

Semantic Analysis in Story Diwa Night: Euphemism and Dysphemism

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Abstract: Hikayat Malem Diwa is one of the classic literary works in the Malay-Aceh tradition that is rich in language and cultural values. This story contains various language styles, especially euphemisms and dysphemisms, which reflect social norms, moral values, and conflict dynamics in Acehese society. This study aims to identify and analyze the forms and functions of these two language styles, emphasizing their semantic and narrative roles. Using a semantic approach and qualitative descriptive methods, data were collected through quotations in the text with documentation techniques, then analyzed based on the context of meaning and use. The results show that euphemisms are often used to convey moral values and politeness, especially in terms of death, respect, and violation of norms. In contrast, dysphemisms appear in the context of violence and character conflict, strengthening the tension and emotion of the story. Overall, the use of these language styles reflects the rhetorical strategies and cultural values of the Acehese people.

Keywords: Acehese Language; Cultural Values; Dysphemism; Euphemism; Hikayat Malem Diwa; Semantics.

1. Introduction

Hikayat literature is one of the old literary forms that has developed rapidly in the Malay world, including in the Aceh region. Hikayat has high cultural, historical, and aesthetic values, and functions as a medium for passing on moral, social, and spiritual values to the next generation. One of the interesting hikayat to study is Hikayat Malem Diwa, a literary work that tells the story of the adventures of the main character, Malem Diwa, in facing various challenges and obstacles that test his courage, intelligence, and morality.

In storytelling, the language aspect becomes a very important element. The choice of words and style of language not only function as a means of communication, but also as a way to form and convey deeper meanings. In this context, the use of language strategies such as euphemism and dysphemism becomes interesting to study, because both have a significant role in building nuances of meaning and conveying ideological and emotional messages to readers or listeners.

Euphemism is a form of language refinement used to convey something that is considered taboo, rude, or unpleasant in a more polite and acceptable way by social norms. In fairy tales, euphemism is often used to maintain politeness, norms of politeness, and moral values of society. In contrast, dysphemism is a form of coarsening or strengthening negative meanings in language that aims to emphasize emotional expression, clarify conflict, or highlight dramatic aspects in the story. Both are linguistic strategies used consciously or unconsciously by the author to strengthen the delivery of messages and aesthetic effects in literary texts.

The Hikayat Malem Diwa is a rich source of practices in the use of euphemism and dysphemism. In this story, the author does not only convey a heroic and adventurous story, but also uses the power of language to shape the reader's perception of the characters, situations, and values raised. Therefore, it is important to examine how these two strategies

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are used and what their semantic functions are in shaping the meaning structure of the text of the tale.

This study aims to examine how euphemism and dysphemism appear in the Hikayat Malem Diwa and how they play a role in shaping meaning, social values, and emotional expressions in the text. By using a semantic approach, it is hoped that this analysis can contribute to a deeper understanding of the use of language in classical literature, especially in the context of Acehese culture and the Malay world in general.

2. Theoretical Review

2.1 Semantics in Literature

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of meaning in language. In linguistics, semantics plays an important role in explaining how words, phrases and sentence structures contain and convey meaning. In a literary context, semantics is not only used to understand the literal meaning of a text, but also to explore the connotative, symbolic and cultural meaning contained therein.

In literary texts, every choice of words is not accidental. The author consciously or unconsciously chooses certain words to create atmosphere, build character, and communicate certain themes to the reader. Therefore, understanding semantics is the key to uncovering the depth of meaning contained in literary works, including in Malay fables such as the Hikayat Malem Diwa.

According to Leech (1981), meaning in literary language is divided into seven types of meaning, namely conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflective, collocative, and thematic meaning. Of these seven types of meaning, connotation and affection play an important role in creating emotional and aesthetic effects in literature. For example, in the context of the Hikayat Malem Diwa, the use of words related to death, war, or respect for certain figures, often have deep connotative meanings and cannot be understood only from their literal meaning.

In this regard, semantic theory is very useful to identify how lexical choices in the fable function to shape the reader's perception of the characters, atmosphere, and values that the author wants to convey. The use of euphemisms and dysphemisms are real examples of semantic strategies that aim to shape meaning with social, moral, and emotional content.

In addition, the semantic approach in literary studies also considers cultural aspects in the meaning of language. In the Malay-Aceh tradition, for example, there are linguistic norms that regulate the use of certain words to conform to manners and customs. Therefore, understanding semantics in a cultural context is important so that the analysis of texts such as the Hikayat Malem Diwa becomes more accurate and meaningful.

Thus, semantic studies in literary works such as fables can help researchers to uncover the hidden meanings behind the language structure, as well as understand how language is used strategically to convey moral, social, and emotional messages. This provides a strong theoretical basis for this study in tracing the use of euphemism and dysphemism in the Hikayat Malem Diwa as part of the semantic strategy in forming the meaning of the text.

2.2 Euphemism and Dysphemism

Euphemism and dysphemism are two language strategies that are opposite in direction but have equally important semantic functions, namely to form and direct meaning in communication. Euphemism is a form of language refinement used to replace words that are considered rude, taboo, or offensive with words that are more polite and acceptable to social norms. Meanwhile, dysphemism is a form of language sharpening or coarsening used to emphasize negative meanings, express anger, hatred, or to mock and belittle.

According to Allan and Burridge (1991), euphemism often appears in social contexts that require covering up or softening reality in order to maintain politeness, honor, or the feelings of others. In Malay culture, including Aceh, the practice of euphemism is very common, especially in conveying sensitive issues such as death, illness, sexual relations, and social position. For example, expressions such as "have gone to another world" are used as a form of euphemism to avoid using the word "die" which is considered too direct and impolite.

On the other hand, dysphemism is used in situations where the speaker wants to show assertiveness, anger, or dislike towards a subject. Dysphemism is used to strengthen the expression of emotions, such as in the context of conflict, war, or when describing enemies. In the Hikayat Malem Diwa, dysphemism is often used to clarify the antagonist's position and emphasize the intensity of the conflict through harsh and sharp word choices.

The use of these two strategies in literary texts reflects the social and cultural dynamics of the author's society. Euphemism and dysphemism not only function as rhetorical tools, but also as a reflection of the values and norms that apply in society. In the context of the tale, these strategies serve to strengthen the narrative structure, form characterization of characters, and emphasize the moral and emotional aspects contained in the story.

Euphemisms also play an important role in creating a softer and more respectful atmosphere in the text. For example, in referring to female characters, the story often uses terms such as "putroe nan mulia" which not only describe the social status of the character but also show the respect and politeness that are highly valued in Malay culture.

Meanwhile, dysphemism enriches the dynamics of the story by providing dramatic power in the narrative, especially in scenes involving conflict or opposition between characters. By using strong and sometimes harsh words, the story is able to convey the tension and courage of the main character in facing the enemy.

By understanding the concept of euphemism and dysphemism theoretically, this study can examine how these strategies are applied in the Hikayat Malem Diwa, as well as how they influence the formation of meaning, characterization, and delivery of moral messages in the story.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Euphemism in the tale of Malam Diwa

In literary works, especially in tales that are full of cultural and emotional values, the use of euphemism is an important language strategy. Euphemism acts as a rhetorical tool that functions to soften the bitter reality, maintain polite language, and convey emotional burdens without offending or hurting the reader's feelings. This folktale displays various forms of euphemism that are used subtly, but have deep and symbolic meanings in strengthening the narrative.

The use of euphemisms in the Hikayat Malem Diwa also shows the depth of feeling and respect for human values. Expressions that replace harsh or hurtful words become a means to maintain harmony and inner peace, both for the characters and the readers. This strategy is not only found in the depiction of death, but also in presenting nuances of sadness, departure, helplessness, and fear.

For example, in the mention of "leaving parents" instead of the phrase "passing away", the author places high respect on the figure of the deceased mother. This avoids the reader from direct emotional shock, and creates a calmer and more reflective narrative atmosphere. Likewise, the phrase "his life that was no longer long" is a subtle way to convey the condition of old age approaching death. Phrases like this reflect the author's efforts to maintain the gentleness of language, while also giving the reader space to reflect on the meaning of life and death.

The use of metaphors and symbolism also enriches the euphemism technique in the text. Expressions such as "mensing diri di sinar matahari pagi" not only describe loneliness, but also give a contemplative impression, as if the character is arranging his heart in the light of hope. In the Malay-Acehnese oral tradition, the use of natural symbols is often used as a form of respect for deep emotions and feelings. The use of sunlight, as a symbol of new life and hope, creates a narrative that is full of philosophical meaning, without having to explicitly express suffering.

Furthermore, the euphemisms in this tale not only serve to soften words, but also convey double meanings that enrich the reader's interpretation. For example, the sentence "a beloved object that never fades with him" does not simply state ownership of an object, but rather describes a close and multi-layered emotional attachment. This kind of language provides psychological depth to the character and shows the author's skill in choosing meaningful diction. In this case, language becomes a medium of inner expression that is able to bridge the character's experience with the reader's sensitivity.

Not only limited to expressions of loss and suffering, euphemisms are also present in the form of expressions of awe and wonder, such as in the sentence "moved by God's magnificent creation." This expression not only expresses awe, but also wraps that awe in a religious and spiritual atmosphere. The word "moved" used does not only imply ordinary awe, but presents a deep emotional response to the beauty of the universe. This shows how the language in the tale is not merely narrative, but also builds a spiritual relationship between the characters and God.

Likewise, in conveying fear, the author chooses the phrase "not because of fear, not because of horror" as a form of reverse statement that actually confirms the existence of fear, but is wrapped in a calm attitude. This form of euphemism shows that even though the character feels anxious, he still maintains his dignity and self-esteem. The use of sentences like this shows how language in the story plays a role as a tool to maintain the honor of the main character in facing challenges.

In the context of Acehese culture that upholds the value of politeness, the use of euphemisms is part of the language identity of its people. The Hikayat Malem Diwa shows that the use of euphemisms is not only an aesthetic choice, but also a cultural necessity. Refined language, full of implied meaning, and full of emotion is a reflection of local values that respect feelings, maintain social balance, and avoid direct conflict. Therefore, the existence of euphemisms in this text cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context in which this tale developed and was passed down from generation to generation.

- Mention of Hope

Text: "Oh ... I was dreaming apparently. " and " ...sleep games, " he said in his heart. He describes the experience as just a dream, not reality. The word " dream " is used to replace the bitter reality (for example, failed hopes).

- Mention of Sadness

Text: " alone in the morning sunlight. "

Correct analysis: This is a euphemism for the state of loneliness. The words " solitude " and " sunlight " are used poetically, disguising the inner suffering.

- Mention of Difficulty

" Tengku continues to walk, wherever he gets tired, he stops, wherever he gets twilight, he takes shelter and takes refuge. "

Literal meaning: Tengku continues his journey and only stops when he is tired.

This sentence describes the tiredness and hard life of wandering in a subtle and poetic way.

- Mentioning the Sense of Hope

" A sense of relief with a hope that is already imagined in front of him. "

Literal meaning: Tengku felt relieved because he felt he was getting closer to his goal.

Euphemisms are used to replace feelings of grief and loss that may be profound.

- Mention of Admiration

" What is clear is that all of this made an impression and made Tengku moved by God's glorious creation. "

Literal meaning: Tengku feels amazed by the beauty of nature.

Euphemism: " To be moved " is used to express emotional amazement in a subtle and religious way.

- Mention of Fear

" Not because of fear, not because of horror. "

Literal meaning: Tengku feels anxious and confused.

Euphemism: This phrase is used to cover up real fear. It softens the expression of fear to keep it looking calm.

- Mention of Creature Behavior

" Forest dwellers act according to their own instincts. "

Literal meaning: Animals act wildly and unpredictably.

Euphemism: This sentence conveys natural (perhaps wild) behavior in a neutral and polite manner.

- Terms of Endearment

" A beloved object that never fades with him ... " Describes a deep emotional connection to an object without saying " can't live without it "

- Mention of Departure

" Once again the mother embraces the child who will soon leave her. "

A euphemism for "separated for a long time" or "gone far away", not left forever.

- The mention of Sadness left behind

" Father condones the umuk-umuk. " (tradition of hugging before a long journey).

Euphemism to express sadness in parting.

- Life guidance / Spiritual hope

" Malim's guidelines for traveling focus more on steadfastness and courage and relying on God's help. "

Conveying that Malim relies on faith and steadfastness, without directly saying that he may be in danger.

- Facing difficult times
 “In a journey like this, there will definitely be ups and downs.”
 A subtle expression that implies there will be hardship, without directly saying "misery".
- "his biological mother left her parents when she was little"
 Euphemism : “leaving parents”
 Consecration : This phrase is used to replace the actual meaning, namely death.
 Context : Referring to the death of Malim Dewa's biological mother when he was a child without directly mentioning that she had died, in order to maintain emotion and politeness in the story.
- "His life is not long anymore"
 Euphemism : Replacing direct phrases such as "dying" or "about to die" with more polite expressions.
 Context : Refers to the age of Tengku's adoptive parents who are already advanced and may not live much longer.
 Purpose : Avoid direct communication about death, to be more polite.
- "It's very hard to divorce your parents"
 Euphemism : The phrase "divorce" here is not in the context of marriage, but means separating forever or leaving.
 Context : Expresses Malim Dewa's sadness at separating from his parents emotionally and subtly.
 Goal : Give a gentle impression of a separation that might be very painful if expressed frankly.

3.2 Dysphemism in the tale of Malem Diwa

In this tale, dysphemism is present as a rhetorical tool that emphasizes the tense atmosphere, the suffering of the characters, and the extreme environmental conditions. The language used does not try to soften reality, but rather describes it directly and sometimes satirically, to create a strong emotional impact on the reader.

In contrast to euphemisms that function to soften meaning and maintain politeness, dysphemisms in the Hikayat Malem Diwa actually appear as rhetorical strategies that convey messages firmly, directly, and sometimes even tend to be harsh or sarcastic. In a narrative context, dysphemisms play an important role in strengthening the tension of the story, forming characterization, and highlighting the intensity of conflict and the suffering of the characters. This harsh and straightforward language contrasts with the gentleness of euphemisms, and reflects the bitter reality that the characters must face.

Dysphemism is not only used to emphasize the suffering of the main character, but also to build an antagonistic impression, show human fragility, and expose injustice or chaos that occurs in the story world. The choice of words in the form of dysphemism is often used strategically by the author to form a certain image of a certain character or situation. Thus, the reader does not only see events narratively,

- Mention of Despair:
 The phrase "not a single servant of God heard him, if he shouted..." emphasizes the absolute isolation experienced by the character. It depicts despair in a harsh manner, without euphemisms, showing that even her screams are unlikely to receive help.
- Real and Exaggerated Threats:
 In the sentence "there is no escape from encountering wild animals...", the use of the phrase "not impossible" and the mention of dangerous animals creates a dramatic frightening impression. This makes clear the amount of risk and tension in the character's journey, with an overemphasis typical of dysphemism.
- Extreme Suffering:
 Expressions such as “Truly terrible, the bitter experience suffered by Tengku” describe suffering directly and emotionally. The words “terrible” and “bitter” are not moderated, but are presented to evoke a sense of pity or horror in the reader’s mind.
- Roughly Described Possibility of Death:
 The phrase “Adamat hanyut bawa air kuat” clearly implies the danger of death. This dysphemism conveys fatal consequences in a way that is not wrapped in soft words, but rather conveyed realistically and threateningly.

- Satire on Reason:
The sentence "Is Tengku's reason?" carries a sarcastic tone, as if doubting the main character's intelligence. This is a mild dysphemism because it does not attack directly, but is enough to give the impression of subtle belittling.

4. Closing

Conclusion

The results of the study of the Hikayat Malem Diwa through a semantic approach show that the use of euphemism and dysphemism in this work is not just a style of language, but is an important tool in conveying cultural messages, moral values, and emotions in depth and contextually. Euphemism is used dominantly in the narrative to maintain politeness of language, express bitter experiences gently, and envelop painful realities in a more subtle and poetic wrapper.

For example, the mention of death with the phrase "leaving one's parents" or "no longer lived" shows how important it is to maintain the honor and feelings of the reader or listener, in accordance with the values of Acehnese society which upholds manners in spoken words.

Not only that, euphemisms are also used to describe sadness, fear, life's difficulties, as well as awe and hope in a way that is not explicit, but still hits home. This reflects the existence of aesthetic and ethical functions in the storytelling style of the tale. In fact, in describing the behavior of forest creatures or emotional relationships with beloved objects, the tale writer prefers polite and symbolic diction rather than direct and straightforward. Thus, euphemism functions as a narrative mechanism that softens reality, avoids rudeness, and provides a deep emotional touch.

Meanwhile, dysphemism in Hikayat Malem Diwa is more often used in the context of conflict, battle, and labeling of antagonists. The use of words such as "the evil one" or expressions such as "all destroyed" shows how language choices are used to emphasize the intensity of the conflict and build a dramatic atmosphere in the story. Dysphemism here is not merely a form of rudeness, but a strategy to strengthen the impression of the opponent and depict tension or chaos in a real way. This rude language plays a role in bringing out a stronger emotional effect on the reader, such as anger, anxiety, or tension.

The combination of euphemism and dysphemism illustrates the dynamics of emotions and values in the text. Euphemism shows the side of tenderness, affection, and spirituality, while dysphemism presents realism, violence, and courage. Both not only give color to the narrative, but also show the psychological and social complexity of the characters.

Overall, the use of euphemism and dysphemism in the Hikayat Malem Diwa reflects the richness of Acehnese culture in choosing and constructing language that is not only communicative but also full of meaning. This linguistic strategy strengthens moral messages, religious values, and distinctive traditional narrative structures. Therefore, semantic analysis of works like this provides a deeper understanding not only of the text, but also of the culture and outlook on life of the author's community. This tale is proof that language in classical literature is not just a storytelling tool, but also a reflection of the cultural soul and value system of a community.

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