THE ANALYSIS OF PEJORATION AND AMELIORATION IN ALICE WALKER'S THE COLOR PURPLE

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ABSTRACT

The change of meaning in language may happen. Pejoration and amelioration are some types of the meaning change. The pejoration is degenerating of meaning while amelioration is elevating of meaning. In this research, the writer wanted to know about the pejoration and the amelioration process that happened in Alice walker’s The Color Purple. The aims of this research are to know what words that experienced the pejoration and the amelioration process, and to describe how the process happens. The writer used the qualitative method to analyze the process of pejoration or the amelioration by using library research. The writer found that there are many words experienced pejoration; they are: tities, pussy; and amelioration process; they are: rouge, etc. Finally the writer concluded that the pajoration and the amelioration process were found in the Alice Walker’s The Color Purple. The writer found that history, society and people influence the shaping of the meaning changes, which is pejoration and amelioration process.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Research

In an authentic text, sometime we meet a word or some words that make us puzzled. Requirement of appropriate word for the appropriate occasion is inevitable because only with a good knowledge of words one can express the thoughts and feelings meticulously. We widely know that the word or those some words are negative, so that those words become irrelevant with another words in a sentence when the sentence is telling a different idea. This word condition can be told as meaning change. Meaning change refers to the changes of word meaning that replace the original meaning. Shaped by society, history and people, words can and often do experience semantic shift or meaning change through the years. Many meaning changes have occured that make the meaning of word may become broader, narrower, positive or negative. The example everyone knows is gay, which originally meant "merry", but because some people are a little too merry came to mean "wanton", and because some people are a little too wanton came to mean "homosexual", which is the sense almost exclusively used now.

Based on the background above, the writer is interested in analyzing the meaning change, especially pejoration and the amelioration words. The writer uses Alice Walker’s The Color Purple as her data. She assumed that the novel has many words that experienced the meaning change. Finally, the writer conducted this research in means of helping the reader
knowing and determining while the words are experienced pejoration or experienced amelioration.

**Problem Formulation**

The writer conducts two problems related to the words that experienced meaning change which applied in the authentic sentence.
1. Which meaning those appear of the words that experienced meaning change when they are applied in concrete sentences?
2. What process that happen to those meanings?

**Aim of the Research**

The aims of the research are:
1. To know which meaning that appear of the words that experienced meaning change when they are applied in concrete sentences.
2. To describe what process that happen to those meanings.

**THEORETICAL REVIEW**

**Theory of Meaning**

Meaning is not confined to a single discipline or field of study, though it is generally thought to belong to the domain or scope of linguistics. It is true, when the meaning of an object in a language, natural or formal language is discussed. But since meaning is a relation between a chunk of reality (object), its sign or referent (and another object) and then a concept ("an abstract object") in someone's mind, obviously you have a multiple option for classification according to the three elements involved.

Meaning is inferred not only from the verbal form, but from the current context. It assumed that some intended meaning is present by the writer or speaker in pragmatics in the message, which is then interpreted in term of the knowledge of the audience will determine how much or what she or he understand the message. Therefore, meaning must either be conventionally associated with the linguistic forms used, or be inferable from the latter in conjunction with contextual knowledge (Cruse, 2000: 12).

**Theory of Meaning Change**

Meaning change is defined as the changes of word meaning that replace the original meaning. Meaning change is not only including the time problem, but also including the place problem. A word that its meaning is well known by a certain language society in a certain time will experience meaning change in another place whereas in other certain place the original meaning is still be used. Meaning change or it can be said as shift of meaning can occur when the sense of word expands and contracts, with the final focus of the meaning different from the original (Henning, 1995, Meaning Change in http://www.langmaker.com/ml0104.htm).

Words frequently change their meanings over time, and pursuing such change often illustrates cultural and historical shifts. Historical processes of meaning change are of course intimately linked to synchronic processes of meaning extension. This can be illustrated with
It was a metaphorically extended to mean “come to an end of a period of validity”, which existed as a clear figurative use alongside the literal use. Nowadays, the “die” sense is quite uncommon, and people will declare a metaphorical extension of the “cease to be valid”. This example illustrates one way in which synchronic meaning extension forms an essential part of diachronic change. In principle, the meaning of a word may change along any of the semantic dimension (Cruse, 2000: 214 - 215). There are several factors which make the changes of meaning happen. There are;
1. The development of science and technology
2. The development of social culture
3. The development of the use of word
4. The exchange of sense perception (synesthesia)
5. There are association (Chaer, 2007: 310)

The change of meaning has several types; but in this research the writer only focused on pejoration and amelioration.

Theory of Pejoration and Amelioration

One of the meaning change types is pejorative. Pejoration is the process by which a word's meaning worsens or degenerates, coming to represent something less favorable than it originally did (Henning, 1995, Meaning Change in http://www.langmaker.com/ml0104.htm). Pejoration happen because some words in a certain time have a normal meaning is felt less favorable in nowadays uses. Katamba said in her book that if a word is acquired a more negative meaning, we speak of pejoration (Katamba, 1994: 122). For example is the word villain (originally spelt villein). It has gone downhill. In the age of feudalism, a villain is not a peasant, but a person of doubtful virtue, a scoundrel. When the word peasant was first adapted from French, the word simply meant a country person who worked the land. Current French paysan comes from old French païsant. Old French pais became modern French pays ‘country’. The ‘ant’ suffix indicated origin in old French. So, a peasant was someone from country district. That meaning is not lost in English peasant, but the word has acquired the additional negative connotation of ‘boorish’, very low status person (Katamba, 1994: 122).

The other type of meaning change is amelioration. Amelioration is the process by which a word's meaning improves or becomes elevated, coming to represent something more favorable than it originally referred to (Henning, 1995, Meaning Change in http://www.langmaker.com/ml0104.htm). The sense of a word that has experienced amelioration is more favorable than the original in the current time. According to Katamba, “if a word acquired a more positive meaning, we speak of amelioration” (Katamba, 1994: 122). The word knight has experienced amelioration. Knight originally meant ‘servant’. In modern German the related word ‘Knecht’ still means servant. But in the age of chivalry, the ‘knight’ went up in public esteem. Being knighted is still considered as a great honor (Katamba, 1994: 122).

Amelioration and pejoration of meaning has a lot of to do with social values. Nowhere is this clearer than in the attitude of different occupation. For instance, at one time being surgeon enjoyed no more prestige than the butcher. Both were seen as tradesmen very skilled in cutting and chopping flesh and bones with sharp knives. However, with the professionalization of surgery and the establishment of Royal College of Surgeons Practitioners of surgery enjoyed ever increasing public esteem. Today, nobody would contemplate lumping them with butcher (Katamba, 1994: 122).

Sometimes the same root may develop an ameliorative meaning in one language and a pejorative meaning in another. Bartsch (1984: 387) sites Dutch (Du.) knap “able, fit, clever,
good looking,” German (Gm.) knapp “narrow, hardly sufficient”, both derived from an earlier Germanic meaning of “fitting close, tightly.” (Traugott - Dasher, 2004: 56).

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This research describes the data than calculate the data. This research did not employ a statistical procedure. By descriptions, the data will be interpreted with words, in means of helping the reader understand about the multi-meaning words in the authentic uses. Therefore, this research uses qualitative method.

According to Nunan, qualitative research assumes that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research (Nunan, 1992:3).

This study also uses a qualitative methodology; it means a research procedure that produce descriptive data such as written words or verbal expression from the people and their behavior that had been observed (Bagdan and Taylor, 1975:5).

It can be concluded that the qualitative method is a method that has a verbal analysis which is used an explanation to represent the data.

**Source of the Data**

The main source of this study is a novel entitled “The Color Purple”. This Alice Walker’s novel was first published in 1985. The novel opens with Celie who was an Afro – American girl who spoiled by her father. She didn’t have any educational background because her father thought that she is ugly and she didn’t have any ability to learn anything at school. She was force to marry Mr._________ while actually she didn’t have any feeling for him. In fact, she was just forming herself like a servant who always doing any household work.

This novel used letter based writing called epistolary style. Because of the writer of the novel is an Afro – American, the form of word to word not exactly used good English. There are some words that have miswriting and also make the reader sometimes confused. From the first page, the writer found that there are words that have experienced meaning change, so that the writer assumed that there will be more words that have experienced meaning change inside the novel.

**Techniques of Collecting Data**

There are techniques that the writer uses to finish the research. The writer uses a library technique by collecting data from libraries and other reference books, the internet service also the source of information for the writer. First, the writer reads the novel and read the note about the author. Then, the writer searches the words that have more than one meaning and making them into a list. After that, the writer analyzes about the appropriate meaning of those words when they are in the sentence in the novel, and also how the meaning appears.
Data Analysis Procedure

After the writer collected the data and theories, she analyzed the data. These are procedures that the writer uses in analyzing the data.

1. Editing
   The data have been collected edited by taking only the valid data. The step are conducted to ensure that there is no mistakes during the transference process or to avoid misleading.

2. Classifying the Data
   The data have been collected sorted and classified into sub-categories ‘words that experience pejorative or ameliorative process’ and ‘words that did not experience pejorative or ameliorative process’.

3. Analysis the Data
   After the writer has the data classified as ‘multi-meaning words that experience pejorative and ameliorative’, then the writer analyzes whether the words are included in pejorative or ameliorative. After that the writer analyzes how those words experience those shifts of meaning.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

Meaning That Appears Of the Words That Experienced Meaning Change

   The writer found that the meaning of the words selected experienced meaning change, and the appropriate meaning of the words can be found after we know the changes. Here are some examples and explanations of the appearing meaning after the shift of meaning.

Pejoration Words

   The pejoration is a process by which a word’s meaning degenerates or become worsen, coming to represent something less favorable than it originally did. These are some example of words in the Alice Walker novel “The Color Purple” which experience pejorative process.

   Then he grab hold my *titles* (Walker, p.1).

   From the sentence above, the word ‘*titles*’ experienced the meaning change; that is pejorative process. In the sentence the word ‘*titles*’ means breasts. It different from the original meaning; a kind of mouse (Webster, 1982) or a kind of European bird which eats insects and seed (Oxford, 2002). We can see the process by looking up in two different dictionaries which published in different year.

   **Tities:**

   Webster (1982) : a. tit; same as titmouse
b. Tit (OE), 1. Same as TEAT, 2. A breast: in this sense now vulgar

Oxford (2002) : n. 1 vulgar slang a woman’s breast. 2 Brit. informal a foolish or ineffectual person. 3 military slang a push-button, especially one used to fire a gun or release a bomb. – ORIGIN OE tit ‘teat, nipple’, of Gmc origin.

The word ‘tities’ has experienced pejorative process, because if we see in the sentence above, the suitable meaning of ‘tities’ will be breasts. Breasts appear as a suitable meaning in the sentence because the context of the sentence is in the house and also the situation of the sentence describe that the character experience violence.

The same experience of pejorative was experienced by the word ‘pussy’, as in the following sentence:

Then he push his thing inside my pussy (Walker, 1985, p.1).

The word ‘pussy’ also experience pejorative. The original meaning of ‘pussy’ is a cat’s name, but in this context, the word ‘pussy’ had change into woman’s sex organ. We can see the change of meaning in the Webster (1982), pussy: the cat’s name; and also in the Oxford (2002), pussy: 1. (also pussycat) a child’s word for a cat, 2. (!, slang) the female sex organs, especially the vulva. The context of the sentence which is the main character who is experienced sex abuse supports the pejorative meaning to appear.

The meaning change of the ‘pussy’ can be seen in the Webster and Oxford dictionary.

Pussy:

Webster (1982) : 1. Cat name, pet name

Oxford (2002) : 1. (also pussycat) a child’s word for a cat. 2. (!, slang) the female sex organs, especially the vulva

Another example that can be discussed is the word ‘trampy’. Let us see the use of ‘trampy’ in the sentence below.

Amelioration Words

As mentioned in the chapter two, amelioration is a process by which a word's meaning improves or becomes elevated, coming to represent something more favorable than it originally did. These are some words in the Alice Walker novel which experience the ameliorative process.

Her face rouge (Walker, 1985, p.7).
The word ‘rouge’, come from the French word, means red. The original meaning had no special sense, but it then experienced ameliorative because the word ‘rouge’ nowadays is used in the world of cosmetic, the word ‘rouge’ has a special meaning of the red powder for coloring the cheeks or lips. The ameliorative change can be seen in the following dictionary.

**Rouge:**

Webster (1982) : n. (Fr., red) 1. A reddish cosmetic powder, paste, etc. for coloring cheeks and lips.

2. A reddish powder for polishing jewelry, etc.

Oxford (2002) : 1. N. a red powder or cream used as a cosmetic for colouring the cheeks or lips.

v. colour with rouge.

– ORIGIN ME (denoting the colour red): from Fr., red, from L. *rubeus*.

The other example of ameliorative word is ‘muse’. The word ‘muse’ has the original meaning ‘waste time’ comes from Old France. Let us take a look the word muse in the sentence below.

She *muse*. He not undernourish, she say. (walker, 1985, p.63)

The word muse does not have a ‘waste time’ meaning anymore, but in the sentence above the meaning will be ‘to think deeply’. It experienced the elevating of word meaning from the original. If we look up in the two different dictionaries which published in different years, we may see the origin of the word.

Webster (1982) : vi. to think deeply; meditate


• v. (often muse on) be absorbed in thought. > say to oneself in a thoughtful manner.

– DERIVATIVES musing adj. musingly adv.

– ORIGIN ME: from OFr. *muser* ‘meditate, waste time’.

We can see the amelioration process by looking the original meaning stated in the Oxford dictionary which stated that the origin of the word muse is from OFr, *muser* ‘meditate’, ‘waste time’. Lately, people not only waste time, they do the think activity, which is why muse has the meaning as in the present time.

Both the word ‘rouge’ and ‘muse’ experienced ameliorative changes. The present meaning of those two words replaced the original meaning of them, and the present meaning of those words are up in the world.
How the Meaning Appears

The historical factor becomes the most important factor in shaping the pejoration and the amelioration of words. Take the word ‘tit’ from the Alice Walker’s novel; The Color Purple. In the novel, we see the word ‘tit’ has a meaning as a breast, especially the nipple. This appears because of the word ‘tit’ experienced the meaning change, that is pejoration. Let us take a look for the origin of that word.Tit: (2), basically any small quadruped or bird or thing; titbit; titlark; titmouse; tomtit . 1. This tit is prob, as Webster suggests, orig—among the Scan languages—a child’s word for small animal or thing; cf OW titlingr small bird [cf the dial E titling], Ice titt r titmouse, small plug or pin, Nor dial tita small object': perch the small object was orig tit, var pron of TEAT. 2. Titbit is a sem duplication: tit, something small+bit, a small piece; hence, because ‘All good things come in small packets’ (an E proverb seldom recorded), a small delicacy. 3. Titlark, now usu tit, is another duplication: ME titemose, timase: tit+OE mase, a titmouse, akin to OHG meisa, MHG-G meise, MD meise, meese, mese, D mees, ON meisingr. The f/e -mouse prob arises from the bird’s nesting in holes. 4. Tomtit= Tom, used generically+ tit; cf tomcat. From those meaning, we can take assumption that the ‘tit’ is originally been used to say something in a small size and because nipple(s) are small, so people say ‘tit’ to represent nipple(s).

We can also take another word ‘pussy’ from Alice Walker’s The Color Purple. The origin of that word are (1), a cat, whence pussy, whence ‘to pussy-foot’ or walk stealthily like a predatory cat; o.o.o., but prob echoic of a cat spitting: cf D Poes, cat, and Ga puts, cat, piseag, kitten? also W pws, an expelled breath, an utterance: prob also Sumerian pu (gen pi), the mouth; (2) the face: A slang and dial: Irish pus, a lip, the lips, the mouth. Here, we can take a relationship why the meaning of the word ‘pussy’ changes. Since saying a word that is related to the sexual organ is taboo, then, people take another word which can represent the taboo. The word ‘pussy’ has similar character of lips with the word vagina (which is sense as a taboo). This is why the word ‘pussy’ experienced the meaning change, which is pejoration.

The word trampy also has influenced by the historical factor. The original meaning of tramp is about the journey by foot, but then the meaning changes into the woman who had many partner. This meaning exists in the American English language. As we see in the origin of word, tramp (v), hence n; trample, (v), hence n; trap (n and v), snare, whence trapper and trapping — cf entrap; trap, a kind of rock; trip, v (whence tripper ), hence n. 1. ‘To tramp’ or walk heavily, hence to travel on foot, derives from ME trampen: cf MLG trampen and Go -trimpan and, without m, the MLG and MD-D trappen, to stamp, to tread: ult cf TREAD. 2. ME trampen has freq trampeln, whence ‘to trample’: cf the syn MHG-G trampeln, akin to MHG-G treppe, a staircase. 3. ‘To trap’ or snare, ME trappen, derives from OE -traeppan, -treppan, itself from OE treappe, treppe, a snare, whence ME treppe. E trap: cf MD trap, treppe, and OHG trapo: cf also, both phon and sem, TREAD, a trap being that which is unwittingly trodden upon. Cf OF-F trappe (from Frankish *trappa), whence MF entrapper or r entraper, whence ‘to entrap’. 4. The Geol trap, a dark igneous rock, esp basalt, derives from Sw trapp, which has cognates in Da, G, D: such rock occurs in masses rising much as steps do. 5. To trip or move quickly and lightly, ME tripen, var trepen, comes from OF triper (or tripper), var treper, of Gmc origin: cf the syn MD trippen, D trippeln, G trippeln, and OE treppan, to tread: words that, phon and sem, represent ‘thinnings’ of those noted in para 1. The senses ‘to (cause to) stumble’ and ‘to make an excursion fo r pleasure’ (now rare, but the imm source of ‘a trip’ or short journey), follow easily from the orig sense. As the writer is an Afro – American, she used the word to denote a woman like whore.
The historical factor also influences the process of amelioration. The word ‘rouge’ which comes from the origin word L *ruber, red, o/s rubr-, has a lost extn *rubricus, surviving in *rubrica (sc terra, earth), red earth, red chalk (used for colouring): MF *rubrice, later rubrique; ME *rubrice, later rubrique; E *rubric, red ochre (obs), hence a portion (of MS, etc.) coloured red. Derivative LL *rubricare has pp *rubricatus, whence the E adj and v rubricate. The word ‘rouge’ originally doesn’t have any special meaning. But then, as said before that one of meaning is red chalk (used for coloring), and it has been used for coloring the part of the face, so then the word ‘rouge’ is used in term of cosmetic tools to coloring the cheeks. Then, the word ‘rouge’ now has a special meaning from the original one. The word ‘rouge’ was going up in the word, so we usually use this word in case of coloring the cheeks or lips instead of the word ‘red’.

The word ‘muse’ is also influenced by a historical factor. The original meaning of ‘muse’ is ‘waste time’, but then the meaning of the word ‘muse’ elevated that become ‘to think deeply’. As mentioned in the origin of words, muse (v, hence n)—cf. amuse, amusement; musette; muzzle. 1. ‘To muse’ comes from OF *muser, to loiter, to reflect, prob orig to stay with muzzle in air, from OF *mus, attested by OF-F *museau, OProv *mus, It *muso, ML *mustim, va r musus, muzzle, animal’s mouth: o.o.o. 2. OF-F muser has OF-F cpd amuser, to cause to stand with muzzle in air, (hence) to bemuse, whence ‘to amuse’; derivative late MF-F amusement was adopted by E. 3. OF *muser has derivative n muse, whence the MF-F dim musette, ref muser in its special MF sense ‘to play the bagpipes’; musette, adopted by E, acquires one or two additional Mus senses. As the people have an intelligent to think, they not only waste time by staring at the air blankly. This is how the meaning of muse elevated.

Commentary

After the writer discussed about the pejoration and the amelioration process that are found in Alice Walker’s The Color Purple, she also has the commentary for another article which is related to her finding.

In Emily Jelsomeno’s article about the words ‘nigger’, ‘bitch’, and ‘gay’, she analyzed about the shift of meaning which is happened in those three words. She said in her article that those words experience meaning change because of the shaping of society, history, and people. The article shows that the shift of meaning happen because there are in- group member and out- group member of the three words. She said that the in- group member for bitch are women, the in- group for nigger are African Americans, and the in- group member for gay are the homosexuals.

Another article which is related to the writer’s analysis is the article from Jeffrey Henning. He analyzed about the pejoration and the amelioration in the Ronald Suffield’s poem The Tenth Beatitude. He found that there are words that experienced pejoration and amelioration. The words that experienced the pejoration are ‘blessed’, ‘goody’, ‘tawdry’; while the words that experience the amelioration are ‘priest’ and ‘prester’. He said that the pejoration and the amelioration that happened in the Suffield’s poem are shaped because of the historical factor. Jeffrey took an example of word ‘blessed’. He said the word ‘blessed’ experienced the pejoration. He explained, “Well, since people who are blessed are often innocent and guileless, the word gradually came to mean "innocent". And some of those who are innocent might be innocent because they haven’t the brains to be anything else. And some of those who are innocent might be innocent because they knowingly reject opportunities for
temptation. In either case, since the more worldly-wise would take advantage of their opportunities, the innocents must therefore be foolish, which of course is the current primary meaning of the word silly.” This means that the words which experienced the pejoration and the amelioration are shaped because of the historical and the sociological factors.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

**Conclusion**

After the writer analyzed the pejoration and the amelioration in Alice Walker’s The Color Purple, she concludes that there are many words that experienced pejoration and amelioration in the novel The Color Purple. The pejoration and the amelioration process happen because of several factors, there are society, history and people. The origin of the word that experienced the pejoration and the amelioration also gives contribution in shaping the new meaning of those words.

The finding helps the reader of the Alice Walker’s The Color Purple understand to the word that experienced the pejoration and the amelioration process, so that the reader will not take a wrong meaning while reading the novel.

**Suggestion**

There are so many changes in language. One of them is the pejoration and the amelioration process. The changes may confuse us as a reader, but the writer hopes that her finding may help the reader understand the changing. The writer also wants to give some suggestions to the readers that if they read some novel consisting of the word that puzzling them, they must aware of the meaning change that can be pejoration or amelioration. The suggestion is also been given to the translators if they want to translate the word that experienced pejoration and the amelioration. Translators must take a special attention to those words, because those words will have different meaning from the original. So, all of their translation will concord each other.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


