

Comparing Iago's and Othello's Language

Othello

Emotive

Descriptive

Sometimes bombastic

Calm, and confident

Dignified blank verse

Imagery concerns sea or heavens – reflects propensity toward chaos/uncertainty

This language reflects his lofty ideals.

Heroic Language – powerful, dramatic, images that know no bounds – sky, heaven, hell, death or fate.

His language later becomes chaotic, showing signs of madness. Sentences become fragmented and he uses more obscenities. His language is broken and he is prone to violent outbursts.

His language only returns to its former majesty at the end of the play after he realises what he has done.

Iago

Manipulative

Manufactures expressions for persuasive effect

Imagery is terse and dry

Bestial images – esp. of animals mating (ewes, horses, goats, monkeys, dogs)

Iago often speaks in prose (esp. when manipulating Roder.)

Images of base physical functions

Images of money and trade

This language reflects the depravity of his mind.

Anti-Heroic Language – plain, direct, ironically understated.

Iago remains in control of language throughout the play.

He skilfully uses insinuations, subtle hints, questions and indirect accusations.

Similarities in their Language

Othello's language starts to become more depraved as his jealousy grows – he then starts to use Iago's imagery (e.g. bestial, diabolical)

Both characters use images of war and soldiers – Othello sees the glory of war, Iago views war as an economic venture. This shows Othello's courage and idealism in contrast to Iago's self-interested character.