

Antithesis in ‘Munajat Al Imam Ali (pbuh)’ and Oliver Gold Smith’s ‘The Deserted Village’: A Contrastive Study

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التضاد في ”مناجاة الامام علي ؑ” وشعر اوليفر جولد سميث

”القرية المهجورة”: دراسة تقابلية

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Abstract:-

Antithesis is a rhetorical device that entails the use of apparent contradictions in ideas, words, clauses, or sentences, all within a harmonious grammatical framework. The purpose of antithesis is to augment communication either emotionally or logically. This study offers a lexical semantic analysis of antithesis in Arabic and English selected texts. It aims at analyzing the texts to identify structural and functional differences and similarities in both languages, as well as, exploring the significance of antithesis in enriching meanings. To conduct the contrastive analysis of antithesis in both languages, Arabic text lines extracted from 'Munajat Al Imam Ali (pbuh)' have been contrasted with selected lines from Oliver Gold Smith's 'The Deserted Village'. The use of antithesis in Arabic and English varies in terms of linguistic structures, emphasis, style and cultural influences.

Key Words: antithesis, lexical semantic analysis, rhetoric device, figure of speech.

المخلص:-

التضاد هو أداة بلاغية تستلزم استخدام التناقضات الظاهرة في الأفكار أو الكلمات أو الجمل، كل ذلك في إطار نحوي متناغم. يسعى التضاد الى زيادة التواصل العاطفي أو المنطقي. تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلا دلاليا معجميا للتضاد في نصوص مختارة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية. وتهدف إلى تحليل النصوص لتحديد الاختلافات الهيكلية والوظيفية والتشابهات في كلتا اللغتين، وكذلك استكشاف أهمية التضاد في إثراء المعاني. لغرض إجراء التحليل التقابلي للتضاد في كلتا اللغتين، تمت مقارنة سطور النص العربي المستخرجة من "مناجاة الإمام علي عليه السلام" مع أسطر مختارة من "القرية المهجورة" لأوليفر جولد سميث. يختلف استخدام التضاد في اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية من حيث التراكيب اللغوية والتركيز والأسلوب والتأثيرات الثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التضاد، التحليل الدلالي المعجمي، أداة بلاغية، الطباق.

1. Introduction

Writers use non-literal or metaphorical language to engage readers, allowing them to mentally picture events, observe internal tensions, and understand abstract concepts. This approach helps conceal emotions and encourages active engagement. Constantly adhering to literal speech can result in monotonous language and restricted emotion conveying. By using figures of speech such as imagery, similes, metaphors, and symbols, writers and orators expand the audience's imagination and encourage interpretation of hidden meanings.

Figures of speech, forming an integral part of language, can be defined as "any intentional deviation from literal statement or common usage that emphasizes, clarifies, or embellishes both written and spoken language" (Britannica, 1999). Figures of speech play a salient role and add richness to writing that will have various effects on the reader. They give clarity of meaning and freshness of expression which allow the reader to use his/her imagination to build brilliant mental pictures. They can be used in both poetic and common language, making it more colorful, descriptive and exciting. All languages use figures of speech, but they employ different stylistic criteria. One of the remarkable figures of speech is 'antithesis'. Antithesis is also identified as a significant rhetorical device that serves to enhance speech emotionally or logically.

Antithesis, originated in Greek for 'setting opposite', is a stylistic figure of speech or rhetorical device involving an apparent contradiction of ideas, words, clauses or sentences within a balanced grammatical construction. Parallelism emphasizes the opposition of ideas (The Columbia Encyclopedia, 1963). Antithesis phenomenon occurs when speech units are stylistically employed with a distinct syntactic structure that relies on semantic contrast (Mamajanov, 1990). A famous instance of using antithesis is the statement said by Neil Armstrong when he landed on the surface of the moon "that's one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind". In this sentence, the antitheses are the 'small step' and 'giant leap' because they are the direct opposite of each other and yet contrast in the sentence.

Various studies have examined the utilization of antithesis in both English and Arabic literature. As an illustration, Ruzibaeva (2019) examines the practical characteristics of antithesis in literary works, drawing on instances from both English and Uzbek fiction. Understanding the semantic and contextual features of antithesis is crucial for completely appreciating its impact on the reader, as emphasized by the study.

Several languages adopted antithesis as a form of contrast in their literary, religious and other text types. However, there must be a number of differences and similarities concerning the structure and use of such device in each language. The utilization of antithesis may differ in terms of linguistic structures and cultural effects. Additional investigation and examination would be required to delve into this subject matter more comprehensively.

The current study offers a lexical semantic analysis of antithesis in Arabic and English selected texts. It aims at providing a descriptive account of the concept of antithesis in both languages, analyzing the selected texts to identify the indication of antithesis and to explore its salient role in these languages, as well as, tracing the structural and functional similarities and differences between Arabic and English as far as antithesis is concerned. It is hypothesized that antithesis is usually more employed in Arabic than in English with a variety of types and styles. To achieve the aims of the study and to verify hypothesis, the researcher performed a contrastive analysis of the selected data. The study is limited to selected Arabic texts extracted from 'Munajat Al Imam Ali (pbuh)' versus selected English literary extracts from 'The Deserted Village' by Goldsmith.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Antithesis in Arabic

Arabic has a wealth of rhetorical and figurative expressions that have been used variously in different text types. Abdul-Raof (2001, p. 138) defined figures of speech as "stylistically decorative building elements that can be employed to achieve and sublime style", illustrating that literature is the most fertile soil for such figurative elements. However, the researcher assumes that the Holy Quran is the main source of rhetorical and figurative expressions.

Antithesis is one of the most significant figures of speech or rhetorical devices used extensively in the Arabic language. It is known as 'tabaq'. According to Arabic lexicons, antithesis, in general, refers to the exact opposite or the juxtaposition of contrasting words or ideas to give a feeling of balance. Rhetoricians define antithesis as a compositional structure based on the combination of opposites, opposite nouns, verbs, adjectives or particles in certain patterns.

Tabaq is based on opposites. The literal meaning of Tabaq is stated by Al-Khalil bin Ahmed Al-Farahidi who defined Al-Tabaq as matching two things and combining them on one way; it has also been said that when two things coincide with each other, this means that they are equal, and equality means agreement. On the other hand, the idiomatic definition of Al-Tabaq refers to the combination of two opposites, or two opposite meanings in one sentence. This concept has many names and synonyms, namely: Al-Tabaq (الطباق), antithesis (التضاد), conformity (المطابقة), and equivalence (التكافؤ). Hence, the term antithesis is more indicative of this concept which shows disagreement (Matloop, 1987), the positive against the negative, so the two opposites do not meet and do not coincide; perhaps the closest name to the opposite is antithesis.

Sometimes Al-Tabaq is confused with Al-Muqabala, particularly when translating relevant texts into English. Thus, it is important to distinguish between them. Linguists distinguished and clarified the difference between Al-Tabaq and Al-Muqabala; one of them is Al-Qazwini who clarified that Al-Tabaq is: "the combination of the opposites, that is, two opposite meanings in the sentence", while Al-Muqabala is "to come with two or more compatible meanings, and then corresponding meanings respectively". Thus, Al-Tabaq in the Arabic language is only between opposites, whereas Al-Muqabala occurs between opposites and non-opposites, and Al-Tabaq is restricted on two opposites, but Al-Muqabala involves more than two opposites (Matloop, 1987).

2.2.1. Types of Antithesis in Arabic

The major types of antithesis (tabaq) in Arabic are:

1. Positive Tabaq: in which both parts of opposition are equal, whether they are positive or negative. It is applied in different

forms including that occurs between two verbs, two nouns, two letters, or between different forms. For instance:

قال الله سبحانه وتعالى: "أَذُهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكُ وَأَيْكِي، وَأَذُهُ هُوَ أَمَاتٌ وَأَحْيَا"

2. Negative Tabaq: it is the one in which opposites differ positively and negatively. It can occur between two opposite meanings, one is proven and the other is denied as in:

قال الله تعالى: "قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ".

2.2 Antithesis in English

Antithesis, as a rhetorical device, occurs when two contrasting ideas are put together to achieve a desired outcome. Sotirova (2016, p. 99) addressed antithesis as a contrastive pair based on the placing of two contrasting ideas similar in their grammatical structures, and adjacent to each other to emphasize meaning through contrast. According to The Columbia Encyclopedia (1963), antithesis could be defined as a figure of speech involving a seeming contradiction of ideas, words, clauses, or sentences included in a balanced grammatical structure.

Antithesis is a literary technique that entails juxtaposing opposed ideas, words, or traits in parallel constructions. This juxtaposition generates emphasis and lucidity, enhancing the persuasiveness of the statement. It is employed in several kinds of written communication, oral expression, literary works, advertising, and music to emphasize distinctions and provide a memorable cadence. The utilization of a recurring structure in antithesis enhances the memorability of literature, while the deliberate placement of contrasting elements strengthens its persuasiveness. An instance of antithesis can be observed in the introductory sentences of Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times".

3. Methodology and Data Analysis

This study employed a qualitative approach by comparing Arabic and English texts through contrastive analysis. The texts utilized as data sources for this research were in Arabic and English. A lexical semantic analysis was conducted on both texts. The purpose of contrastive analysis, or research, is to discern differences and patterns in the manner in which antithesis is utilized in both English

and Arabic texts. The qualitative paradigm required the analysis of data. executed in a continuous manner throughout the research procedure, ensuring that every stage is interdependent on one another. The next stage, following the successful collection of primary and secondary data, consists of data processing; the acquired data were analyzed using contrastive theory between B1 (English) and B2 (Arabic) (Chesterman, 1998, p. 54).

It is worth mentioning that Arabic and English are culturally and linguistically incompatible languages. Therefore, the translation of some figures of speech, involving 'antithesis', may not reflect their real figurative and connotative value in Arabic (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Furthermore, the data has been selected for the purpose of analyzing its structure in relation to antithesis, regardless of its authors or spiritual value.

3.1. Analysis of Arabic data

Before analyzing antithesis in the Arabic text 'Al-Munajat Verse' by Al Imam Ali (peace be upon him), it is essential to provide the reader with some background information regarding this verse. Al Munajat verse is a religious verse, recited in praise of the Almighty Allah, the prophet Mohammed and his family 'Ahlul Bayt' (pbuh). The term 'Munajat' in Arabic refers to a private discussion or confidential talk. The term 'Najwa' originates from the Holy Quran. For devout followers who have a deep affection for Allah, the Munajat serves as a means of direct communication with their divine Creator, providing a profound sense of tranquility and comfort to their innermost beings. Several Imams have composed Munajat, which have been documented in various literary works. An illustration of this is 'Al Saheefa al Sajjadiyyah', which has 15 supplications uttered in a whispered prayer by Imam Zaynul' Abidin (pbuh).

Text 1

” لك الحمد يا ذا الجود والمجد والعلى * تباركت تُعطي مَنْ تشاء وتَمنعُ“

“For You is all praise, O Possessor of Bounty, Glory and Eminence,”

“Glory be to You – You grant to whosoever You will, and withhold”

Discussion

Arab grammarians define verbs as “words denoting an action, event, process, or state of being”, which may occur in the past, present or future time. This refers to the fact that the semantic antithesis in verbs is characterized by instability due to time of occurrence of such verbs.

In the aforementioned text, the line of the verse commences with praising Allah the Almighty, expressing gratitude to his blessings. Two antithetical verbs (تُعطي، تمنع)- (grant, withhold) are employed here. The time reference of these verbs may be in the present or future, which emphasize their semantic function, clarifying integration of the two opposite meanings of granting and withholding to compose and motivate the whole intended meaning in the reader's mind, that is the wisdom of the Almighty Allah in the distribution of his grace. Antithesis has also provided aesthetical and harmonious style in conveying this meaning.

Text 2

”إِلَهِي وَخَلَّاقِي وَوَجْزِي وَمَوْلِي * إِلَيْكَ لَدَى الْإِعْسَارِ وَالْيُسْرِ أَعْرَجُ“

“O Allah! My Creator, my Fortress, and my Refuge!”

“To You I resort, in hardship and in ease, for relief”

Discussion

Divine texts written by the Prophet Mohammed and his family ‘Ahlul Bayt’ (pbut) are often accompanied by supplication (التضرع), which is usually preceded by glorification and praising the Almighty Allah. The line begins with a distinctive style of praising our creator. Unlike verbs, nouns have no reference to time, so antithesis in their meanings is stable. The two opposite nouns (الاعسار، اليسر)- (hardship, ease) express stable opposite meanings. Antithesis between ease and hardship enforces the meaning of obedience to Allah and submitting to his judgement in prosperity and distress. Thus, this rhetorical device not only adds aesthetic value to the text, but also contributes in forming the textual content with a variety of contrasted, though integrated meaning.

Text 3

”الهي لئن خيبتني أو طردتني فمن ذا الذي أرجو ومن نا أشقع“

“O Allah! If You thwart me or chase me away,”

“Then who can I hope from, and who can I make intercede for me?”

Discussion

This line involves the juxtaposition of two antithetical pairs of parallel constructions respectively. This kind of opposition, which is known as ‘al muqabala’, is noticed in (thwart, chase away) (خبيتني، طردتني) confronted by (hope, make intercede) (أرجو، أشفع). The contrasting meanings and temporal context of the verbs contribute to the overall semantic and aesthetic portrayal of this text which entails that if our Lord prevented and expelled us, then who can we turn to for hope, and who can we implore on our behalf.

Text 4

إِلَهِي لَئِنْ لَمْ تَرَعْنِي كُنْتُ ضَائِعًا * وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَرَعَانِي فَلَسْتُ أُضَيِّعُ

“O Allah! If you do not watch out for me, I will be lost!”

“But since You do watch over me, I am never lost.”

Discussion

The antithesis in this line is known as negative tabaq (طباق السلب), which takes place between two contradicted meanings, one of them is positive and the other is negative. Here the antithesis occurred between the positive and negative verbs: (do not watch me out, watch over me) (لم ترعني، ترعاني) -. The antithesis also involved other constructions in the text represented in the noun (ضائعا) - (..be lost) against the negative verb (لست أضيع) - (..never lost). The antithetical patterns in this line contribute in enhancing the whole meaning that is, 'we are lost without Allah's protection.

3.2. Analysis of English data

'The Deserted Village' by Goldsmith is a renowned poem composed during the 18th century. It highlights the speaker's profound sorrow, resulting in early readers appreciating its poetic qualities but dismissing its political message. In addition, Goldsmith's references to other literary works, such as Alexander Pope's Eloisa to Abelard and Joseph Addison's Cato, emphasize conflicting perspectives on environmental disasters and colonialism. The

interplay between the 'public voice' of poetic etiquette and the personal voice of the narrator enhances the intricacy of the opposition presented in the poem. In addition, the poem's logical form, which resembles a classical oration, highlights the contrast between the problematic subject matter and the persuasive power of its delivery. The poem suggests that the colonization processes and the income gained from colonial efforts are responsible for the abandoned condition of Auburn. This creates a contrast between the impact of colonial trade and the decline of rural England.

Text1

"Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,"

"Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn"

Discussion

These lines appear to create contrasting focal point. The occurrences of the words (sports) and (charms), their almost interchangeable usage, and the pleasantness of their immediate surroundings unite them together, particularly as generic nouns of a sweet and falsely pastoral kind. Antithesis has been reflected through the parallel expressions, conveying the overall idea of contrast between the idealized rural life (sweet village) and the harsh reality faced by small farmers (thy charms withdrawn).

Text 2

"fares the land, to hastening ills a prey"

"Where wealth accumulates, and men decay"

Discussion

Antithesis is presented in the second line as observed in the musical difference between the verb (accumulates) and the simpler verb (decay). It is emphasized by the fact that these words all sound the same, bringing the two ends of the line together so that people decay is made to look like the result of building up wealth. In this way, the argument of the first line is shown properly, as it were, to show that what it means is that the land is badly ill. This kind of mix of strong arguments and simple music with words is called "lyrical antithesis", and it's all over the work and is often marked by gadgets like those seen in the couplet.

Text 3

“One only master grasps the whole domain,”

“And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.”

Discussion

These lines also incorporate antithesis. It is noticed that a single word (stints) can make a big difference by signifying the new owner's formal control over the land and also by strongly suggesting another type of impropriety that flows from it. Only one master fully comprehends the entire domain, and your fertile plain is limited to half of its potential cultivation. This is a contradictory concept created via the parallel constructions.

Text 4

“His heaven commences ere the world be past!”

“And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.”

“But verging to decline, its splendours rise.”

Discussion

These lines suggest that the alliteration and assonance sharpen the antithesis produced through parallel structures (decline, rise), and they have the additional impact of highlighting not just the existence of change, but also the process of changing. The continuing emotional or visual transformation depicted in the poem has been enhanced via antithesis.

3.3. Comparison and Results

The results of the current analysis can be described as follows:

1. 'Al-Munajat Verse' by Al Imam Ali (peace be upon him) has vivid rhetorical formulations that clearly exhibit both structural and semantic antitheses, thus enhancing the overall meaning.
2. 'The Deserted Village' by Goldsmith exhibits clear indications of both structural and semantic antitheses. The structure and references employed in the poem contribute to this contrasting idea.

3. The presence of antithesis in both languages enhances and unifies the overall meaning of the text, stimulating the reader's imagination to fully comprehend the intended message.
4. Both languages employ parallel grammatical structures which serve to emphasize antithesis, in addition to the use of alliteration and assonance.
5. Arabic uses various constructions that are opposite to each other in a wide range of types and styles, while English focuses on opposing ideas using different structures.
6. The antithesis is almost direct in Arabic, while English tends to use indirect expressions to perform antithesis.
7. The aesthetic aspect has been highlighted in Arabic through the utilization of antithetical structures, whereas in English, the primary objective of employing antithesis is to effectively communicate the intended message.

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