

**PERKEMBANGAN MAKNA PEYORATIF PADA KATA BAHASA INGGRIS 'IDIOT':
SEBUAH KAJIAN ETIMOLOGI**

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ABSTRACT

This study argues that every word of any natural language is prone to meaning modification known as pejoration. Pejoration happens when a meaning of words becomes negative and it is different from its original meaning. In order to answer that phenomenon, this study entitled "Pejorative Development of English Word 'Idiot': A Study of Etymology" issues that the English word 'idiot' may have experienced pejoration. It discusses the history of the word 'idiot' and its pejorative development. Liberman and Voyles's theories are used in this study. In the analysis, Liberman's theory is applied to explain the history of the word 'idiot' and also the development of its meaning, while Voyles's theory is adapted to see the semantic features of the word 'idiot' whether the meaning is specific or general.

The descriptive qualitative method is used to explain the phenomena covered in pejorative datum. The datum was analyzed and described using applying grand and supporting theories mentioned earlier.

The result shows that the word 'idiot' has experienced degradation of meaning where the word itself in its original meaning meant 'a private person', but over time it has acquired a negative connotation. The word is currently used in the sense of 'a stupid person or someone has done something stupid' or 'someone who is mentally ill or has a very low level of intelligence'.

Keywords: etymology, pejoration

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji bahwa setiap kata dari setiap bahasa rawan mengalami modifikasi makna yang dikenal sebagai peyorasi. Peyorasi terjadi ketika arti dari kata menjadi negatif dan makna kata berbeda dari makna aslinya. Untuk menjawab fenomena tersebut, studi yang berjudul "Perkembangan Makna Peyoratif Kata Bahasa Inggris 'Idiot': Sebuah Studi Etimologi bertujuan menelisik kata 'idiot' yang diasumsikan telah mengalami peyorasi. Studi ini membahas sejarah dan perkembangan makna peyoratif pada kata 'idiot'. Teori dari Liberman dan Voyles digunakan dalam studi ini. Dalam analisis, teori Liberman diterapkan

guna menjelaskan sejarah dan juga pengembangan makna pada kata '*idiot*', sedangkan teori Voyles diadaptasi untuk melihat fitur semantik dari kata '*idiot*'.

Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan untuk menjelaskan fenomena yang tercakup dalam data yang mengalami peyorasi. Data dianalisis dan dijelaskan dengan menerapkan teori utama dan teori pendukung yang disebutkan sebelumnya.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kata '*idiot*' telah mengalami degradasi makna di mana kata itu sendiri dalam arti aslinya berarti "orang yang menjaga privasinya" kemudian kata tersebut berasosiasi dengan konotasi negatif. *Idiot* saat ini berarti 'orang bodoh atau seseorang yang telah melakukan hal yang bodoh' atau 'seseorang yang sakit mental atau memiliki tingkat kecerdasan yang sangat rendah'.

Kata Kunci: etimologi, peyorasi

INTRODUCTION

Every word has a variety of senses and connotations, which can be added, removed, or altered over time. Linguists even argued that generation before and after speak and understand words differently. The change of words is obvious, not only their form but also their meaning. The change may be radically different from the firstly-given meaning. The English word '*harlot*', for example, has experienced certain changes,

Harlot (borrowed from Old French) means
firstly-given meaning : vagabond
change to : prostitute

The meaning modification is inevitable. Respectively, further semantic analysis gives an idea that the meaning of *Harlot* changes into a more negative meaning; *it* refers to vagabond in its old term, but now it acquires a new term, that is *prostitute*. The type of this changing in semantic change is called pejoration. Pejoration, suggested by Washington (2010), is a process describing a decrease in the semantic quality of a word. Since the history of the word contributes to the process of pejoration, an etymology analysis with a semantic approach is applied in this study. This study is expected to give understanding about evolution of word usage, especially the point in which word meaning can possibly be changed from positive to negative. In this sense, words are considered undergoing semantic change through times.

DATA SOURCES

Datum in this study is taken from COCA since it proposed to be the valid data source for providing past, current, and ongoing changes in language.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research. Djajasudarma (2010: 11) states that:

“Penelitian kualitatif adalah tradisi tertentu dalam ilmu pengetahuan sosial yang secara fundamental bergantung pada pengamatan manusia dalam kawasannya sendiri dan memiliki ciri-ciri seperti latar alamiah, manusia sebagai alat, teori dasar, deskriptif lebih mementingkan proses daripada hasil dan adanya batas yang ditentukan oleh fokus.”

Notifying Djajasudarma’s statement, this current study is qualified as a qualitative research where humans are instrument by observing and examining the phenomena that exist in society. This study also uses descriptive analysis method. Sukmadinata (2006:72) states that:

“penelitian deskriptif adalah suatu bentuk penelitian yang ditujukan untuk mendeskripsikan fenomena-fenomena yang ada, baik fenomena alamiah maupun fenomena buatan manusia. Fenomena itu bisa berupa bentuk, aktivitas, karakteristik, perubahan, hubungan, kesamaan, dan perbedaan antara fenomena yang satu dengan fenomena lainnya.”

Considering to Sukmadinata’s theory, this study analyzes the datum by describing it with etymology and semantic approaches. Both of the theoretical approaches are used in order to get the answer scientifically about pejorative development of the word. In conclusion, the study applies a descriptive qualitative method.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The word innovations in semantic evolution show the phenomena triggering to the regular process in language change. The semantic analysis of the evolution produces words that bear negative connotation, typologically called pejoration. Pejoration happens when a word meaning becomes negative (Kleparski, 2007). Regarding to Kleparski’s ideas, pejoration addresses the history of some of the

negative terms with historical shifts in certain level. In this sense, the development of the meaning is contextualized within a broader examination. The broader examination itself is actualized through the etymological analysis. The Liberman's ideas become the grand theory of this field. Supporting to Liberman's theory, the analysis of semantic features by Voyles is provided in order to give a detail description on semantic change due to extension or replacement of the meaning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data 1: Word *Idiot*

Date	2014 (140910)
Publication information	SPORTS; Pg. D01
Title	Bullpen choices work out well for Nationals
Author	Adam Kilgore
Source	NEWS: Washington Post

Expanded context 1:

*Drew Storen played catch Tuesday afternoon in the Nationals Park outfield and confirmed what he already knew. Thrust into the Washington Nationals closer position on the fly, Storen had saved games the previous two days, a heavy workload in a high-stress setting. But from the moment he woke up, he had no doubt his arm would be ready again. " It's September, man, " Storen said. " We're trying to get this thing done. It's going to take a lot. There's that fine line between being an **idiot** and a hero. I anticipated being available. " The big challenge of a pennant race brings with it countless small challenges. The Nationals' bullpen navigated one Tuesday in their 6-4 victory over the Atlanta Braves at Nationals Park. The Nationals blitzed Braves starter Ervin Santana with four runs in the first inning, and Jordan Zimmermann held on for six innings before he handed the ball to a diminished bullpen. Before Storen's third perfect save in three games, relievers Aaron Barrett, Ross Detwiler and Craig Stammen*

Date	2015
Publication information	New York : St. Martin's Griffin, Edition: First edition.
Title	The tragic age :a novel

Author	Metcalfe, Steve,
Source	FIC: The tragic age :a novel

Expanded context 2:

now I'm seventeen and in the garage and nothing's really changed. Dad's still yelling. # " Good Christ Almighty, Billy, are you listening to me? Are you paying attention? Have you heard one goddamn word I've said? " # " Thirty, " I'll say. # " What? " # " To mow the lawn. I want thirty dollars an hour. With a three-hour minimum. " # This is called capitalism. # Dad will snort and make a face that says " You're so such an **idiot**, you're almost funny. " He makes this face with Mom Linda, his wife, my mother a lot. # This is called derision. # " Anything else, your majesty? " # I stare at the lawn mower. The hand lawn mower that he Gordon wouldn't cut his toenails with. # A couple of hours later, I'll be in our backyard, which is lush and green and beautiful, and I'll be riding around on a brand-new tractor mower, the

Analysis:

'Idiot' is argued to be English word experienced pejoration process. Etymologically, the word 'idiot' is derived from Greek *idiōtēs/idios* meant *a private citizen* or *individual*. The term was first used by Athenian democracy to characterize the people who have self-centeredness and concerned almost with private affairs. Semantic features of this word may be described as follows:

Idiotes or *idios*

[A PRIVATE CITIZEN] [INDIVIDUAL]

Along with the development, the word has experienced the downgrading of meaning. In expanded context 1 (2014), the word 'idiot' is compared to the word 'hero' which develops the sense of negative one. While in expanded context 2, the word 'idiot' is used as an insult.

Each of those terms developed and eventually replaced the older terms. This stage can be seen in word 'idiota' from Latin meant ordinary person. The word preceded the late Latin meaning uneducated or ignorant person.

The noun 'idiot' in ancient Greek, according to the Bauer-Danker Lexicon, meant *civilian* (ref Josephus Bell 2 178), *private citizen* (ref sb 3924 9 25), *private*

soldier as opposed to officer (Polybius 1.69), and in (Herodotus 2,81 and 7 199), the word meant *relatively unskilled and not clever*.

This table below shows the idea of word ‘*idiot*’ and its development (the word has cognates in many other languages)

Idiot	Meaning
Greek <i>idiotes/idios</i>	Private person/individual
Latin <i>Idiota</i>	ordinary person, layman
Middle English <i>idiot</i>	uneducated or ignorant person
Old French <i>idiote</i>	uneducated or ignorant person

The term ‘*idiot*’ finally in 19th until 20th century is associated to disability in medicine and psychiatric sense. Dr. Henry H. Goddard proposed a classification system for intellectual disability based on the Binet-Simon concept of mental age. Individuals with the lowest mental age level (less than three years) were identified as idiots; imbeciles had a mental age of three to seven years, and morons had a mental age of seven to ten years. It was used to refer to people having an IQ below 30. Standardized tests determined the intelligence quotient by dividing a person’s mental age and the concept of mental age has fallen into disfavor. These people who have IQ problem are stated to be an *idiot* or *someone who is mentally ill or has a very low level of intelligence*. The word also in slang term used as an insult.

Semantic features of ‘*idiot*’ and its pejorative development

Idiot	Semantic features	Contrastive features	Meaning
Origin	[A PRIVATE CITIZEN] [INDIVIDUAL]	-	-
The pejorative development	[ORDINARY PERSON] [UNEDUCATED] [IGNORANT]	[UNEDUCATED] [IGNORANT]	-
19 th -20 th century	[DISABILITY]	[DISABILITY]	

Date 2015	[STUPID PEOPLE]	-	Someone who is mentally ill; Someone who has a very low level of intelligence.
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CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the datum, it can be concluded that the English word '*idiot*' has experienced degradation of meaning and it develops into a negative one. The old term *private person* is replaced by a new term that is *stupid person*. The sense of this word in medical and psychiatric term is often associated with a person who has a very low level of intelligence; that may be the cause of the pejorative development of the word. Now, the word is currently used to describe *someone who is mentally ill* or *stupid people* and in slang term, it is used as an insult.

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