visit and stay the night at their home. Lady Macbeth uses her powerful words to convince her husband to do anything achieve the target. She says, "O, never shall the sun that morrow see!" and starts to counsel him by advising that

"Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent
flower." (Act 1, Sc. 5. Line 73-77)

to hide his true intentions and emotions behind a mask of innocence and cordiality. By comparing his face to a book where others can read "strange matters," Lady Macbeth implies that Macbeth's expressions betray his inner turmoil and ambitions. She urges him to adopt a facade that mirrors the present moment, appearing welcoming and harmless to others while concealing any sinister desires or plans. In essence, Lady Macbeth is coaching Macbeth to deceive others by appearing outwardly harmless and congenial, thereby facilitating their nefarious plot to seize power, and she urges him:

"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 sway and masterdom." (Act 1 Sc. 5 Line 78-82)

to adopt a deceitful and cunning demeanor, likening him to a serpent hidden beneath a seemingly innocent surface. She is instructing him to conceal his true intentions, just as a serpent hides beneath a flower. Lady Macbeth emphasizes the importance of preparing for King Duncan's visit, as they must ensure that their plan to murder him is executed smoothly and without suspicion. She asserts her authority by taking charge of the arrangements for the "great business" of Duncan's murder, indicating her determination to seize power and control over their future. Lady Macbeth believes that their actions tonight will secure their dominance over all future nights and days, granting them complete sovereignty and mastery. She says that he should not worry. He just need to keep fear away and rest of the things she will manage. When Macbeth says her that he does not want to murder King Duncan because he has honoured him by achieving the approval and respect of many people. He wants to enjoy these things whilst it is still fresh and new. Macbeth wishes to enjoy these honours and golden opinions while they are still fresh and new. Lady Macbeth, however, says that she is wonders

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?

Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
Like the poor cat i' th' adage? (Act 1, Sc. 7. Line 39-49)

if Macbeth was drunk when he came up with the idea of the murder and, now that he has woken up from a drunken stupor, if he has lost his courage. She use such words which make Macbeth feel humiliation, as though he looks physically weakened at the thought of taking the crown. Lady Macbeth questions Macbeth's character. She asks him if he is the sort of man who is too afraid to act upon his desires. In doing this, she questions not only his love for her but also his masculinity, a tactic designed to make him rethink his decision. She asks if he would rather be a "coward" than take what he wants. Again, by insulting his character, Lady Macbeth hopes to

spur him to action. Notice, also, how she describes the crown as an "ornament," as an object of value. Becoming king is not just something she desires for her husband, it is something she also desires for herself because it brings great prestige and power. Finally, "the poor cat" that she mentions refers to an adage (an old saying) that a cat would eat fish but not get her feet wet. In other words, if you want the best things in life, you must be prepared to take them for yourself. By alluding to this cat, Lady Macbeth reminds Macbeth that if he does not act, he will never fulfill his ambitions. Macbeth asks her to be calm but she expresses her disbelief and frustration towards her husband, Macbeth, who has shown hesitation in carrying out their plan to murder King Duncan.

What beast was 't, then,

That made you break this enterprise to me? (Act 1, Sc. 7. Line 53-54)

She uses a word "beast," implying that something primitive and irrational has caused him to deviate from their agreed-upon course of action. She is questioning what kind of force or influence could have led him to go against their plan and break his commitment to her.

"When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man." (Act 1, Sc. 7. Line 56-58)

She accuses him of lacking the courage and determination that he once possessed when he initially agreed to the plan. Lady Macbeth suggests that Macbeth's willingness to commit the murder would have demonstrated his masculinity and ambition, making him "more the man" than he was before. Lady Macbeth emphasizes

"Nor time nor place

Did then adhere, and yet you would make both.

They have made themselves, and that their fitness now

Does unmake you." (Act 1, Sc. 7. Line 58-62)

that at the time of their initial discussion, there were no obstacles preventing them from carrying out the deed. She argues that the lack of constraints such as time or place should have made it easier for Macbeth to follow through with their plan. However, Macbeth's hesitation now undermines his previous resolve and commitment. Lady Macbeth believes that the mere fact that they had conceived of the plan should have been enough to motivate Macbeth to carry it out. The phrase "They have made themselves, and that their fitness now does unmake you" suggests that the opportunity to seize power, which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth had envisioned for themselves, has now been lost due to Macbeth's indecision. Lady Macbeth implies that Macbeth's failure to act has diminished his own worthiness and suitability for power. Then finally, she uses the strongest words to convince her husband. She begins by invoking her experience as a mother,

I have given suck, and know

How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.

I would, while it was smiling in my face,

Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you

Have done to this. (Act 1, Sc. 7. Line 62-67)

stating that she has nursed a child and knows the tenderness and love that comes with caring for an infant. Lady Macbeth then makes a shocking declaration, claiming that if she had sworn to carry out such a heinous act as Macbeth has sworn to do – that is, to kill Duncan – she would be willing to commit an unimaginable act of violence against her own child.

By hearing the powerful words, Macbeth convinces himself but expresses the doubts, that if he fails. Quickly Lady Macbeth says "We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking place And we'll not fail." Then she give the plan how to kill the King to convince Macbeth and he acts accordingly and kills the King Duncan.

Conclusion

The present study found that the fundamental motivation behind the protagonist lies in the power of words. It is often said that words are stronger than weapons, and this notion is evident upon reading "Macbeth." Lady Macbeth exemplifies the power of words. At the beginning of the drama, readers encounter a great warrior, but Lady Macbeth's words transform him into a criminal who kills his own master or king, for whom he was once willing to do anything. Lady Macbeth's logical connections give her words the power to influence Macbeth's thoughts, preventing him from considering anything beyond kingship. She uses powerful words to convince him to kill the king, and the tragic result is evident. Lady Macbeth employs words that transform Macbeth from a war hero to a tyrant.

Limitation and future scope of the study

William Shakespeare wrote many dramas, which are divided into three main styles or genres: Comedies, Tragedies, and Histories. For the study's purpose, only 'Macbeth,' a tragedy, has been used. For further study, all dramas may be included. Collaborative research is also possible.

References:

- Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press.
- Celine Freyer, *Forms of Persuasion in Shakespeare's Macbeth and Fugard's Sizwe Bansi Is Dead: A Comparative Analysis*, MA Thesis, The University of Namibia, April 2023
- E- notes, *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, <https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth/questions/was-the-hope-drunk-wherein-you-dressed-yourself-270327>
- Jovanović, V. Ž. (2006). The Significance of William Shakespeare for the development of English word-formation. In: K. Rasulić & I. Trbojević (Eds.), *ELLS75: Interfaces and Integrations* (pp. 109 – 122). Belgrade: University of Belgrade.
- Macbeth*-William Shakespeare. Publisher PenguinClassics, ISBN: 9780141396316; Edition: 1st Edition, 2015
- Maitra, S., & Mukherjee, S. (2020). Indian decentrings of Macbeth: postmodern creativity in filmic adaptations by Vishal Bhardwaj and Jayaraj. *Creativity Studies*, 13(2), 585-599.
- Mohammad Jashim Uddin* Mst. Halima Sultana**, *Patriarchal Dominance in Shakespeare's Macbeth: Viewing from A Feminist Perspectives*, *ASA University Review*, Vol. 11 No. 2, July–December, 2017
- The tragedy of Macbeth*, By William Shakespeare, Part of Folger Shakespeare Library Edited by Dr. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, New Folger Library Shakespeare series, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2013
- Yagnasri, Ms. S. (2023) *The Power of Words: Iago as Reasoner*, *The Journal of English Language Teaching (India)* vol. 65(6), pp 38-41.