

A critical Stylistic Analysis of Humiliation in “The Merchant of Venice”

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ABSTRACT

Critical stylistics is a linguistic field which provides crucial tools to examine, and analyze how linguistic patterns and structures are used to enhance ideologies. By using critical stylistic tools, this study, with particular focus on the character Shylock, aims to uncover how Shakespeare’s language reflects, constructs, and communicates the act of humiliation in the play “The Merchant of Venice”. Humiliation is viewed as a deeply social emotion including degradation, put down, and loss dignity. It is imposed externally, usually publicly, and carries long-lasting effect. The study explores how stylistic choices contribute to character humiliation. It sheds light on humiliation as a distinct discursive and stylistic phenomenon by identifying linguistic features which depict humiliation in “The Merchant of Venice”. Through selected excerpts from Shylock’s dialogues, and the language used towards him, the analyses reveal the effectiveness of stylistic choices such as lexical selection, transitivity, and modality in the contribution to constructing his margin-alized identity and humiliated character. The study demonstrates that “The Merchant of Venice” both critiques and reflects social hierarchies, providing a clear framework for examining the linguistic strategies of humiliation. The results contribute to understand the role of language in literary texts to sustain or challenge power relations.

KEYWORDS: critical stylistics, humiliation, public and verbal humiliation, critical stylistic toolkit.

1. Introduction

Understanding humiliation as a linguistically constructed phenomenon is crucial to this study. It allows to ask how Shakespeare uses language to shape, reflect, and critique that experience. Humiliation is the experience of ridicule, scorn, or to feel demeaned, put down, stripping of status, rejection or exclusion (Hartling and Luchrta’s, 1999: 264). Despite its importance, it seems that humiliation is not given its due attention from a critical stylistic perspective. To understand how Shakespeare constructs and implicates humiliation through language in the play “The Merchant of Venice”, the study adopts the critical stylistic toolkit to find answers to the following questions:

1. How is humiliation stylistically constructed and encoded in “The Merchant of Venice”?
2. What are the linguistic features that convey, enhance, shape, and resist this humiliation?

According to the above questions, the following hypotheses are suggested:

1. Language in the “*Merchant of Venice*” functions not merely as a medium of communication, but as a power tool for enacting humiliation, reinforcing ideological power structures, and constructing social exclusion, particularly in the characterization of Shylock, i.e. Shylock’s humiliation is systematically constructed through language. 2. Through specific stylistic devices – such as naming, modality, and transitivity – Shakespeare linguistically encodes the processes of dehumanization and resistance, making humiliation a central mechanism of the play’s ideological and dramatic structure.

Consequently, the study mainly aims at conducting a critical stylistic analysis of humiliation in “*The Merchant of Venice*”, focusing on the linguistic choices that contribute to depict Shylock as humiliated and marginalized character. To illustrate, the study main objectives are:

1. identifying and analyzing the linguistic features –such as lexical choices, transitivity patterns, modality, and naming- that represent humiliation in the play, especially how other characters’ language toward Shylock indicates dominant power structure, cultural biases, and mechanisms of exclusion
2. Looking at Shylock’s speeches to examine how his language reflects internalized humiliation, outsider status, and resistance to social oppression and inferiority.

The study is limited to Shylock’s character as a sample of humiliated character

2. Humiliation

Humiliation is a complex psychological and social phenomenon which refers to lower or put down of a person’s dignity, loss of status, or public shaming, rendered helpless, and feel hurt, painful and negative emotions. It comes from a Latin word “humiliare” which means to humble or to bring down. It is an intense feeling or emotion. The humiliated will never forget the violation for years or all his lifetime. Humiliation is defined as “suffering an actual threat to or fall in one’s self-esteem.” It is the feeling of embarrassment and shame as a result of treating someone inferiorly against his will. It embedded in relations; people and institutions inflict humiliation on those who are at the receiving end (Svindseth and Crawford, 2019: 15).

Lindner (2006: xiv) views humiliation as “the enforced lowering of any person or group by a process of subjugation that damages their dignity or sense of worth.” Wherefore, humiliation is the emotional response experienced, when someone feels degraded, belittled, or shamed, the humiliated feels a loss of dignity or self-respect.

Barnhart (2020: 3) states that humiliation is “the emotional response to the perceived undeserved decline of one’s status in the eyes of others. Humiliation is a complex and negative self-conscious emotion, which combines the sense that one has been mistreated with a painful sense of self-doubt and helplessness in the face of this injustice.”

Humiliation involves core aspects which are either universal or specific to cultural and personal peculiarities. Universal aspect is always concerned with feeling ‘put down’ and understanding this as an illegitimate assault. What is different is that several contexts (such as social situations, personal relations or professional environment) being put down is defined and experienced in different ways. In social contexts and as “natural order” to have higher and lesser beings, apparently “lesser” people – “on the ground of their race, culture, occupation, religion, philosophy, political affiliation, celebrity, or the amount of values or money”- are often subjected to humiliation. Although Humiliation is often related to shame or embarrassment, these emotions are self-inflected with the absence of an audience, while others inflict humiliation upon people and reduce their pride. Furthermore, the presence of an audience shows an intense instance of humiliation (Marrapodi: 2016, 22; Svindseth and Crawford ,2019 :16; Elision and Harter, 2007: 65).

On this account, humiliation can be understood as an internal experience (a feeling or an emotion), and external case leads to degradation, interpersonal interaction, bullying, abuse and violent conflict. (Miller ,1993: 24)

Hartling and Luchrta’s (1999: 264) definition of humiliation is adapted in this study; “the deep dysphoric feeling associated with being, or perceiving oneself as being unjustly degraded, ridiculed, or put down- in particular, one’s identity has been demeaned or devalued.”

There are many key elements of humiliation like degradation, confusion, powerless/ helpless, violation, feeling of unjustness, exclusion (Svindseth and Crawford ,2019: 17).

Another key elements are mentioned by Miller (1993: 25) : degradation , dehumanization , demoralization, depersonalization ,domination, subjugation , and denigration.

Humiliation can take different forms :

a. Verbal humiliation refers to constant criticism, insults, ridicule, or putting down a person’s opinion.

Language is used as a tool of symbolic violence (Klein, 1991 : 94). (also this form of humiliation is studied in this research)

- b. Public humiliation takes place to an individual publically, i.e. when a person is shamed or degraded in front of others. It is related to loss dignity, status, or reputation (Margalit, 1996: 121 ; Elison, et al. 2003 : 41). (This type of humiliation is explored in this paper).
- c. Physical humiliation occurs when forcing someone to perform humiliating acts such as physical punishment or aggressive behavior carried out to mock or embarrass the victim.
- d. Social humiliation includes rejecting or exclusion or denial from a group or community. It is linked with stigma and inferiority (Torres, 2001: 31).
- e. Psychological humiliation: refers to manipulate, ignore, exposure to physical abuse, or making the victim feel inferior (Lindner, 2006 :72).

In literature, humiliation serves both as a personal emotional experience and a narrative tool that exposes power relations, social hierarchies, injustices, and ideological conflicts, where dignity and self-worth are stripped away. Within literature, humiliation may reveal the moral or ideological stance of charters and societies (Marrapodi, 2016: 86).

Shapiro (1996: 25) argues that in Shakespeare's plays, humiliation is central to character conflict. For instance, in "*The Merchant of Venice*" Shylock's forced conversion is the eventual act of public humiliation , pillaging him of identity and dignity, giving up who he is to satisfy the majority.

To conclude humiliation is often fulfilled intentionally and publically. In social context, humiliation can serve as a mechanism of control and exclusion. It is applied to reinforce social boundaries between dominant and subordinate groups. It also dehumanize the "other" especially minorities or outcasts.

3. Humiliation in "*The Merchant of Venice*"

Shakespeare's plays are rich in complex language that reflects the social, religious, race, philosophical and political ideologies of his time. In "*The Merchant of Venice* ", language is a key weapon in perpetuation of humiliation, especially against Shylock, a Jewish moneylender whose role balanced between villain and victim (Loomba, 2002: 56). Shylock is subjected to constant scorn, mockery, and dehumanization from those who thought they are superior to him.

Humiliation is the central theme of the play "*The Merchant of Venice*" whereas Shakespeare explores religious intolerance, cultural prejudice, and personal revenge. For centuries , the play sets up for Jew's humiliation (Julius , 2012: 179). Shylock, as a Jewish character in a Christian society, experiences humiliation by the Venetian Christians, especially the merchant Antonio. Shylock is an outcast and mistrust because he is different. He practices a dissimilar faith, wears differently, and speaks a different



language. He is subjected to verbal abuse , and legal and economic disempowerment, culminating in the forced loss his wealth, dignity and his religious identity (Shapiro,1996 : 30). Finally, in Act four, Shylock admits of his own shame, humiliation and terror, “his willful abandonment of human dignity and answerability in the process of making his revenge ‘inevitable’ “(Marrapodi, 2016: 32) .

The play presents a conflict of two systems. “ One claims to stand for justice and the other for sacrifice, but both legitimize the pursuit of avarice and revenge in ways that embarrass the agent of pursuit no less than their victims” (ibid : 34)

4. Critical Stylistics: Theoretical Background

Critical stylistics (CS) is developed primarily by Lesley Jeffries (2010).It is an interdisciplinary approach that combines methods from linguistics and literary criticism to examine how language in texts reflects and constructs power, ideology and social relations. This approach is based on stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), however; it rises in reaction to CDA which explores ideology in language and how language may affect the way of perceiving the world. Critical stylistics focuses more closely on the stylistic features of both literary and non-literary texts (Burke , 2023 : 47). Traditional stylistics explores artistic or aesthetic effects by analyzing literary language, including imagery , metaphors, sentence structure, and narrative techniques. However, critical stylistics goes further by searching to explore the role of those stylistic choices of serving ideological functions. It examines not only how language works, but also why it works in particular ways to maintain or challenge dominant worldview. While CAD typically deals with political speeches , media text , or institutional discourse, critical stylistic adapts similar tools to analyze fictional texts, exploring how literature participates in wider ideological practices (Busse et.al, 2010 :14-16). Jeffries clarifies that all texts need same analytical tools to uncover the underlying ideologies of those texts. Her opinion is that textual meaning is encoded by the stylistic choices of linguistic features which are embedded in a text. In order to uncover those underlying meanings, ideologies, and other social concepts of a text, Jeffries suggests a critical stylistic framework which “combines the text analysis of stylistics with the ideological awareness of CDA” (Jeffries , 2010 : 15).

Jeffries (2009 :1) argues that when she studies linguistics, she realizes needing of tools to analyze literary studies. She relies on stylistics to provide these tools, and applying similar tools to question of power and ideology in language.

CS analytical linguistics tools are based on Halliday’s meta-function theory which deals with language as a whole. Halliday suggests systemic functional linguistics with three meta-functions to clarify the difference between textual (deals with forming texts and presenting the ideational and interpersonal meanings that

produced in the text explained by context), ideational (focuses on ideation that refers to the use of grammar to form the world, i.e. the linguistic structure system), and the interpersonal meaning (concerned with interaction between the speaker and listener, in social roles, and speech roles as it shapes interpersonal relations, i.e. the pragmatics with a contextual frame of the text in the situation) (Bavali and Sadighi, 2008 : 105). CS toolkits derive from Halliday's meta-functions of language whereas meaning placed between language structure and language in context (Jeffries, 2014 : 416).

5. Key Tools in Critical Stylistics

Lesley Jeffries (2010 :17) proposes a toolkit of textual-conceptual functions. She states that these tools are suitable to analysis all types of texts so as to help reveal how language encodes meaning. The most relevant tools for this study include :

1. Naming and describing : Texts name and describe humans and objects, and what is interesting is that the way that noun phrases are put together to name and describe what the text contain (Burke, 2023 : 50). This means that naming includes the choice of a specific noun to point to a specific referent (Jeffries, 2010 :18)

2. Representing actions / events /states : Through transitivity choices, texts show how actions are expressed and who is portrayed as the actor or the acted upon. "the choice of main verb in a clause can alter the potential perception of the process by recipients of the utterance/text" (Burke, 2023 : 51; Jeffries, 2010 : 39). The choice of the verbal component of the clause affects the interpretation of the information given in the text. Jeffries adapts the transitivity model by Simpson (1993) which states that lexical verbs are of four main categories; first, the material action process includes human actions. Second category is verbalization process where the action are performed by human language through telling or reporting. It is identified by a sayer, verbiage, and target. The third category is the mental cognition process consists of cognition, reaction, and perception which describe what happen with humans. The last category is the relational process refers to the relations between a carrier and attribute. There are three types of relations; intensive, possessive, and circumstantial relations ((Jeffries, 2010 : 32).

3. Hypothesizing : Modality : The use of modal verbs (must, should, might) to express meaning, i.e. certainty, obligation, or permission – often revealing authority or control. Modality expressions also include lexical verbs like 'think, suppose'; modal adverbs as 'probably, definitely'; modal adjectives such as 'possible, sure'; and conditional structures 'if, then' (ibid : 177)

4. Equating and contrasting: texts create similarity or opposites through phrases that compare characters or concepts, reinforcing binary oppositions (e.g., good vs. bad). Noun phrase apposition, parallel structures indicating synonymous relationships; lexical or structurally constructed opposition; negation. (Tabbert ,2015 : 45)

Those tools allow the study to uncover hidden power structures, character positioning, and implicit meaning that traditional literary analysis may overlook.

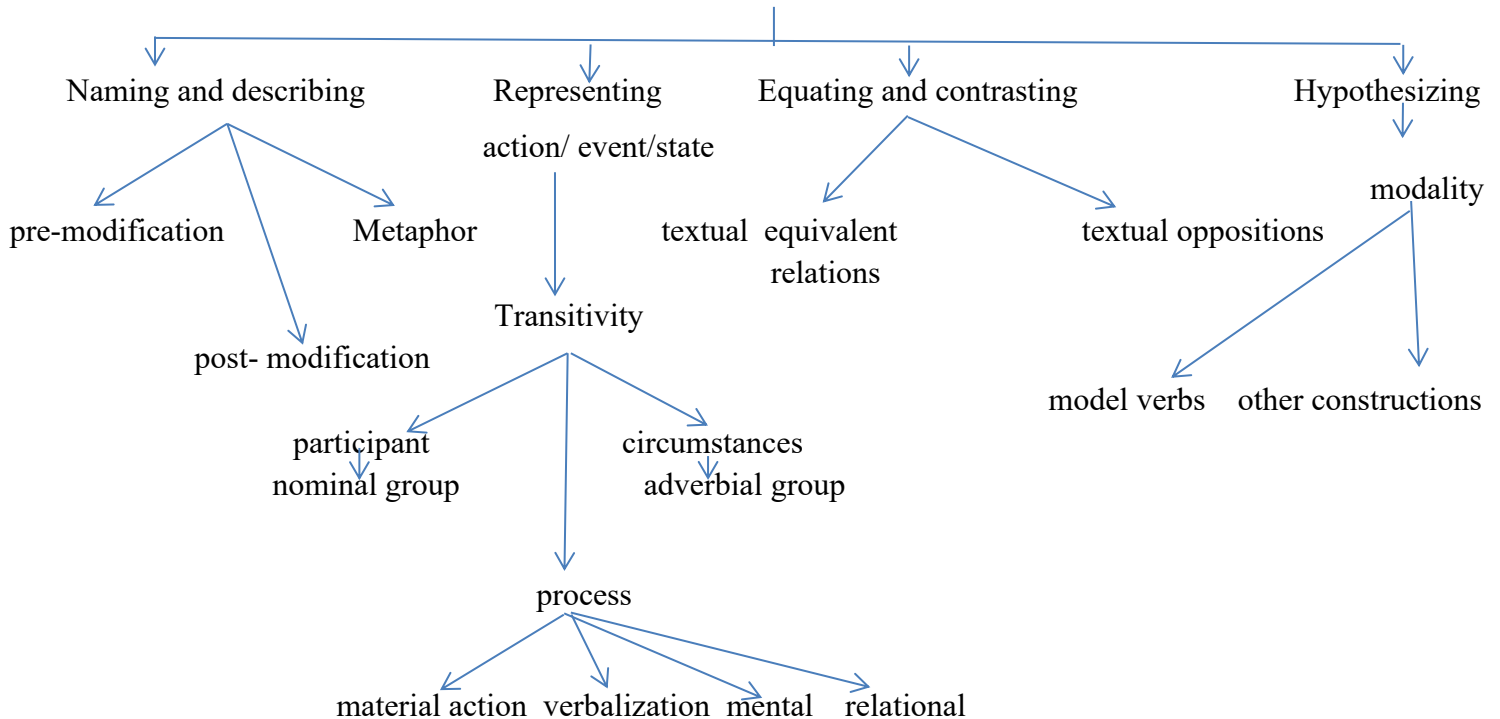
6. Textual Analysis of Humiliation in Shylock’s language

This section applies critical stylistic tools to select extracts from “*The Merchant of Venice*” that focus on Shylock’s experience of humiliation. Shylock is directly humiliated or marginalized through language. The other’s language , such as Antonio, and the Duke, contribute to make Shylock feel inferior and humiliated. These extracts are chosen according to their thematic relevance and linguistic richness of stylistic elements of expression of power, ideology , and social dominants.

The model of analysis which is adapts in this study includes tools which indicates how linguistic structures work to reinforce or challenge systems of humiliation.

The model of Humiliation

Critical Stylistics



Extract 1:” You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog,
And spet upon my Jewish gabardine,
And all for use of that which is mine own...
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold, Moneys is your suit.
What Should I say to you? Should I not say
“Hath a dog money?” Is it possible
A cur lend three thousand ducts?” (Act 1, scene III)(Type: verbal and public humiliation)

This is one of the earliest moments where Shylock faces public humiliation.

Through naming and describing: Shylock lists the derogatory terms others describe him with: the post-modification “misbeliever“implies religious othering He is humiliated because of his religion. The pre-modifications “Cutthroat dog and a stranger cur“dehumanize him – removing rationality and dignity. The post -modification “ my Jewish gabardine” in ” spit upon my Jewish gabardine“reflects religious and cultural humiliation through his clothing.

The metaphor of spitting signifies rejection and physical degradation.

Representing action/ event /state : transitivity : the participants in this extract are “ You” refers to Antonio who represents the humiliater. “me, and I” refer to Shylock the humiliated.

“call me , spet upon, void, foot me” these verbs are related to material action process. They express what Antonio does to humiliate the Jew. Shylock reported Antonio’s actions (verbalization) in order to express his feeling about Antonio’s mistreating him with contempt and in a public manner. All the extract represents verbalization process. It is said by Shylock to express his feeling towards Antonio’s treatment of him, and his discontent of dehumanized him.

“which is mine own” refers to relational process; Shylock points to his possessive which considers as a reason for humiliation by other.

Equating and contrasting : Shakespeare equates Shylock to “a cutthroat and stranger dog” which mean he resembles the dog not human. This refers to dehumanize him and emphasizes the intensity of repeated insult him.

“ Hath a dog money” , Shylock’s question expresses contrasting. He is asking about something that is contrary to reality, so if he is like a dog i.e. not human, he is not able to lend Antonio money.

Hypothesizing : Modality: The phrase “ that which is mine own “ introduce modality of possession- Shylock insists on his right to act as a lender , challenging the moral hypocrisy of those who humiliate him

.The use of “should” refers to expectation. How can Antonio expect that a dog possesses money. “can” refers to ability in which a dog has no ability to lend money to human. The use of “possible” indicates probability. Also it emphasizes that it is impossible to expect that a dog lend money to human. The impact of these expressions by Shylock refers to establish Christian superiority and deepens Shylock’s hatred, setting the stage for his later demand for the bond.

Extract 2 :“I am as like to call thee so again,

to spit on thee again , to spurn thee too.”

If thou wilt lend this money , lend it not

As to thy friend, for when did friendship take

A breed for barren metal of his friend ?

But lend it rather to thine enemy, (Act1,Scene111)(Type: Public and verbal humiliation)

This extract indicates Antonio’s humiliation of Shylock .

Naming and describing :Here Antonio openly reaffirms his right to scorn and humiliate Shylock. “not as to thy friend , to thine enemy” these post-modifications express the type of relationship between Shylock as a Jew and Antonio as a Christian. Antonio considers Shylock as an enemy and asks his to treat him the same.

Representing action/ event /state : transitivity : the participants are ; “I” refers to Antonio the humiliater, “thee” refers to Shylock the humiliated.

“call, spet, spurn” indicate material action process, in which these actions are done by Antonio to humiliate Shylock. The use of the simple future tense” spit on thee again, to spurn thee too” expresses and describes the intent, indicating that humiliation is not regretted but expected to continue.

The extract represents verbalization process. It is said by Antonio to express his feeling towards Shylock. He always and forever humiliates him publically.

“lend” refers to relational process .The verb indicates circumstance, i.e. the verb is repeated to explains the circumstance of lending money.

“again and too” are adverbs refer to the circumstance of asserting humiliation.

Equating and contrasting : “as a friend , thine enemy” are opposites. Antonio treats Shylock not as a friend, so that he expected that Shylock considers him as an enemy. Antonio never equates Shylock with his friends, but he belittles and humiliates him.

Hypothesizing :Through modality , Antonio asserts dominance : he can , will , and even feels entitled to inflict harm. The verb choices – spit , spurn , call – are all violent, reinforcing the physical and verbal abuse that mark Shylock’s experience.

The use of conditional construction "if thou wilt lend this money," also expresses dominance. Antonio confirms that he need not Shylock's friendship. He will borrow money from him and still despises him, and considers him inferior.

This scene establishes the ideological superiority of the Christian character over the Jewish one – Shakespeare uses language to encode systemic bigotry through everyday speech acts.

Extract 3 : "I am a Jew Hath not a Jew eye ? Hath not
a Jew hands, organs, dimensions,
senses affections , passions ? Fed with the
same food, hurt with the same weapon, subjected to
the same diseases, healed by the same means,
warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer
as a Christian is ? If you prick us , do we not
bleed? If you tickle us , do we not laugh ? If you
poison us , do we not die ? "(Act III , Scene I) (Type : verbal Humiliation)

This is perhaps the most famous speech in which Shylock challenges the ideology of dehumanization.

Naming and describing : in this extract Shylock describes himself. The use of post-modification " a Jew" describes his religious identity. He has the organs that all people have, suffers from the same conditions. Therefore; he asks the Christians why they humiliate him and treat him scornfully. The pre-modification " same" describes the conditions all people face. But the superiority and dominance of Christians give them the right of seeing themselves as better than others.

Representing action/ event/ state : transitivity : "I, us, we" refer to Shylock and all Jewish. " You" refers to the Christians, so the participants are Shylock the humiliated, and Christians the humiliators , who are citizens in the same city.

" feed, laugh, poison , die, prick " refer to material action process. These actions are done by all people. " hurt, healed, warmed, cooled" are mental verbs indicate cognition. The Jew describes the activities that Jewish and other people feel .

The extract indicates verbalization process. It is said by Shylock to express sameness.

" I am a Jew" is an intensive relation indicates Shylock's religious identity.

Here , the stylistic technique of equating is central. Each rhetorical question positions Jewish identity as equivalent to Christian identity , directly challenging the presupposition of Jewish inferiority. "same and as" assert the sameness, i.e. all people are equal, have the same rights. The repeated use of parallel structures creates a rhythm that confirms shared humanity , countering the repeated humiliations he suffers from.

The pronoun “we” in “do we not bleed“ constructs a collective identity , shifting the discourse from the personal to the political . Although Shylock describes the rights of all people, they treat him scornfully. This indicates contrasting. Therefore, through this , Shylock transforms his personal humiliation into a border claim for justice.

Hypothesizing : Modality : using the conditional constructions in Shylock’s speech to describe people’s equality. Those structures indicate Shakespeare’s geniality in choosing language to create effectiveness.

Extract 4 : “ That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,

I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it...

Shylock :” Nay , take my life and all .Pardon not that.

You take my house when you do take prop

That doth sustain my house ; you take my life

When you do take the means whereby, I live”(Act IV, scene1) (Type: Public humiliation)

This is the court’s judgment, where Shylock is stripped of his wealth and forced to convert to Christianity – a moment of ultimate humiliation.

Naming and describing: The post modifications, “the difference of our spirit, thee thy life before thou ask it” express the Christian superiority, in which they are better than Shylock who was given his life for his wealth. In fact, they belittled him, making him feel scornful.

The metaphor “the prop that doth sustain my house; you take my life” uses figurative language to equate Shylock’s wealth and profession with his entire identity and survival. The repetition of “you take” emphasizes the total erasure of his autonomy – not just economic, but existential.

Representing action /event/ state: transitivity: the participants are “our spirit, I, you “refer to the duke who represents Christians’ power. “Thy, thou, my life, I” refer to Shylock how losses his dignity, and feels humiliated. The law forces Shylock to give up all his possessions even his identity.

“see” is mental process, represents reaction, in which the duke wants to show the Jew that Christians are good and merciful, while Jews are wicked. “take” indicates material action process, in which the taking of his wealth means he lives as humiliated for the rest of his life. The passive voice in “you do take” presents Shylock as acted upon, lacking control or agency- a stylistic marker of subjugation. This linguistic structure reflects his powerless , enhancing the emotional weight of his humiliation.

The extract openly represents verbalization process in which the Duck gives Shylock’s sentence. Then, it indicates Shylock’s reaction against that sentence.

“ before you ask”, “whereby I live” refer to circumstance. Shylock relates his life and his pride to his wealth, so if he lost them ,he would have no reason to live.

Equating and contrasting : From what Shylock said, it is clear that he equates his identity and pride to his wealth. "my house" equates "my life" if "you take my house", then you take "my life".

"shalt see the difference" indicates contrasting. Christians are opposite to Jews. The former is good and merciful, in contrast to the later who is wicked and unmerciful.

Hypothesizing: modality : the use of "shalt" to make an offer. The Duke offers to Shylock to see Christian's mercy so as to belittle him.

Extract 5 : "Two things provided more: that for this favor

He presently become a Christian;
The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possessed
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.
Duke: He shall do this, or else I do recant

The pardon that I late pronounced here. (Act IV, Scene III) (Type: Public and verbal humiliation)

This is the climactic moment of the trial, Shylock has lost his case, money, and his dignity.

Naming and describing: "Two" is pre-modification indicates the number of orders requested by Antonio. "a Christian" is post-modification indicates converting Shylock's religious identity.

Representing action/event/ state : transitivity : the participants are : "he, his" refer to Shylock, the humiliated, "I" refers to the Duke who represents power. "Lorenzo and his daughter" refer to Shylock's heirs.

"record, do" are material action process express what Shylock is forced to do.

"become" is relational indicates intensive relation.

The extract represents verbalization process. First, Antonio sentences Shylock to convert to Christianity and donate his wealth to daughter. Second, the Duke forces Shylock to accept the sentence.

"presently, here" indicate circumstances. They force him to give up his religious identity and his wealth immediately before the court.

Equating and contrasting: in a trial supposedly about 'justice', the Christian characters not only ruin Shylock but also demand his conversion to Christianity as a 'merciful' alternative to death. i.e. demanding of converting equates to mercy and justice, but for Shylock, it considers as humiliation, dehumanization, and injustice.

Hypothesizing: modality : "He shall do this ..." the use of strong modality "shall" reflects coercion disguised as legal justice. Shylock is not offered a choice; he is commanded, and his will is erased from

the legal process. He is dehumanized and feels that his life now holds no value. The modal verb “ shall” in this context carries judicial force – a clear marker of institutional domination. This speech draws attention to how language is used not only to defeat a character , but to strip him of all worth- economically , socially and spiritually.

7. Tables of Discussion Analysis

This section is dedicated to make tables of the analyses items to clarify frequencies and percentages of the items of the analysis, and discuss the items.

7.1 Naming and Describing

No.	Naming and Describing	Frequency	percentage %
1.	Pre-modification	3	23 %
2.	Post-modification	7	54 %
3.	Metaphor	3	23 %
Total		13	100 %

Table (1) Frequency and of Percentages of naming and describing

The analysis of selected excerpts from “*The Merchant of Venice*” detects that humiliation is not merely a dramatic theme, but a systematically constructed linguistic phenomenon. Language considers as a tool of power and social exclusion. Pre-and post-modifications, and metaphor illustrate how language serves as a tool of exclusion and humiliation, through the repeated dehumanization of Shylock by labeling like ‘dog ‘ ,’misbeliever’ and ‘devil’. These naming choices reflect and enforce a cultural hierarchy in which Jews are placed as morally and socially inferior. Shylock’s identity is reduced to his religion and occupation, so that Christian’s dominance gives them the right of stripping him of dignity and personhood. Naming and describing function ideologically: Shylock is not merely called a Jew –he is reduced to it.

7.2 Representing Actions/ Events/ States : Transitivity

No.	Transitivity	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Process	18	67 %
2.	Participants	5	19 %
3.	Circumstances	4	14 %
Total		27	100 %

Table (2) Frequency and Percentages of transitivity

language is used to reflect and enhance social hierarchies, particularly in the way Shylock is treated and spoken about. Through tools of critical stylistics, it becomes clear how the playwright encodes ideological bias, power relations, and religious prejudice in each structure of dialogue. The use of transitivity patterns in several key scenes shows how Shylock is often presented as a goal of actions rather than the agent. For instance, in the courtroom, verbs such as "take, do" are used in passive constructions that deny him control, "you do take the prop" and "You take my life when you take these means whereby I live". The participants usually indicate the superiority of the humiliator. The circumstances reflect the constant of Shylock's inferiority.

This type of language reflects social subjugation. Shylock, in each situation, is someone who is humiliated, belittled and dehumanized.

7.3 Equating and Contrasting

No.	Equating and contrasting	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Textual equivalence	5	56 %
2.	Opposites and contrasting	4	44 %
Total		9	100 %

Table (3) Frequency and Percentages equating and contrasting

The table shows that textual equivalence are used frequently. Shylock in each situation tries to express his right of equality while the Christian insists on humiliate him. Religious ideology and illusion of mercy : the trial scene, in which Shylock is forced to convert to Christianity, exemplifies the ultimate linguistic and ideological humiliation. Christian considers this conversion is equated to mercy, functions as cultural cleansing, portraying the Christian characters as morally superior while robbing Shylock of his religious and personal identity for him considers as a loss of everything. In his famous "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech, he employs rhetorical questions, parallelism and modality to challenge and contrast the Christian worldview. His language becomes a form of resistance, asserting the shared humanity that his enemies deny him. The play is on one level reinforces stereotypes, but on another, it critiques the cruelty of those in power. The use of critical stylistic analysis makes visible this ideological ambivalence. Language in the play does not merely serve plot or character development; it is battleground where inclusion and exclusion, mercy and mockery, justice and vengeance are negotiated.

7.4 Table of Hypothesizing : Modality

No.	Hypothesizing : modality	Frequency	Percentage %

1.	Modal verbs	4	44 %
2.	Other constructions	5	56 %
Total		9	100 %

Table (4) Frequency and Percentages hypothesizing

The use of modality in most of the dialogues shows that Shylock is being forced, excluded, and humiliated because of his religious identity. The modal verb “shall” which is used in the trial scene forces him to accept the humiliation and gives up his religious identity in exchange for his life. The use of modality is served to show humiliation.

8. Findings

This study has demonstrated that language in “*The Merchant of Venice*” functions as a powerful instrument for constructing and encoding humiliation, most notably through the character of Shylock, whose Jewish identity positions him a target of both personal and institutional degradation. The application of critical stylistics enables a deeper understanding of how humiliation is linguistically encoded in the play and highlights the role of stylistic choices in reflecting dominant ideological forces.

The analysis conforms that humiliation in the play is linguistically constructed rather than simply thematic, being deeply embedded in linguistic structures. Through employing specific linguistic tools –such as naming, transitivity, and modality – Shakespeare expresses Shylock’s powerlessness, social inferiority, and emotional distress.

- a. Shylock is dehumanized and excluded through lexical choices. He is repeatedly referred to with animalistic and derogatory terms such as (“dog, devil, misbeliever”), stripping him of human dignity. These lexical patterns enhance the play’s ideological positioning of the Jew as the ‘Other’ and justify his social exclusion.
- b. In the courtroom scene, humiliation reaches its climax. The forced conversion of Shylock is the culmination of ideological domination presented as mercy. Legal language marked by high modality (shall, must) enables total institutional control over Shylock’s identity, faith and property
- c. Shylock’s voice reflects elements of resistance. Despite the ongoing humiliation, Shylock’s rhetorical strategies- most powerfully in the “hath not a Jew eyes?” speech – reveal a strong counter – discourse resistance and assertion of shared humanity.
- d. Critical stylistics reveals ideological ambiguity. Shakespeare’s language both reinforces and upholds cultural prejudices. This tension is particularly apparent in the contrast between the mockery from

Christian characters and the emotional depth of Shylock's monologue. The stylistic structures of the text mirror the power structures of Elizabethan society, making the play a rich site for exploring ideological analysis.

These findings support the view that humiliation in "The Merchant of Venice" is not simply a dramatic device, rather it is a linguistic construction deeply embedded in the ideological fabric of the text. They also highlight the significance of critical stylistics in uncovering the hidden mechanism of oppression in literary texts.

9. Conclusion

Through close linguistic analysis, the study illustrates how both Shylock's own speech and the language directed toward him encode ideologies of exclusion, dominance, and dehumanization.

Focusing primarily on Shylock's character, this study has investigated the theme of humiliation in "The Merchant of Venice" through the lens of critical stylistics. By analyzing the linguistic patterns used both by Shylock and against him, it has become clear that language plays a central role in forming social hierarchies, enacting power and legitimizing exclusion. Shylock is portrayed not only as a victim of personal hatred but also as a symbolic representation of the marginalized "other" in Elizabethan society. Through repeated acts of verbal abuse, mockery and forced assimilation, he is systematically stripped of agency, dignity, and identity. These acts of humiliation are linguistically realized via specific choices such as: derogatory naming, passive constructions, modality of coercion, binary oppositions and presuppositions. This complexity emphasizes Shakespeare's ambivalent stance, he portrays the anti-Semitic ideologies of his era, simultaneously humanizing the character those ideologies seek to marginalize. Through the application of critical stylistics, this study has demonstrated that literature can both mirror and critique societal injustices. Language, far from being neutral, emerges as a powerful ideological tool that shapes character perception, and structures the unfolding of events.

Ultimately, Shylock's humiliation appears not just as a narrative outcome, but also as a linguistically constructed and socially conditioned experience. It prompts reflection on the ongoing relevance of Shakespeare's work in examining power, prejudice, and representation, and affirm the importance of stylistic analysis in revealing the deeper ideological workings of literary texts.



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