

A Study of Swearing in Shakespeare's Hamlet

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Abstract

Swearing is part of everyday language use. This phenomenon is related originally to profanity or bad language. It is the use of taboo language to express certain emotions such as fear, anger, frustration, contempt, hatred...etc. to listeners.

As a way of expressing emotions, the meanings of the swearwords, are not to be taken literally but as connotative:

- (1) *Piss off!* (insulting request which means 'go away').
- (2) *Kiss my arsehole.*(violent rejection to something).

Swearwords can be related to different sources: religious terms (e.g. God damn it, go to hell), terms related to excrements or the organs that produce them (e.g. shit, buttocks), and terms that are related to sex and genitals(e.g. cunt, cuckold).

The study examines the linguistic, semantic, and psychological aspects of this phenomenon. It covers different linguistic categories of swearwords, such as their being nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and interjections. They are used to issue different types of swearing: abusive, cathartic, social, emphatic and blasphemous.

Finally, the study limits itself to analyzing this phenomenon in selected texts taken from Shakespeare's Hamlet.

1.1. Swearing

Andersson and Trudgill (1992:53) admit that swearing might (a) refer to something taboo in a given culture ,(b) be interpreted non-literally and (c)be used to express strong emotions and attitudes. Bousfield and Cluiper (2008:5) similarly show that swearing is the use of taboo language with the purpose of expressing the speaker's emotional state and communicating that information to listeners. Swearing can also be interpreted as follows:

To utter a form of oath highly or irreverently ,
as a mere intensive, or an expression of anger ,
vexation or other strong feeling, to utter a profane
oath , or use profane language habitually ; more
widely to use bad language(OED 1989:367).

Crystal (1995:10) defines the function of swearwords as "emotional expressions" ,he adds that "swearwords and obscenities are probably the commonest signals to be used to express our emotions".

Wierzbicka(1987:252-253) defines a swearword in terms of the speech acts that it expresses as :

- (a) I'm thinking about X.
- (b) I imagine that by saying these words I could cause something bad to happen to something.
- (c) I want to say some words because people think one should not say.
- (d) I imagine that by saying these words I could cause myself to feel better.
- (e) I say this because I want to show what I feel.

The above definition shows that swearing in most cases is deliberately "bad" act designed to express powerful emotions by using 'strong' language. It explicitly acknowledges the importance of the speaker's attitude and the fact that particular words will be used in such a context (ibid.).

Swan (2005:575) classifies swearwords in English into three main groups:

- a. A number of words connected with Christian religion, e.g. the names (Christ, God) are considered holy by some people. These people prefer to use such words only in formal and respectful contexts, and they may be upset or shocked by their careless use.
- b. Certain words related to sexual activity and associated parts of the body (e.g. fuck, balls) which are regarded as shocking by many people.
- c. Some words referring to the elimination of bodily wastes (what one does in the lavatory), and the associated parts of the body (e.g. piss, shit).

The following are some of the most common English swearwords with their literal meanings (Swan, 2005:575; Ripley, 2008 :1; Ameka, 1992:111):

Religion	
Swearword	Meaning
damn	condemn to hell
blast	strike with divine punishment
hell	
God	
Jesus	
Christ	
Parts of the body	
Swearword	Meaning
arse (ass)	bottom ,buttocks, anus
arsehole (asshole)	a nus
balls	testicles
bollocks	testicles
cock	penis
dick	penis
prick	penis
tits	breasts
cunt	Woman's sex organ
twat	Woman's sex organ
Sexual Activity	
Swearword	Meaning
fuck	have sex (with)
wank	masturbate(have sex with oneself)
bugger	have anal intercourse with a person or animal
come	reach a sexual climax (orgasm)
sod	homosexual (abbreviation of sodomite)
bitch	female dog ;earlier used for 'immoral woman'
whore	prostitute
bastard	child of unmarried parents
cuckold	husband of immoral woman
Lavatory	
Swearword	Meaning
piss	urine, urinate
shit	excrement; defecate
crap	excrement; defecate
fart	let digestive gas out from the anus

Table (1) Swearwords with Their Literal Meanings

1.2. Types of swearing

Beebe(1995:22) affirms that swearing generally can be either propositional or non-propositional. Propositional swearing is consciously planned or intentional, for example:

(1) You **fucking asshole!**

Kasper(1990:4) and VaLanker (1977:7) agree that non-propositional swearing, in contrast to the above examples, is unintentional , unplanned and uncontrollable. It involves automatic emotional response to sudden burst of emotion such as pain, fear, annoyance or anger,for example:

(2) **Shit!** I've lost the address! (Swan,2005:575)

Swearing whether propositional or non-propositional can be subdivided into five types: abusive, cathartic, emphatic, social, and blasphemous (ibid.).

1.2.1. Abusive Swearing (Insulting)

In this kind of swearing abusive language is used to express retributive or pre-emptive aggression in addition to other motives such as: contempt, disgust, dissociation from others or assertion of superiority at least (Wajnryb, 2005a:93). This kind of swearing is an affront to the listeners. It degrades or threatens those it is used towards (Ripley,2008 :1).

In this sense, swearing is usually insulting, certainly discriminatory and abusive, and is designed to show how little we care about the subject. It is intended to hurt the listener. Swearwords of this kind are: masturbation (wanker), incest (motherfucker), an illegitimate family background(bastard),or sexual deviance(bugger).These terms are rarely intended to be taken literally , but the

unpleasant connotations may help to their emotive nature (Lachenicht,1980:22).
For example:

- (3) You, **shiteating asshole!**
- (4) Mother**fucking** son of **bitch!**
- (5) **Fuck** you!

The above examples show that in abusive swearing there is a "participation framework", a system which has an active (participating) and a passive (observing) role. Goffman (1967:13) shows that a target is very important in abusive swearing because the abusive swearer wants to wound, to rapture, to inflict harm, most commonly to abuse.

1.2.2. Cathartic Swearing

Wajnryb (2005a:52) admits that cathartic swearing is used as a means of expressing extreme emotion such as surprise ,anger, fear, annoyance, depression...etc. Releasing a cathartic expletive is possibly beneficial as a means of relieving out stress level.

In fact ,it is a kind of a response –cry swearing which might tell others that something bad happened to the speaker. In a coffee spilling, for example ,one might let out a spill cry like:

- (6) Aww , **fuck !**

The above example show that cathartic swearing is the act of letting out a stream, emitting some –pen-up emotion that speaks independently of the words used(ibid.).

Two important characterizations can distinguish cathartic swearing from other types. First , the offence on the part of the speaker is unintentional, except to

an informed listener who may be offended, so emotions arise involuntarily. Secondly, such kinds of expletives may require no audience (no target), or it can be directed towards an inanimate target. Some people, for example, may invest the offending objects such as the cupboard that bashed their head or the doorway that jammed their fingers with volition and malice. Here are some examples of this kind of swearing:

(7) a. Dentist: Aww! I am sorry.

b. Patient: **Shit!** Get the **bloody** thing out of my check.

(8) Oh, **fuck** ! my computer just crashed. (Ameka, 1992:111)

1.2.3. Social Swearing

Social swearing is conversational and tends to define the relationship between people and groups. People, in this sense, use swearwords without referring to the matter, just using words to arouse interest, to express admiration, to show off and express to peers that the setting is informal (Waters, 2007:1).

When the group is relaxed and happy, swearing is clearly of a social kind, a sign of being 'one of the gang' and it has even been said to be contagious. So under conditions of very low stress, swearing is almost entirely of social variety. It creates a sense of harmony and ones (Montague, 2001:89).

Crystal (1995:173) shows that swearing can be used as markers of friendliness in bantering remarks between friends, and may even be used as terms of endearment. One, for example, may hail a friend who has not seen for a while by swearing:

(9) Where have you been, old **bastard!**

or to promote social harmony, one might say:

(10) This pie is pretty **fucking** good! (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008:4)

1.2.4. Emphatic Swearing

Emphatic swearing is used to emphasize something. The swearer, in this sense, uses it as descriptive, to emphasize an emotion. Intensifying adjectives and adverbs used to emphasize an emotion are: (damned, sodding, bloody, fucking, goddam). The emphatic capacity has sometimes been regarded as straightforward synonyms of "very" (Pinker, 2007:5). Examples of this use may include:

(11) She's a **fucking** marvelous singer.

(12) Where's the **bloody** switch? (Hughes, 2006:2)

1.2.5. Blasphemous Swearing

The original meaning of the term "blasphemy" is restricted to sacrilege or saying God's name (such as "Lord" or "God") in vain (Wikipedia, 2007:4). It involves cursing or reviling God, or acting in a way that scorns Him, mocks Him, or denounces Him. When someone commits blasphemy, he is shaking his fist in God's face, defying Him, insulting Him, and refusing to acknowledge His goodness or His authority over Him. Cursing is one form of blasphemy, because it treats God casually and ignores His glory and honour (Graham, 2000:1). Examples of lifting up God's name in vain may include:

(a) profanity, e.g., dragging God's name or holy names through the mud of human emotion:

(13) **God damn** it !

(14) Go to **hell!**

(15) **Shit ! Mother of God!**

(16) **Fucking** Christ! (Rachel, 1999:2)

(b) frivolous use of God's name for idle and unfruitful purposes in exclamations such as:

(17) Oh! **My Lord!**

(18) Oh! **God!** (ibid.)

(c) or it may refer to misusing God's name or His prophets in taking oaths:

(19) By **God' blood !**

(20) By the **beard of the prophet!** (James and Keenan,1999:6)

1.3. The Psychological Aspect of Swearing

Psychologically speaking ,swearing may be beneficial as a means of relieving -pent-up anger, and studies have indicated that those who swear regularly suffer less from stress than those who do not. Psychological factors most directly associated with swearing are trait, anger, hatred, religiosity, sexual anxiety and verbal aggressiveness (Martin and Anderson,1997:271); (MaCaulay,1996:89).

Montague(2001: 67)compares swearing as a vent for emotion to the crying of a small child, and suggests that crying develops into swearing as the child requires language. In this sense, he (ibid) puts it in the following way:

There is no doubt that swearing has a definite physiological function , for after childhood relief in tears and wailing is rightly discouraged [...] the nervous system demands some expression that does not affect towards cowardice and feebleness and , as a nervous stimulant in a crisis, swearing is unequalled.

The capacity to respond in frustration is already present in the infant, but it is not innate. Swearing is a learned form of human behaviour in cultures and under conditions in which it is encouraged. It constitutes a culturally conditioned form of behaviour, which serves two purposes: on the one hand, it permits expressing excess energy or frustration in a verbal form, and on the other hand, it restores emotional stability (ibid:71).

Similarly Andersson and Richard(1985:41) admit that "just as we can have a 'good cry' or a 'good laugh' ,prompted by sorrow or joy, we can have 'a good swear' to bring relief to stressed mind". Thus, the relief-purifying-pacifying function of swearing is a rather more civilized form of behaviour that replaces physical violence as a vent for frustration or aggression. Andersson and Richard (ibid.) formulate the law of swearing by saying:

Swearing is the verbal expression , or venting of the aggressiveness which follows upon frustration. Hence the desire to swear will always be experienced under conditions which give rise to the frustration – aggression syndrome.

1.4. Emotive Meaning of Swearing

Swearing is primarily meant to convey connotative or emotional meaning; the meanings of words themselves are primarily constructed as connotative(Jay and Danks,1977:25).Many words in this area have a specific referent but have also been extended to be used solely to express the attitude of the speaker. For example, "fuck" a common profanity in English, a verb for the act of sexual intercourse, can be used in certain contexts to refer to acts of violence:

(21) I'll **fucking** kill you.

(22) He really **fucked** that guy up. (Wikipedia,2007:6)

Or it may refer to an error:

(23) You **fucked** up again! you are fired. (ibid.)

Sometimes it is used profanely in imprecations and exclamations as the coarsest equivalent of "damn":

(24) **Fuck** my luck! (Swan,2005:575)

In other contexts, the word "fuck" means "I don't care":

(25) **Fuck** Lyndon Johnson!

Thus, the sentence(25) can be roughly glossed as " I don't care about Lyndon Johnson " instead of taking its literal meaning as "have sex with Lyndon Johnson" (Kidman,1993:6).

Swan(2005:575)Similarly shows that the words fuck(up) and bugger (up) can be used to mean "spoil" or "destroy":

(26) You've **buggered** my watch.

(27) You've **fucked up** the TV.

Swan(ibid.) maintains that "fucked" and "buggered" can also be used to mean "exhausted":

(28) a. Want another game of tennis?

b. No, I'm **fucked**.

In British English the words "bugger" ,"fuck", "damn", and "sod" can mean "nothing":

(29) There's **fuck** all in the fridge. We'll have to eat out (ibid.).

Swearword like "balls", "bullshit", "cock" and "crap" are used to mean "nonsense":

(30) Don't talk **crap**.

(31) What's his new book like? ~ A load of **balls** (McEnery,2005:201).

Kidman (1993: 12) points out that in American English "shit" can mean "lies" or "nothing":

(32) Jane's is getting married.~ No **shit**?

(33) He doesn't know his ass from a hole in the ground. He doesn't know **shit**.

The idioms "cock up", "balls up" and "fuck up" can refer to mistakes of organization:

(34) That secretary **cooked up** my travel arrangements.

(35) Sorry you didn't get your invitation- Mary made **a balls-up**.

(36) The conference was a complete **fuck-up**. (Swan,2005:576)

In British English swearwords like "pissed" means "drunk" and "pissed off" means "fed up":

(37) Steve was **pissed** out of his mind again last night.

(38) I'm getting **pissed off** with London. (Wells,1990:33)

The idiomatic expressions like "fuck off", "piss off", "bugger off" and "sod off" can give the meaning of "go away":

(39) Can I have a word with you? ~ **fuck off** !

(40) If Andy comes asking for money, tell him to **piss off** (Hughes,1991:10).

Swan (2005:576) assures that expressions like " I don't / couldn't give a damn/shit/fuck;...a bugger can be used to show unconcern=('I don't care'):

(41) They can come and arrest me if they want to, I don't give a **fuck**.

(42) Mary is very angry with you.~ I don't give a **bugger**.

Some expressions a part from the referential meanings of the swearwords of which they are composed, can be used to express violent refusal, rejection or defiance:

(43) I'll be **damned/ fucked/buggered** if I will !

(44) Get **stuffed**!

(45) Kiss my **arselass**!

(46) Why don't you take a **flying fuck**? (Kidman,1993:7)

1.5. Categorization of Swearing

Swearwords generally are called "expletives". The term expletive is commonly used to refer to any "bad language" or "profanity" that has been used with or without meaning. Expletives, in this wide sense, may be interjections, adjectives, adverbs, nouns or verbs (Wapedia,2008:1).

(a) Interjections

Interjections swearwords can be defined as lexical phrases which serve to express emotion and fail to enter in any syntactic structures at all (Trask, 1993:144). Swearwords, in this sense, can be described as response-cry imprecations especially in cathartic swearing:

(47) **Bugger** ! I've smashed my finger. (Goffman, 1981:115)

(b) Intensifying Adjective/ Adverb

Intensifying adjectives or adverbs are usually used to emphasize an emotion especially in emphatic swearing. In their emphatic capacity, these words have sometimes been regarded as straightforward synonyms of "very" (Swan, 2005:576):

(48) That car is going **damned** fast.

(49) It's **bloody** raining again.

When these words are used before verbs, the word "well" is often added in British English:

(50) I **damn** well hope you never come back.

(51) I'm not **fucking** well paying this time.

(52) It's **bloody** well raining again (ibid.)

Swearwords may take the form of predicative negative adjective:

(53) That dentist is **shit**

and they can be used in the superlative degree:

(54) He's the **shittiest** dentist I've ever seen. (Goffman, 1981:115)

(c) Nouns

When used as nouns , swearwords simply express a strong emotion such as hatred, anger, envy, or contempt (generally to insult):

(55) Luck **Sod!**

(56) She's such a **bitch!**

(57) The guy's a real **asshole!**

(58) Stupid old **fart!** (Swan,2005:577)

(d) Verbs

As verbs, swearwords are generally used to insult. Usually they take the form of the imperative verb followed by an object:

(59) **Fuck** that child!

(60) **Fuck** you!

(61) **Suck** my **cock!** (ibid.)

(e) Infixation

Wajnryb(2005b:35)and McCarthy(1982:44) admit that another interesting feature is the potentiality of swearwords to take part in "infixing" in English, involving the insertion of certain English lexemes into others. It is the phenomenon of insertion expletives in emphatic forms like " infuckingcredible" or "absofuckinglutely" which McCarthy (ibid.) labels as integrated adjective, expletive insertion or fucking insertion:

(62) What you are saying is **absofuckinglutely** wrong.

(F) Combination of Swearwords

Taylor (1975:33) introduces another interesting feature of swearwords and that is the tendency to show a high degree of combinability with each other. Once a swearword has been introduced into a sentence, others can easily follow:

(63) He is **a cunt**, a real **shit** of a guy.

While the previous example show different swearwords being used, Kidman(1993:7) asserts that it is also possible for the same swearword to trigger itself repeatedly as well as triggering others:

(64) She was a **fucking** textbook **fucking** boxer's **fucking** girlfriend. She looked so **fucking** dumb!

(65) I **bloody** hope he **bloody** chokes on his **bloody** pretzels(Wapedia,2007:3).

1.6 Application

This section is devoted to the analysis of swearing in selected texts from Shakespeare's Hamlet .It aims at investigating the linguistic, semantic, as well as the psychological aspects of swearing.

Plot Summery

Plagued by royal treachery, vengeful scheming, and unsettled ghost, Denmark is ripe for destruction. Directly following King Hamlet's recent death, the widowed Queen Gertrude has hastily remarried Claudius, King Hamlet's own brother. At midnight, the rambling ghost of King Hamlet exposes a hidden treachery to Prince Hamlet: Claudius fatally poisoned the slumbering King Hamlet in order to steal his crown and his queen. The phantom King begs Hamlet to avenge his foul murder. Prince Hamlet agrees and feigns insanity to disguise his motive. This puzzles everyone, but Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, tells the

King and the Queen that Hamlet is mad for his love for his fair daughter Ophelia. Prince Hamlet hires a group of actors to perform a play, "The Mousetrap" for the royal audience. Because the play closely mirrors the murder of the King Hamlet, both prince Hamlet and his confidant, Horatio, will study the King's reaction. The king grows increasingly nervous and finally stops the play. The Queen calls her son to her chamber to chide his pointed actions. In her Chamber, Hamlet chastises his mother for her lusty disloyalty. She becomes frightened and calls for help. The cry is reiterated from behind a curtain. Hamlet mistakes the spy for King Claudius, and plunges his sword into the curtain. At Polonius' death, Ophelia becomes insane and drowns herself. Laertes, Ophelia's brother, returns from France burning for the revenge of his father. Laertes blames the King but the latter convinces him that Hamlet is his target. After challenging each other in a fencing bout, Laertes draws Hamlet's blood and the latter wounds Hamlet. The queen innocently quenches her thirst from a poisoned cup. As both the Queen and Laertes point to the King as the villain, Hamlet plunges his rapier into his breast. Although he is dying, Hamlet has enough strength to stop Horatio from joining him in death and persuades his friend to explain the story to the world (Shakespeare, 2006:1).

Text 1

HAMLET

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd

His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,

Seem to me all the uses of this world!

***Fie on't! ah fie!** 'tis an unweeded garden,*

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. That it should come to this!

But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:

So excellent a king; that was, to this,

Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven

Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth! (Act I, scene ii:19)

Hamlet thinks for the first time about suicide desiring his flesh to melt, and wishing God had not made "self- slaughter" a sin saying that the world is just like an unweeded garden "Fei on ! ah, fei! 'Tis an unweeded garden". Treason and lust make the world flat and unprofitable. In other words, suicide seems like a desirable alternative to life in a painful world, but Hamlet feels that the option of suicide is closed to him because it is forbidden by religion. Hamlet then goes on to describe the causes of pain, specifically his intense disgust at his mother's overhasty marriage to Claudius. He compares Claudius to his father (his father was so excellent a king "Hyperion" while Claudius is "satyr") (Dorothy, 2005:1).

Linguistically speaking, the swearword "fei" is an interjection which has no syntactic structure. Semantically, it justifies cathartic swearing. From the psychological point of view it is used by Hamlet as a vent to reveal his self-depression and frustration. Hamlet not only regards the world with pessimism, but he also has suicidal feelings. He displays the thoughts of self that questions the worth of living. The foremost cause of his exasperation and aggravation is the fact that his mother and his uncle Claudius immediately got married after his death.

Text 2

Enter HAMLET, reading

O, give me leave:

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET

Well, God-a-mercy.

LORD POLONIUS

Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET

*Excellent well; you are **a fishmonger.***

LORD POLONIUS

Not I, my lord.

HAMLET

Then I would you were so honest a man.

LORD POLONIUS

Honest, my lord!

(Act II, scene ii:69)

Polonius declares that what made Hamlet insane is his love for Ophelia. He shows the king and queen letters and love poems that Hamlet had given to Ophelia and proposes a plan to prove that. Seeing that Hamlet is approaching, reading from a book, the king and queen decide to exit leaving Polonius alone with Hamlet. Polonius attempts to converse with Hamlet, who pretends to be insane. Polonius is confused by Hamlet's answers to his questions. They are nonsensical, yet they have some reasoning in them. Hamlet describes Polonius as a "fishmonger". He uses the word "honest" ironically to show that Polonius is trying to sell his daughter to him (Hang and Jeffrey, 2005:2).

Linguistically speaking, the swearword "fishmonger" is a noun. Semantically, it is used to issue abusive swearing. From the psychological point of view it is used to insult. Hamlet bitterly hates Polonius, he mistrusts his motives and will go to any extreme to insult him, confuse him and make him look foolish. The word "fishmonger" gives the implication that Ophelia is a prostitute and Polonius is her pimp.

Text 3

HAMLET

*Yet I, a dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Ha!
'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: **bloody, bawdy** villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, **lecherous**, kindless villain!
O, vengeance! (Act II, scene ii:93)*

This soliloquy shows that there is a kind of psychological and mental conflict. Hamlet has a fatal defect or tragic trait in his character-uncertainty, delay of action. Hamlet indulges his imagination in reflecting upon the enormity of the crime and refining his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice-his ruling passion is to think and not to act. He is plagued by self-doubts. He tries to find reasons for his inadequacy by asking if he is coward or villain. Then, there is Hamlet's furious execration of the villain Claudius describing him as bloody, bawdy, remorseless, treacherous, lecherous and kindless (Shakespeare:4).

Linguistically speaking, Hamlet uses a series of adjectival swearwords, i.e., "bloody", "bawdy", and "lecherous" to describe the king. At the semantic aspect, these words justify abusive swearing, because they are used as insults to Claudius. Hamlet is frustrated and angry because he has done nothing to revenge on Claudius, so from the psychological point of view such combinability of swearwords may help him vent his anger.

Text 4

HAMLET

Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

LORD POLONIUS

[Behind] What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET

[Drawing] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

Makes a pass through the arras

LORD POLONIUS

[Behind] O, I am slain!

Falls and dies

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not:

Is it the king?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

*O, what a rash and **bloody** deed is this!*

HAMLET

*A **bloody** deed! almost as bad, good mother,*

As kill a king, and marry with his brother(Act III, scene iv:135).

Polonius has grown so self-important that he instructs the queen as to what to say to Hamlet when he comes in. In a deal with the queen he hides behind the arras to determine the causes of Hamlet's misbehaviour.

Hamlet storms into the queen's chamber to persuade her of the evil that she has done by marrying Claudius. The queen is angry and rises to send the king in. Hamlet pins her down in her chair and says she will not budge till he has told her off completely. Genuinely fearing personal violence the queen calls for help. Polonius who can't see what is going on, forgets himself and calls more loudly than the queen. Thinking that the muffled voice behind the arras was the king's, Hamlet lunges his rapier through the arras (James and Roberts,1970:67).

Linguistically speaking, the swearword "bloody" is an intensifying adjective. Semantically it is used to issue emphatic swearing. It is used by the queen to emphasize the enormity and harshness of Hamlet's murder to Polonius. From the psychological point of view, the queen was terrified, shocked, upset and overwhelmed by fear and panic as Hamlet kills Polonius. So, this emphatic swearing is a way of relieving out her stress.

Text 5

Enter LAERTES, armed; Danes following

LAERTES

Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

Danes

No, let's come in.

LAERTES

I pray you, give me leave.

Danes

We will, we will.

They retire without the door

I thank you: keep the door. O thou vile king,

Give me my father!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES

*That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me **bastard**,*

*Cries **cuckold** to my father, brands the **harlot***

Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow

Of my true mother(Act IV,scene v:167).

Laertes who recalled from his pleasures in France by a vague report of his Polonius's murder at court comes storming at into the hall, demanding the whereabouts of his father. The queen, Gertrude, tries to soothe him, but as Laertes sees it any reluctance to avenge his father's murder will disgrace the entire family triangle, providing the son a bastard, the mother an adulteress (harlot), the father a cuckold (Online Shakespeare:4).

Linguistically speaking, the swearwords "bastard", "harlot" and "cuckold" which are used by Laertes are nouns. Semantically they generate abusive swearing since Laertes used them to insult himself in case he hesitated to take his father's revenge. From the psychological point of view, these self-insults are used by Laertes to pen-up his anger because of his father's murder.

Text 6

LAERTES

Where is my father?

KING CLAUDIUS

Dead.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

But not by him.

KING CLAUDIUS

Let him demand his fill.

LAERTES

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:

*To **hell**, allegiance! vows, **to the blackest devil!***

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!

I dare damnation. To this point I stand,

That both the worlds I give to negligence,

Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged

Most thoroughly for my father (Act IV, scene v:169).

Laertes plunges into rage. Claudius claims that he is not responsible for Polonius' death and tells Laertes to seek revenge upon the proper person. Claudius' ulterior motives were apparent, he needed to bring Laertes into his coterie so he can goad Laertes into turning his anger and desire to vengeance toward Hamlet. Claudius in this moment sought a propitious opportunity to uproot Hamlet using Laertes as a puppet. Laertes is a man of rashness and impulse, willing to do anything even not to mind being despicable to revenge for his father. He dares damnation over the wrongful death (SparksNotes:5).

Linguistically, the categories "to hell" and "to the blackest devil" take the form of imperative verbs; they are elliptical for "go to hell" and "go to the blackest devil". From the semantic point of view the kind of swearing used by Laertes is blasphemous. Laertes utters these words in a way which appeared very evil. The

stability of the country was seen to depend on a strong government , and the source of strong government was a powerful monarch. Since the monarch was "appointed to God"; treason against him was therefore an act against common sense. But Laertes says " to hell, allegiance!" .Psychologically speaking, Laertes utters blasphemies as a vent of his anger. He wants revenge that's why he curses declaring that as long as he avenges his father's death he does not care for what happens to him in his life after his death.

Conclusion

Swearing is a common phenomenon. Swearers not only from anarchic or lower class backgrounds, but even English presidents and monarchs use this phenomenon as a means to relieving their stress level.

The use of swearwords by the speakers has great power, and they sometimes achieve certain effects that are hard to create in more legitimate ways. This may be due to the connotative meanings of the swearwords used.

Although most swearwords that are used are taboo or profane, but this does not necessarily mean that their impact will be insulting or an affront to the listener. In certain situations, a speaker's motivations may be just to promote social harmony. At other situations, a speaker can swear to let out a pain cry. So, it is assumed that the effects of swearing depend mainly on the psychological state of the speaker. Accordingly, it can be determined whether the kind of swearing is abusive, cathartic, social, emphatic or blasphemous.

The practical part of the study deals with analyzing different texts taken from Shakespeare's Hamlet. It includes the analysis of different kinds of expletives used by the characters of the play to express their tragic emotions such as hatred, frustration, anger, contempt, panic...etc. which in turn issued different kinds of swearing.

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الملخص

تعد الشتائم جزءاً مهماً من استعمال اللغة اليومية حيث تعود أصولها إلى استخدام اللغة النجسة أو العظيمة للتعبير عن عواطف معينة مثل الغضب، الإحباط، الأزدراء، الكراهية... الخ للمستمعين. لا تفسر معاني كلمات الشتائم، كوسيلة للتعبير عن العواطف، على أساس معناها الحرفي، بل على أساس مضمونها:

﴿أَبْـؤُل ! (طلب مهين معناه " اذهب ") .

﴿أَقْبـُـلْ عَجِيزَتِي . (وتستخدم للدلالة على الرفض العنيف لشيء ما).

الكلمات التي تعبر عن الشتائم يمكن أن تكون مشتقة من مصادر مختلفة مثل المصطلحات الدينية (لعنة الله، اذهب إلى الجحيم)، المصطلحات التي تعود إلى فضلات الجسم أو الأعضاء المسؤولة عن إنتاجها (البراز، العجيزة) والمصطلحات التي تشير إلى الجنس والأعضاء التناسلية (العضو التناسلي الأنثوي، الذي يوفى "زوج المرأة الفاسقة").

تبحث هذه الدراسة النواحي اللغوية، الدلالية والنفسية لهذه الظاهرة. إذ إنها تناقش استخدام كلمات الشتم كان تكون أسماء، أفعال صفات، ظروف أو تراكييب تعجييبية للتعبير عن الأنواع المختلفة للشتائم: كالشتائم البذيئة، شتائم التنهيس عن العواطف الشتائم الاجتماعية وشتائم الكفر (اللعنات).

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هاملت للكاتب المسرحي وليم شكسبير .

