Shakespeare`S Othello: Language Speaks For Its Self Essay, Research Paper

Derek Eiri

Ms. Noto

H. English 10

1 November 2000

Language speaks for its self

The English language is a way to write and speak that helps us see a motive or point in a piece of writing. Depending what style an author uses, whether if it tells the detail of a situation or descriptive of an object, the author tries to “paint” a picture into the reader?s mind that may seem imaginative, analytic, expressive, or judgmental. Writing styles that involve imagination or a hyperbolic phrase is the best way to develop that image. The brush that most imaginatively paints the color on to the paper is the figurative language.

Figurative language stimulates the reader?s imagination since authors explain details so that one subject can be compared to another. Another positive feature of figurative language is that it helps the readers understand what the author is trying to say without any confusion comprehend complicated ideas. Using metaphors and hyperbolic verbalisms, the author enhances the reader?s enjoyment and raises interest in the character?s themselves. In addition, similes can describe a characters persona. For example, when Iago states that “Your heart is burst. You have lost half your soul,” (I.1.96) the reader must use his imagination to fully understand its intentions. As Iago points this out to Brabantio, he is implying that Brabantio?s heart + soul must be broken since he had lost his daughter to an undesirable moor. The reader, who infers the deep significance of the hyperbole realizes the suffering that Brabantio must be going through. Two metaphors also invite readers, making a reference to her white and his moor background of their races, he exclaims that “?an old black ram is tupping your white ewe.”(I.1.97) Portraying Othello, as a ram allows one to imply that he imposes his beast?s behavior upon Desdemona, the innocent, helpless ewe. This quote actually gives one an idea of Iago?s image that he is trying to plant into Brabantio?s mind because the fact that Othello is a moor, instead of using officious language, which could be dry and wasteful to read. In the duration of Iago?s plan for Othello?s downfall, Othello accuses Desdemona of having an affair with Cassio and says “Was this fair paper, the most goodly book, made to write “whore” upon? ?O thou public commoner.” (IV.2.81) Fair paper, being the metaphor used to describe Desdemona, is a good way of saying clean or pure, but Othello then adds his remarks of the word “whore” being written upon her, which emphasizes the disappointment he feels about Desdemona?s reputation as a pure woman, and the question of her being faithful to her true love. Having such quotes of this nature makes reading an adventure since it forces the reader to apply the characteristics of one familiar object, for instance: a sheep to Desdemona.

Officious, existing as a dull, worthless language puts readers into a different mood. Reading an excerpt or even a page full of Officious “bull” is meaningless to an anxious/active reader. Maybe that?s why we?re tired of politicians? Officious language tells a character?s point, but does not give it right away. It takes forever to find the meaning of an entire paragraph. Sounds like your long winded grandfather? Iago, being a good example speaking in officious terms, he says “Farewell, for I must leave you ? so, Farewell (I.1.161-177). If you were to conclude this quote, the only translation you would decipher is “see ya.” Having long quotes such as this one can make a reader confused and soon may irritated the reader, being another reason why figurative language is much more efficient delivering the message rather than officious language. Another example of a waste of paper space is when the Herald come in Act 2 Scene 2 Line 1, “It is Othello?s pleasure ? is full of liberty of feasting from this present.” This permission to celebrate for the victorious defeat of the Turkish fleet and the belated wedding takes up 12 lines of text! Iago, once again, speaking to Othello in officious terms, says; “Touch me not so near, I had rather?” (II.3.235) If this were to be simplified, one would see that he?s only asking “Do you hate Cassio?” Time is definitely wasted reading these continuing lines of meaninglessness and it really distracts the reader in his/her thoughts. If such lines were to be simplified in Shakespeare?s plays, perhaps it would be much easier to understand.

When it comes to understanding, evaluative is a little more comprehensive than officious. Evaluative is more of an opinion passed on to the reader an really an overview of what the character thinks. For instance, Iago is discussing his opinion of Othello and reason why he should have been put in the place of lieutenant, “Despise me if I do not. Three great ones on the city, in personal suit to make me his lieutenant ?” (I.1.8-35) Although this quote gives Desdemona of his feelings and frustrations. It doesn?t paint that picture quite as well as figurative language would. Evaluative phrases are known to be long and boring, but showing a point. The point that the following quote is trying to prove is that Brabantio is arguing how it is impossible that his daughter could have not fallen in love with him without any magic, “O, thou foul thief, where hast thou enchanted her!?”(I.2.80-100) When Brabantio speaks of enchantment, he is telling Othello that he must?ve used magic. This goes on as he vents for at least a half of a page, it is interesting, but not as interesting to stay focused on the whole excerpt. Another example of Iago speaking in evaluative language is when he states “Lay thy finger, thus and let thy soul be instructed ? she first loved the Moor but for bragging ?”(II.1.242-270) This quote discusses the way Roderigo should look at Desdemona, doing such a sinful act. Evaluative Language is not all that bad if it were to be compared to any of the three, but it is still apparent that figurative language is much better because of the amount of detail given in a sentence or two.

Laconic language is a way an author sugarcoats an insult from on character to another, by saying one thing, but not directly saying the particular words. Laconic terminology can be very interesting, but it has similar flaws as the other two did, officious and evaluative. All three did not have enough detail, but did arise opinions from the characters.