Chapter V

Language as a Disabling Tool: Looking into Language with Disability in Doris Lessing's Novels

We ascribe an agency to language, a power to injure, and position ourselves as the objects of its injurious trajectory

- Judith Butler

The Function of Language

The role of Language is very important in human life (Butler, 1997: Kailes 2010). Language speaks the mind of its society. Language is a reflection of how people see each other in a society (Blaska, 1993). M. Carker says language in use can and does change the lives, in both positive and negative directions. Dennis Casling says any language behavior will illustrate stereotypes in the wider social culture. James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson states understanding that all language practices are positioned and interested, postmodern rhetoricians analyze and study the history of the relations between language and power. June Isaacson Kailes describes the essential role of language:

Language is powerful. It structures our reality and influences our attitudes and behavior. Words can empower, encourage, confuse, discriminate, patronize, denigrate, inflame, start war and bring about peace. Words can elicit love and manifest hate, words can paint long lasting pictures. (4)
The Role of Language with Disability

There are different hurdles, discrimination that affects the life of people with disabilities over these years. Many of the common myths and misconceptions about the various handicapping conditions are not allowing the individuals to achieve their goal of independent living (Gouvier & Coon, 2010). The activists and scholars challenge a change in the attitudes towards people with disabilities. They seek an attitudinal change in legislation, regulation, enforcement, integration, education, relationships, and Language (Kailes, 2010). Dajani says society enforces disability through language, media, and other public and visible ways. Carker says linguistic oppression is an issue of all disabled people.

Simi Linton observes that over the past twenty years disability activists have taken the issue of language concerning the people with disabilities. Harper tells that the important issue of the disability advocates is to use the power of language to change the perception of people about disability. There are attempts made by the activists against language that shows the stereotypical image of the disabled community, and excludes the community from their active participation in the society (Longmore, 1958). Language associated with people with disabilities is mostly negative. (B. Haller et al, 2006; Linton, 1998).

Paul k Longmore says, 'language applied to persons with disabilities corroborates Goffman's principal assertion that fundamentally, stigma is the assumption that stigmatized people are less human than the rest of us.' Wilson & Wilson state the importance of looking into the way disability is being described in language to reassign the meaning. The language associated with people with disability is loaded with negative meaning (Hadley & Brodwin, 1988; Kailes, 1985; Gouvier & Coon, 2010). Gouvier and Coon argue that disabling speech or handicapping
language patterns have the potential to affect the person with disability, and the insults keep going in the society. The terminologies associated with people with disability project them as incapable, subhuman, helpless, and dependent (Dajani 2001; Longmore, 1985; Galvin, 2003; Linton, 1998). The stereotypical language is one of the barriers for the progressive life of the people with disabilities (Kailes, 1988; Linton, 1998). Linton is of the view that the terms have been used to condition these people to ways which are socially and economically convenient to the society. The disability activists and scholars try to develop a new language to bring an end to the struggle to fashion a new collective identity (Longmore, 1985). Kailes says disability is one of the many the characteristics of an individual.

The most common terms associated with persons with disabilities are “the handicapped”, “the disabled”, “the deaf”, the blind”, “the mentally retarded”, “the developmentally disabled”, “victim”, “abnormal”, “defective”, “infirm”, “invalid”, “maimed”, “crippled”, “wheelchair bound/confined,” and so on (Longmore, 1985; Kailes, 1988; Kailes, 2010; Linton, 1998, Galvin, 2003). Linton calls these terms as “Nasty Words”. Blaska argues that such words fail to demonstrate respect and do not recognize the person’s strengths and abilities. Kailes says, ‘Terms such as “crippled”, “disabled”, and “handicapped” have been imposed from the outside, from definitions derived from social services, medical institutions, governments and employers’.

The literal meaning of the term “handicapped” refer to the person who begs in the streets with his “handy cap” (Blaska, 1993; Kailes 2010). The use of the term “handicapped” to describe the person with disability has been strictly challenged by the activists everywhere for its dehumanizing, stigmatized sense. Kailes also says the term “handicap” can be used to describe an obstacle or barrier imposed by the environment or society where as disability is condition. There are arguments regarding the use of the terms “handicapped” and “disability”. A disability
is defined as a condition of the person, either his emotional or physical. Whereas, “handicap” is the cumulative result of the barriers imposed by society. A disability does not have to be a handicap (Blaska, 1993). A disability may mean “that a person may do something a little bit differently from a person who does not have disability (Blaska, 1993; Kailes, 1985).

The term “disability” has come from the “medical labeling”. According to Harpur the term ‘disability’ discriminates the people with impairments as contrary to the people without impairment. Anyhow the term “disability” is frequently as well as widely in use everywhere though it has negative meaning (Kailes, 2010; Galvin 2003). According to Harpur the use of the prefix “dis” reinforces the negative image of the people with disabilities. Simi Linton notes the problematic nature of the prefix, ‘dis’, which stands for separation or taking apart. She says it has lots of denotative meanings such as

absence of, as in disinterest; opposite of, as in disfavor; undo, do the opposite of, as in disarrange; and deprive of, as in disfranchise. The Latin root dis means apart, asunder. Therefore, to use the verb disable; means, in part, to deprive of capability or effectiveness. The prefix creates a barrier, cleaving in two ability and its absence, its opposite. Disability is the “not” condition, the repudiation of ability. (30)

The preferable use is “people with disability”, “person with a disability”, not “the disabled” (Kailes, 2010; Longmore, 1985; Dajani, 2006; B. Haller et al, 2006, Linton).

Many other euphemistic terms came to replace “handicapped”. They are “handicapable”, “physically challenged”, “disABLED”, “differently abled”, “special people/children”(Dajani, 2001; Linton, 1998; Longmore, 1985; Galvin, 2003). Linton calls these terms as “Nice Words”.

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Following the dissatisfaction with the terms “handicapable”, and “disabled”, activists began to fashion neologisms (Longmore, 1985). They are Able-disabled”, “handicapable”, “disABLED”, “differently abled” (Galvin, 2003; Longmore, 1985).

The activists and scholars are against the use of the term “wheelchair bound”, “confined to wheelchair”. As the wheelchair is used for mobility, as how cars or any other motor vehicle is used by non disabled persons, one who uses the wheelchair also keeps it for mobility purpose. They do not sit in wheelchair all the time. They do come out of it to have food, to go to toilet, to go to sleep, and so on. Blaska says wheelchair is a liberating vehicle which allows the person to move independently. Therefore the activists rather prefer the term “wheelchair user” (Hadley & Brodwin, 1988; Kailes, 1988; Kailes, 2010; Longmore, 1985; Linton, 1998). Wheelchairs are not binding or confining but actually increase mobility, speed and ability (B. Haller et al, 2006, Hadley & Brodwin, 1988). For many, ‘wheelchair’ means increased mobility and freedom; it does not mean being confined. People who use wheelchairs transfer to cars, chairs, beds, etc. Thus they are neither confined nor bound to their wheelchairs (Blaska, 1993; Kailes, 2010; Kailes, 1988; B. Haller et al, 2006; Linton, 1998).

Maximum number of terms associated with the persons with disabilities are either from the rehabilitation services or from “medical labeling” (Dajani, 2006). Galvin says medical descriptions inform the persons with disabilities of weakness, lack of agency, martyrdom and individual responsibility. These terms stayed forever with a negative sense attached to them. Longmore says:

The language of disability indicates that persons with disabilities are usually perceived exclusively in terms of their disabilities, that they are confined to a
"handicapped role" in which they are seen primarily as recipients of medical
treatment, and that this role also includes ascribed traits of helplessness,
dependency, abnormality of appearance and mode of functioning, pervasive
incapacitation of every aspect of personhood, and ultimately subhumanness. (419)

According to Harpur to change the notion that a disability is a medical tragedy is the prime
concern of disability scholarship. Medical labeling is to be used in the clinic, to refer to the
condition of the patient. He also says the development of social model of disability is to
challenge the labels, especially to resist the medical discourse. Once the person leaves the clinic,
they should stop addressing the person with that medical label. Dajani observes, irrespective of
the social situation, people with disabilities are often labeled and perhaps viewed primarily as
objects of medical treatment. Apart from medical contexts, people with disabilities are often
identified as "patients", "cases" or as "sick with", afflicted by," "suffering from," or "stricken
with," one condition or another (Longmore, 1985). A disability is not a disease. Often
individuals with disability are very healthy. Words such as "patients," "cases or symptoms"
should be avoided unless talking or writing about someone's health or medical condition.
(Blaska, 1993).

These activists and scholars substitute euphemistic labels in the place of negative phrase or
words. (Longmore, 1985). He says euphemistic labels undermine the stigma. These
euphemistic terms are called by Linton as 'Nice Words.' Euphemistic terms are brought in
with the view to lessen the prejudiced terms associated with the persons with disabilities.
"Physically challenged", "able disabled" "special children/people", "differently abled"
"handicapable," "people with different abilities, " "normal abnormal" are such terms which
were never accepted completely by persons with disabilities themselves. Euphemistic words
or phrases are not chosen by the person with disabilities is one of the reasons for not been chosen by the disabled people themselves (Longmore, 1985) Brenda Jo Bruggemann says she never liked the terms ‘hearing-impaired’ or ‘visual impaired’, and she neither liked to be called with the terms.

Galvin says:

Words such as “physically challenged,” “able disabled,” “handicapable,” special people/children,” “differently abled,” and “people with differing abilities” are all attempts to raise the status of disabled people by providing more positive sounding labels but they have been rejected by disabled people as undesirable. (13)

Linton while talking about euphemism says, ‘although they may be considered well-meaning attempts to increase the value of people with disabilities, they convey the boosterism and do-gooder mentality endemic to the paternalistic agencies that control many disabled people’s lives.’ She argues, the term “physically challenged” sounds as if the obstacle to one’s participation in society is physical, not social. Likewise Linton goes on saying that the term “special,” a euphemistic formation when applied to education or children, it means something different. There is no harm in the use of the word “special” when it is used to refer to a celebrity or national champion but if it singles out as a label to exclude one from the participation, it wounds so that we need to be careful in using the word “special” (Blaska, 1993). She further says “normal abnormal” in talking or writing should be used to indicate the development and not a person or program.

Dajani states euphemistic terms also keep the persons with disabilities as a separate category from the “normal” people. He says another group of activists have attempted to deal with the
issue of prejudice in language by giving a name to prejudice against disabled persons. The terms “handicappism,” “physicalism,” and “normalism” have been proposed but they are not accepted widely. Longmore says though the first term, “handicappism” frequently used, others are not accepted by the disability activists. He states ‘an alternative euphemistic terminology attempts unsuccessfully to undermine stigma, but actually reinforces prejudice and social subordination.’

Kiales is also of the same view:

These terms sound like slogans from a failed public relations campaign. These euphemisms are not widely endorsed by the disability community because they deny and trivialize the reality of a disability. These misguided fad phases actually offend many people with disabilities. (18)

Dajani while talking about the use of language with disability observes that the language of disability demonstrates the people with disabilities are often viewed exclusively in terms of their disabilities. Many terms are medical labels which leave them with the negative meanings. They are frequently viewed as objects of medical treatment. Scholars and activists are now coming with the new language of disability to change the stereotypical images for an alternative, self-defined identity. (Longmore, 1985; Gajani, 2006).

The use of adjectives as nouns, “the blind,” “the deaf,” etc., stigmatizes the individual and group them as one category, takes off their individual identity. Euphemistic words or phrases employed to subvert the stigmatized terms are also considered prejudicial, kept the differences as it was with the “normal”. Labels and names reinforce stereotypes (Dajani, 2006).

Another big problem lies in where the adjectives are used as nouns to describe the persons with disability such as “the deaf”; “the deaf and dumb”, “the blind” etc. The argument is deaf, blind
are one among the many characteristics of an individual so when an individual is identified with his disability, one refuses to see the individual as a person. Kailes suggests the use of the verb "to have" rather than "to be" because the verb 'to have' expresses a weaker connection where as the verb 'to be' has a stronger connection. Hadley and Brodwin suggests:

We suggest that discussing disabilities with "to have" rather than "to be" expresses an attitude that they are relatively peripheral rather than central characteristics of people, and subtly fosters a like attitude on the part of listeners and readers. We hold that this attitude is more compatible than its opposite with goals of most counselor-client relationship. (148)

The language of disability indicates that persons with disabilities are usually perceived exclusively in terms of their disabilities, that they are confined to a "handicapped role" in which they are seen primarily as recipients of medical treatment, and that this role also includes ascribed traits of helplessness, dependency, abnormality of appearance and mode of functioning, pervasive incapacitation of every aspect of personhood, and ultimately subhumanness (Paul K. Longmore, 1985, 419)

The aim of the linguistic challenge launched by the disability activists and scholars through the social model is to resist the oppressive concepts, negative image attached with the present terminology associated with persons with disabilities (Galvin, 2003; Kailes, 1988; Longmore, 1985; Linton, 1998). Galvin also says what is imposed on top of their impairment is the reason for the exclusion of the persons with disabilities from the full participation in the society. He suggests substitution or neologism, though sometimes substitutions continue with the same prejudices, as the ways to remove the stigmatized terminologies. Disability community has
attempted to wrest control of the language employed by the power in the society, and reassign meanings to the terminology used to describe disability and disabled people (Linton, 1998).

Words are loaded with meanings. The words used here are meant to give the negative meaning.

Persons with disabilities are regularly confronted with language patterns that perpetuate negative stereotypes of who they are (Hardley & Brodwin, 1988; Kailes, 1985). Gouver and Coon, Jun 2010.

Tom Coogan says body is made present in language through the function of metaphors, he tells about the 'carnal order', establishment of the dominant 'normal' bodies, that determines the 'carnal performance' so predisposed to the exclusion of people with impairments. He shows disabled people's experiences are excluded from language.

Kailes says public attitudes about disability are much more disabling than the actual disability. One must deal with the challenge of changing attitudes on many levels: education, integration, personal relationship and LANGUAGE.

Language perpetuates very negative stereotypes about disabled community says Kailes.

They develop a false consciousness as they internalize the oppressors' image conveyed through language.
Acceptable and Unacceptable Terms

Acceptable

disability
wheelchair user
has an emotional disability
people of short stature
has cerebral palsy
a person who is deaf/a person with hearing impairment
a person who has speech impairment

Unacceptable

invalid
handicapped
special people
stroke patient
crippled
disfigured
disabled people
wheelchair bound
polio victim
imbecile
idiot

dead and dumb
	normal person

deaf and dumb

physically challenged

is cerebral palsied

crazy

has fits

able-bodied person

deformed

moron

feebleminded (June Isaacson Kailes, 2010: )

Paul K Longmore (1985) group them as common terms, medical labels, frequently used terms, and euphemistic terminology

Common Terms Used to Identify the People with Disabilities

"the handicapped"  "the disabled"

"the deaf"  "the blind"

"the mentally retarded"  "the developmentally disabled"
Group of Terms Described as Medical Labels

"patients"  "cases"
"sick with"  "afflicted by"
"suffering from"  "suffering with"

Other Frequently Used Terms

"victim"  "abnormal"
"defective"  "infirm"
"invalid"  "unsound"
"maimed"  "crippled"
"confined to wheelchair" or "wheelchair-bound"  "misshapen"
"deformed"  "the monster"
"the creature"  "a vegetable"

Euphemistic Terminology or Substitutes

"special"  special needs
special school  special children
atypical  exceptional
persons with exceptionalities  special education
Terms Proposed by Disability Civil Rights Activists

“handicappism”

“physicalism”

“normalism”

Neologisms

“able-disabled”

“handicapable”

“disABLED”

“differently abled”

“challenged” or “physically challenged”

Rose Galvin (2003) says the stereotyping is to maintain the social order;

Stereotyping in other words, is part of the maintenance of the social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic between the ‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’, the ‘normal’ and the ‘pathological’, the acceptable’ and the ‘unacceptable’, what ‘belongs’ and what does not or is ‘Other’, between ‘insiders and ‘outsiders, Us and Them. It facilitates the ‘binding’ or bonding together of all of Us who are ‘normal’ into one ‘imagined community’; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them – us who are in some way different – ‘beyond the pale.’ (258)

He groups the terms as Negative Images

“disabled”

“cripple”

“spastic”

“invalid”

“weak”

“abnormal”
Further he also marks out the stigmatized terms, bring out the medical definition used to describe the persons with disabilities. Along with Longmore’s account of terms under ‘medical labels’, Gavin lists out few more terms

“stricken with”

“the chronically ill”

I have taken all the four novels of my study here to see the use of language associated with persons with disabilities. In the novel The Cleft the metaphorical use of language associated with disability is employed for abusive purpose.

Terms used in the novel, The Fifth Child

Terms are used here are associated with person with disability. These utterances were given to Ben by ‘normal’ family and society.

“normal“-“abnormal”

“ordinary”-“extraordinary”

“monster”

“creature”

“dwarf”

“freak”

“hyperactive”

“afflicted”

“alien”

Here are Some Example of the Terms used in The Fifth Child

‘It’s because you don’t want to. It’s you who is carrying this --’ She cut off monster, afraid of antagonizing him (p.58).

In the cots were – monsters (p.98).
‘He’s extraordinary,’ said David, giving her the support she needed (p.63).

Dorothy took the fighting creature from Harriet, who collapsed exhausted back in her chair (p.66).

But for a while she did try hard to make him ‘ordinary’ (p.69).

She said to him, ‘I suppose in the old times, in primitive societies, this was how treated a women who’d given birth to a freak” (p.74).

Rows of freaks (p.98).

‘He’s a hyperactive child – that’s how they are described these days, I believe,’ said old-fashioned Dr Brett (p.77).

‘He may be normal for what he is. But he is not normal for what we are.’(p. 79)

Ben’s eyes were never off her, this other afflicted one, adored by everyone in the house. But did he know himself afflicted? (p. 81).

‘Then we have to find a doctor who says he’s abnormal,’ said Harriet.

They treated him roughly, it seemed to Harriet, even unkindly, calling him Dopey, Dwarfey, Alien Two, Hobbit, and Gremlin (p.114).

Terms used in the sequel of *The Fifth Child, Ben in the World*

Terms used here are associated with person with disability.

Here again the terms were used to refer Ben by the family and society

“yeti”

“beast”
Here are Some Example of the Terms used in Ben in the World

She knew he was not human, ‘not one of us’ as she put it. Perhaps he was a kind of yeti (p.11)

When money was needed for food, electricity, rates, Mary said to Matthew, ‘Take that beast to market and get what you can for it.’ (p. 15)

She had a pretty good idea that ‘having a look’ at Ben would not be the end of it, but she felt powerful and useful, introducing this creature who was obviously a kind of scientific enigma, to someone who could solve it (p 21-22).

Johnston did not care what happened to this freak, but Rita was crying (p.45)

He called him a hairy ape. […] ‘Well I can’t compete, can I? Not with a great hairy ape? (p 50)

This band of what – dwarfs? Yetis? – nothing that Alex had seen in pictures or on film – held their ground there, staring at him (p 78).

Into the lobby from the lift came Ben, and Alex’s eyes followed him. […] he heard water splashing and from beside little waterfall emerged a creature, squat, hairy, with powerful
shoulders and a deep chest, which lifted gleaming hostile eyes to see this alien, Alex, and barked, at which from behind rocks and through trees came a company of similar creatures. [...] (p 78)

He was a throwback of some kind (p 82)

Then the suitor lost his crudeness, and was handicapped only by a crippled leg, which the girl cured - so you could say that Ben’s actuality dwindled into gammy leg (p115).

'This specimen could answer questions, important questions, important for science (p153).

He was a monster of cruelty (p 154).

Other than these terms, in both The Fifth Child, and in Ben in the World Ben is addressed as "Yeti", “Ape”, “Throwback”, “Gnome”, “Alien Two”, “Gremlin”, “Hobbit”, “Dopey” and “Beast”.

Terms used in the novel Alfred and Emily

The terms used in the novel, Alfred and Emily to refer Alfred are positive. All the references were handled very carefully with the veteran with disability. Alfred’s physical impairment referred in the novel as ‘wooden leg,’ ‘without one leg.’

The terms used here are associated with person with disability

“invalid” “deaf”

Terms used as metaphor in the novel Alfred and Emily

“mad” “normal”

“freak” “hyperactive”
Here are Some Example of the Terms Used in Alfred and Emily

[...] who helped her invalid husband choose a farm in uncharted, unworked wilderness [...] (p 157).

There he went pretty deaf, from gunfire – more than he had been: he was deaf even in his teens (p 248).

I aver that being shut up with a hyperactive small boy for five days in a small space comes pretty high on a list of unlikeable experiences (p 249).

Fleshed out to a page, what always became plain was a pitiful, improbable quality, as if this were a tale about freaks (267).

Terms used as metaphor in the novel, The Cleft

I would briefly discuss the novel. The Cleft is the story of the beginning men and women. In the pre historical period there was only female, no male. Roberta Rubenstein accounts, “according to legend there was only one gender: female”(5) They call themselves cleft. They lived by the sea, and reproduced asexually. These females lived peacefully. One day, a female gave birth to a monster as how they call the male baby. To their astonishment it looked completely different from the females. Following, uncontrollably there were many births of the monsters. These clefts to kill all the monsters left them on the rock. But the eagles took them all to the valley, fed them with the help of the deer, saved their lives. Monsters grew to form an ethnic group. The remaining is the story of “a slow coming together of these two communities, their growing need for one another and despair at their mutual dependence.” (2)
These clefs were with hatred towards the monsters. The terms clefts used in this novel are abusive. They are metaphors of disability. Jay Dolmage says:

In positing one thing in terms of another, metaphors might be seen as bridges on the verbal map. Indeed, the Greek root of the word, *metapherein*, means “to carry across.” In studying the use of metaphor, one thing becomes abundantly clear: the metaphor can be a useful tool bridging between binaries that have traditionally been divisive. (109)

He says metaphors matters. It plays an important role in social and cultural existence. Our world is predicated upon language, and our language relies upon metaphor. (110) we use metaphors unconsciously. It constructs particular social and cultural meaning (Dolmage, 2005)

While talking about the use of metaphors, Devis says:

[...] they tend to use metaphors to represent limitations on normal morals, ethics, and of course of language. While it is entirely possible to maintain that these figures of speech are hardly more than mere linguistic convention, I would argue that the very regularity of these occurrences speaks to a reflexive patrolling function in which the author continuously checks and notes instances of normalcy and instances of disability — right down to the linguistic level. (45)

Metaphors misrepresent the people’s opinion of people with disabilities. (Sandahl, 1999)

Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson says language is filled with metaphors. No language is free of metaphors. Viladi states that disability metaphors must be weeded out from language. Carrie Sandahl states that many artists in the disability movement decide to challenge the demeaning and limiting metaphors imposed on disabled bodies. She says disability metaphors are the recent
concern by the people with disabilities. Books, articles challenging metaphors show the growing concern of the scholars and activists in this area (Sandahl, 1999) Sandahl describes the power of metaphors:

In their Book Metaphors We Live By (1980), Lakoff and Johnson content that metaphorical concepts “structure what we perceive, how we ger around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities”(3). Metaphors are not innocuous artistic flourishes, then, but powerful discursive structures that can misrepresent, define, and confine people with disabilities and as such are the focus of much disability activism. (14)

The representation of disabled character speaks beyond their conditions. The disabled body stands as a raw material for other disempowered group to become visible. (Sandahl, 1999) she says “ disability becomes a stand-in , a metaphor, for the social outcast, who is marginalized, misunderstood (60). (15). According to Sandahl the use of disability as a dramaturgical device erases the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

Amy Vidali says Disability studies scholars “ critiqued disability metaphors for eliding embodied lives of disabled people ( as Sobchack does), for objectively emphasizing deficiencies, and representing disability as disorder—all of which reflect back on people with disabilities.”(35) She states that metaphor is problematic because they reinforce certain attitudes and beliefs. Viladi insists the necessity to engage with the removal of disability metaphors:

A disability approach to metaphor must engage the full range of disability; resist the desire to simply “police” or remove disability metaphors; actively transgress
disability metaphors by employing a diverse vocabulary; and artistically create and historically reinterpret metaphors of disability. (42)

The uniqueness about the use of the term “monster” is it has been used in the novel around one hundred and thirty nine times (139). The frequent use of metaphors reinforces the meaning attached with the term (kailes, 2010).

Tom Coogan says ‘one of the ways in which the body is made present in language is through the function of metaphor’. Lennard Davis describes how the frequent use of metaphor constructs normalcy;

Theses references are almost like tics, appearing at regular intervals. They tend to focus on deafness, blindness, dumbness, and lameness, and they tend to use these metaphors to represent limitations on normal morals, ethics, and of course language. While it is entirely possible to maintain that these figures of speech are hardly more than mere a linguistic convention, I would argue that the very regularity of these occurrences speaks to a reflexive patrolling function in which the author continuously checks and notes instances of normalcy and instances of disability – right down to the linguistic level. (45)

The author proposes that disability is partially socially constructed, and metaphors play an important role in the construction of disability.

I have taken this novel for my study mainly to discuss the metaphorical use of the terms associated with persons with disabilities. Susan Sontag describes how the function of illness as metaphors came to exist. She states that people are interested in using illness as metaphor when illness is mysterious. She talks about TB and Cancer as the mysterious diseases of the past
decades which later came to be used as metaphors. In this novel men are described through the metaphors which usually are used to describe the persons with disabilities with its loaded negative meanings. Metaphors have been in use over many years. They reinforce the common misconception, stereotypes and negative thinking about disability. The unconscious use of metaphors acts against the disability community (Kailes, 2010)

Terms used as metaphors

“monster” (139) "deformed"(7)
“freaks”(1) "crippled"(7)
“defective”(2) "normal"(1)
“deficient”(1) "idiot"(1)

Here are Some Example of the Terms used in The Cleft

Perhaps a new kind of thinking began when the Monsters began to take birth. I am sorry, you keep saying the truth, you want the truth, and that is how we saw you, all of you, at first. Monsters. The deformed ones, the freaks, the cripples (p 8).

When we put out deformed babies the eagles come for them (p 12)

I see poor Horsa lying there crippled and think of how Rome has hurt itself in our need to expand, to have (p 216).

The Clefts were for the time believed that the boys were defective, mentally: they do not have normal memories ( p 156).
It was generally agreed in the end that the men were, if not mad, then deficient in understanding (p 162)

*Natural and Bias Free Rewrites of Few Examples*

*The Fifth Child*

Avoid

`Then we have to find a doctor who says he’s abnormal,’ said Harriet.

Use

`Then we have to find a doctor who says he’s person with disability,’ said Harriet

*Ben in the World*

Avoid

Then the suitor lost his crudeness, and was handicapped only by a crippled leg, which the girl cured – so you could say that Ben’s actuality dwindled into gammy leg (p115).

Use

Then the suitor lost his crudeness, and was accessible only by a disability, which the girl cured – so you could say that Ben’s actuality dwindled into gammy leg

Avoid

This band of what – dwarfs?

Use
This band of what – persons of short stature?

*Alfred and Emily*

Avoid

There he went pretty deaf, from gunfire – more than he had been: he was deaf even in his teens (p 248).

Use

There he went pretty a person with hearing impairment – more than he had been: he was a person who is deaf even in his teens

*The Cleft*

Avoid

Perhaps a new kind of thinking began like everything else when the Monsters started being born (p 8).

Use

Perhaps a new kind of thinking began like everything else when the persons with disability started being born.

Avoid

When we put out deformed babies the eagles come for them (p 12)

Use
When we put out the babies with disability the eagles come for them.

"People First Language"

Poststructuralists say meaning can never be fixed because human discourse is constantly evolving and therefore continually engaged in creating new meanings (Galvin, 2006). The language that persons with disabilities formulate shows the effort of the community to escape from the stigma, and to create an alternative, a self defined social identity (Kailes, 2010).

Longmore says;

An emerging language, being developed by the handicapped persons themselves and particularly influenced by the disability civil rights movement, actively resists stigma and social subordination, seeks to create an opposing positive social identity, and, in some instances, affirms a minority group identity. (423)

Hadley and Brodwin argue that one should avoid language that expresses biases or unwanted surplus meanings or treats opinions, interpretations, or impressions as facts. Kailes says;

Language does play an important role in shaping ideas and attitudes. It takes time to change language habits, but if you are committed to increasing integration, equality, community awareness, acceptance and access, then take the time to be vigilant about the language you use. Just as our society has worked at eliminating pejorative and derogatory and racial and ethnic language, so must it expend the same effort to do the same with removing negative and biased disability language. (68)
Harpur says in US and Australia disability is placed behind to emphasize that a person should not be referred to through his disability. He says Americans and Australians use the descriptor persons with disabilities. After the ADA (American Disability Act), the activists started preferring “people-first” language. Examples of people first language are saying ‘a professor with a disability’ rather than ‘a handicapped professor’, saying ‘uses a wheelchair’ not ‘bound or confined to a wheelchair’, or ‘non disabled’ not ‘normal’ (B. Haller et al, 2006) Blaska states clearly;

The philosophy of using people first language demonstrates respect for people with disabilities by referring to them first as individuals, and then referring to their disability when it is needed. This philosophy demonstrates respect by emphasizes what people can do by focusing on their ability rather than their disability and by distinguishing the person from the disability (27)

Blaska says we can challenge and change our language which has the potential to positively impact the society.

Doctors suggest the idea of institutionalization under the guise of normalizing them but writers acknowledged the segregation in different angle. Except a few, majority of the institutionalized person never returned home. Institutionalization maximum ended in execution

David statement asserts it more clearly.

Lindblom & Dunn suggest what are responsibilities of a scholar to bring a significant impact;
• Produce Rhetorical analysis of the ways in which ordinary language and assumption adversely inform public documents, laws, organizational rules, cultural values, and so forth in a manner that perpetuate problematic constructions of disability.

• Suggest better—that is, less disabling—terms and constructions for those documents.

(27)
Works Cited


