Litotes in Azerbaijani and English literature

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Abstract.
The purpose of this article is to review and compare litotes in Azerbaijani and English literature. Since the means of artistic expression are the key priority for writers in various literatures, its role in Azerbaijani and English literature is undeniable, especially the significance of litotes topic should be mentioned. On the other hand, each language has its own linguistic structure and linguistic phenomena, the sequence of rhetorical devices is awkward.

Keywords:
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the opposite of exaggeration
Litotes is an inseparable part of literature. Regularly, litotes is used in English, Hebrew, Dutch, Greek, German, Polish, Chinese, Turkish, French, Azerbaijani, and a number of other languages. In fiction, we certainly encounter authors who use litotes according to their linguistic phenomena of each language. In many languages it is used in the same context. For example, the phrase in Turkish “Hiç fena değil” is equivalent to "not bad at all" in English. In consequence, although the Turkish language belongs to the same language family as the Azerbaijani language, the concept of litotes is not compatible with the Azerbaijani language, but with the English language.

Litotes is a versatile rhetorical device used in literature to emphasize irony and express an idea more vividly. The author emphasizes his opinion by using a word that contradicts the idea to be expressed. Readers can appreciate the nuances and deeper meanings between what the writer is expressing and what he wants to convey, depending on the context. Litotes prompts the reader to ponder the statement. For example, in George Orwell's 1984, he used the phrase “not untrue”. It conveys the underlying meaning, adding complexity to the dialogue and thoughts of these characters.[1]

Many writers in English literature used litotes when they wanted to convey their ideas indirectly rather than directly in their works. In Austen's Pride and Prejudice, the characters often used various means of expression, especially litotes, to convey their polite expressions and irony. An example of this is Mr. Darcy's remark: "He is hardy, but not handsome enough to tempt me." If he directly emphasizes that it is ugly, he will be rude. Therefore, the image indirectly expresses its opinion in its speech. As the impact of the sentence increases, so does the reader's visual revitalization. Such expressions used in the work make the image more understandable.

Let's look at another statement from the same work of Austen. In Pride and Prejudice, Mr. Bennet says, "I'm not twenty-one," which means he's much older than twenty-one. If Mr. Bennet had told his age directly, there would be no significant nuance for the reader and no difference for the
plot of the work. Because litotes is used to express small details in a more emphatic manner.

Litotes affirms something by denying its opposite. It's not difficult. Suppose you are writing a piece. You can start each line with the words "This is common" or use litotes with the words "This is not uncommon". The second idea attracts more attention. [2]

Shakespeare's Hamlet is considered one of the masterpieces of English literature. Because the speech of the characters, the means of expression used, as well as the plot of the work are very interesting. In this work, Shakespeare uses the phrase "He hath not failed to pester us with message" to emphasize the conflict between the characters with litotes. The reason why litotes is used the most is precisely because it does not perform the action that the character can do, but also exhibits a different action, which draws attention to such nuances when reading.

The mentioned examples are from the classic English literature. The richness of English literature is certainly not limited to the classical genre. Litotes were widely used in other genres as well. In the English poem "Paradise Lost", Milton tries to convey the characteristics of the devil to the reader ironically by using litotes. To emphasize the gravity of Satan's life, he mentions it as "not unmindful." The purpose of using this expression is to emphasize the lost glory of Satan. Characterizing the devil with this expression actually makes the reader think and encourage analysis.

Consequently, these examples illustrate how English authors use litotes to provide emphasis and convey nuanced meanings, often adding a layer of irony or understatement to their writing.

Litotes is used in different ways in different literatures. English literature and Azerbaijani literature have certain differences and similarities according to their features.

Similar features:
1. The reason litotes is used in both literatures is to convey the idea more gently to the reader.
2. The reason for using litotes in both literatures is rhetorical. Allows the writer to express thoughts and emotions
in a discreet way.

3. In both English and Azerbaijani literature, the writer uses litotes to create subtle emphasis in his work. Otherwise, expressing the idea as it is reduces the impact of the work.

Different features:
1. English literature: Litotes was found in a letter mentioned by Cicero in 55 BC. The meaning of the word is expressed as double negatives. [3]

   Azerbaijani literature: It is a Greek word meaning to emphasize the strength, size, or quality of a described item in a reduced form rather than as it is.

2. English literature: Litotes means the opposite of the meaning of the expression. For example, "not unhandsome" means "handsome, not bad." [3]

   Azerbaijani literature: Litotes is considered the opposite of exaggeration. For instance, He was looking for a mouse hole to hide because he was trembling like a rabbit from fear.

3. English literature: The writer often uses litotes for irony and humor in English satire. [3]

   Azerbaijani literature: Litotes is often found in classical poetry and folk literature. It is also possible to find proverbs that do not reflect a direct idea.

   Incidentally, in The Catcher in the Rye, Holden Caulfield used litotes in his speech. For example, he used the expression "not too bad" when characterizing the teacher. Otherwise, he would have to describe the teacher rudely. By the way, although these expressions are not considered litotes in Azerbaijani literature, they are used in conversation or to say a phrase in a soft way instead of saying it rudely. Although such expressions are considered litotes in English literature.

   Litotes is a Greek word that means to shrink, to show a feature in a different form than it has. The emergence of litotes in our literature began with the poetry of Nasimi.

   Nasimi skillfully used litotes in the expression of philosophical ideas and praising love.

   Without you, O villain, the universe is worthless.

   What if I say so much to a worthless object?

   "Shol labi sweet, okay, what if I say sugar?" is a verse from Nasimi's ghazal. When the poet praises the beauty, "the
universe without her" means that it is less important than a penny. This is considered one of the most perfect examples of litotes created during Nasimi's era. Likewise, in the phrase "no matter how much I say, it's worth nothing" in the second stanza, the lover uses litotes when declaring his love to his lover. Which states that the universe has no meaning without a lover. (9)

Litotes, which developed from the era of Nasimi in the 14th-15th century, has maintained its relevance in the 20th century. In "Vagif" by Samad Vurgun:

My king! The rear front is very scary,
It is truly the way of the world.
A band of Eldar is coming forward,
He breaks ours like a sparrow..

In these verses, the poet expressed the invincibility and strength of the Eldar's group by showing that the Eldar's group destroyed the Gajar army like sparrows, and created a perfect example of litotes.

The main indicator of the richness of Azerbaijani literature is the means of artistic description and expression in language. It is impossible to imagine literature without them. The reason why the work is more readable and remarkable depends on the writer's scientific outlook and artistic imagination. The Azerbaijani poet Pasha Galbinur skillfully used litotes in his poetry. For example, Look at the moon - it is the size of your hands. [4] Here, the poet tried to reduce the moon to the size of a hand. This makes the poem more poetic.

As I mentioned, Litotes is often found in classical poetry and folk literature. Let's look at another expression:

I can walk on a rose petal
I can melt on the pine branch.[5]

In this expression, the poet is so loaded with emotion and thought that he tried to strengthen the expressiveness by making the words into words within the verse.

Sleepy mountains pour over me -
My "Lake Goygol" slipped and fell into my palm.[6]

This phrase is quite rich with hyperbole, metonymy and litotes. The mentioned Lake Goygol is one of the famous lakes of Azerbaijan. When he says that the Lake Goygol fell into my palm, he tries to make the Lake Goygol tiny. Reading this
phrase, the reader realizes that the lake cannot fall into the palm of his hand, but it sounds perfect as a means of artistic expression. It is possible to feel that it is poetically rich, as well as the feelings and emotions of the poet.

It is also possible to find litotes in the poetry of Aliaga Kurchayli, one of the masters of Azerbaijani literature. For instance,

The road between us

It was no longer than a needle. [7]

By showing the length of the road as a needle, the poet makes a small consideration of an existence insignificant than it actually is created litotes. Litotes does not mean only the diminution of a feature, but also involves making the idea more concise and effective. For example, let's look at the following verse from Molla Panah Vagif's ghazal "Look": [11]

Take an example from Agha Muhammad Khan, Oh humble beggar,
While you are still alive, do not look at the branch or the khunkhara.
Oh humble beggar is litotes. Because with this phrase, Vagif called his close friend Vidadi to be alert in an age where art is not valued, to properly appreciate the oppression of kings and the meaning of life.

In Azerbaijani literature, examples of litotes have shown themselves not only in poetry, but also in our epics. Epics are considered unique pearls of Azerbaijani literature. Samples from our epics: In Koroglu's epic, in the sentence "The leader of the army turned into a chicken out of fear", the general's impotence and anxiety were more effectively expressed with the help of litotes. A typical diminutive used in classical literature is the image of foot dust. In order to magnify the beloved in an artistic image, the lover shrinks himself, making him look like the dust of the beloved's feet or the dog of his door. [8]

Let's take a look at a verse from Kitabi-Dada Gorgud, one of our other unique epics:

My eyebrows are like a twisted bow,
I have a narrow mouth that does not fit double almonds.
In this verse, an Azerbaijani woman is described in the sense of pampering with litotes. [10]
In the expression used by Sheikh Nasrullah when he was angry in Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's book The Dead, which is one of the instructive works of Azerbaijani literature: How many meals, how many kinds of pilaf, Sheikh Ahmed, didn't you tell them that my food is one date a day?

Additionally, a person cannot be satisfied with one date during the day. Sheikh Nasrullah only interprets his nutrition in a reduced way, not as it is. In other words, he demonstrated his humility. Meanwhile, the negative character of the work, Sheikh Nasrullah, who became famous as "the one who raised the dead", should have distinguished himself from other people with his supernatural characteristics.

As a result, the examples from oral folk literature that I have mentioned, as well as such examples from our written literature, are considered unique pearls of Azerbaijan's artistic heritage. The litotes, which show themselves with their unique form of each era, have been expressed in different ways by different poets.

References:

[2] "The Elements of Eloquence: How to Turn the Perfect English Phrase" by Mark Forsyth, 165p