

# A SEMANTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF PEJORATION OF ECONOMIC TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS AND VERNACULAR SPEECH

Sayed M. Ismail, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University

## ABSTRACT

*The present study aims to investigate pejoration in Egyptian Arabic and its causes through employing historical semantic and sociolinguistic approach for pursuing in-depth investigations of pejoration in Egyptian Arabic. The lexical items examined in the study are divided into moral lexical items and neutral lexical items. The study has found out that pejoration in Egyptian Arabic has been shown to be high in lexical items charged with sexual connotations. Moral items are more prone to pejoration than neutral lexical items. Nouns are more prone to pejoration than adjectives and verbs. In addition, pejoration results into a remarkable gap between Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian colloquialism. The study concludes that there may be a mutual relationship between morality and pejoration in the Arabic language, which requires further investigation and research.*

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistic, Historical Semantic, MSA, Pejoration, Semantic Change, Vernacular Speech

## INTRODUCTION

Pejoration is characterized as a type of lexical semantic change. Words acquire unfavorable connotations that are not inherent in their historically original meaning scope. Pejoration in Egyptian Arabic has recently become a problematic linguistic phenomenon. It has contributed to widening the lexical gap between Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. It also widens the gap between MSA and ECA. Lexical semantic change is often coupled with polysemy, in which one word may have more than one sense. These new senses can continue to coexist stably with the older ones, or they may supplant earlier senses, thereby “taking over” the meaning of the word” (Dubossarsky, 2016). Al-aboudi remarks that the contemporary Arab audience is likely to misunderstand the original message of the traditional and religious texts because the lexical items in classical and traditional texts have undergone lexical semantic change. For example, Zaydan stated that the noun “ayn” has 35 senses in classical Arabic. The purpose of the present study therefore is to investigate pejoration in Egyptian Arabic from a historical and sociolinguistic perspective and it tries to answer the following questions: How are Arabic lexical items historically changed? How is the pejorative meaning different from MSA and fusha? How can the pejorative meaning affect the collective consciousness of ordinary people and replace the original meaning? How can pejoration historically affect ordinary people’s reception of classical and religious Arabic texts? What are the major causes of pejoration in Egyptian Arabic?.

The study aims to investigate the impact of dominating ethics and value systems on pejoration in Egyptian Arabic. The current study has to review critically the Western theory of semantics that addresses pejoration in order to fill in such a clear gap in the Arabic studies of pejoration. In Egyptian Arabic, there are many moral lexical items the meanings of which have been derogated, like “*tayib*,” (good), “*baraka*,” (bliss) *ibn halal*, (dutiful son) “*sheikh*,” (title given to highly respected elderly people) “*pasha*” (a Turkish title given to the elite and rich people) and *tawil al'aid*, (generous). These words have recently acquired negative connotations. In Egyptian Arabic, *tayib* refers to a foolish person. *Baraka* has also recently acquired a negative connotation, and it refers to an impotent person.

Classical Arabic poetry includes numerous lexical items the meanings of which have recently been degraded in Egyptian Arabic. *Al-mutanabi* says: *Al-khāil wā la-lāial wā al-bāiyd`a*

*tā'rifūni wā al-sāif wā al-rūmh wā al-qūrtās wā al-qalam.* The Arabic lexical item, *al-qūrtās* is used in lineal-mutanabi with the meaning of parchment. However, *al-qūrtās* has recently been degraded, and it has become equivalent to “a bag made of paper,” and “*al-qūrtās*” also means “to fool or deceive someone.” In *Al-mutanabi's* Diwan entitled, *Gharib Ka-Saleh fī thamūd*, there are several lexical items whose connotations have been degraded. For example, in the following line, *kam qatīl kama qūtalat shahīd lūbayid altūla wā ward alkhūdud*, the classical Arabic word *altūla* means neck. However, it has recently derogated and has become equivalent to “painting.” *Al-aboudi* remarked that while he was working on his dictionary of vernacular speech, searching for the origins of some vernacular words, he found out that the majority of the colloquial words had their roots in Classical Arabic. The colloquial speech was developed from classical roots. The majority of the colloquial words were used frequently in Classical Arabic poetry and in the Classical Arabic texts.

Anis addresses the causes of pejoration in the Arabic language and attributed pejoration to a number of factors such as the degradation of political, economic and social conditions. He provides the following example: the lexical item *hajib* was used in Andalusia with the meaning of prime minister; however, it has been derogated to mean doorman. He further adds that pejoration can result from psychological and emotional conditions as the lexical item may have negative connotations because it may be related to dirtiness or sexuality. Languages may lose some of their lexical items denoting a striking dirtiness or sexual instinct, as these terms may vanish or get replaced by more ambiguous words in order to bestow a euphemistic meaning. It seems that traditional Arabic studies have focused their attention on polysemy without considering pejoration as a type of semantic lexical change. In addition, modern Arabic studies dealing with pejoration were abstract in nature and did not examine it exhaustively in the Arabic language. These studies were short of using an explicit approach for examining pejoration in Arabic, as they were based on highlighting pejoration in some lexical Arabic items.

### The Problem of Research

Pejoration in Modern Egyptian Arabic with a particular emphasis on moral expression and terms is a controversial and problematic issue. In Egyptian Arabic, there are many words whose meanings have changed across time and space. A major problem faced by lexicographers is implicit in the difficulty arisen from perceiving the causes of pejoration and whether these causes are represented by frequency, by history, by degree of establishment, by metaphorical extensions, and so forth. This view was held by Anis as he remarks that Arab linguists are unable to identify the causes of semantic change of many contemporary words. The causes of semantic change have been an ambiguous issue and the exact causes for these changes have not been determined yet. There are several causes for semantic change which may include historical, social, cultural factors and so on.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have focused on the issue of typologising semantic changes (Kleparski, 1986; Kleparski, 1988; Kiełtyka, 2005; Grygiel & Kleparski, 2007), which are cross-referenced to the evaluative category of semantic change. The first traditional typology of semantic changes is the division into changes whose result is a more positive meaning so-called melioration and those which give a more negative meaning known as pejoration. Widening, narrowing and transfer are among the most important types of semantic change. Kochman & Kleparski (2011) write:

Evaluative changes are traditionally (Rayevska, 1979; Kleparski, 1986; 1988; 1990) divided into two predominant types of meaning development, that is amelioration/elevation and pejoration/degradation. These changes, based on ethical and/or moral considerations, emerge from the axiological bias in semantic research predominant in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

The concept of widening is inextricably related to the historical development and change in meaning of words, as a word may acquire new connotations while travelling across space and time. The idea of historical development of the lexical items draws heavily on the fact that the meaning of the words is shaped by the worldview. This study has specifically focused on the negative semantic change where there are many Egyptian Arabic words, the classical meaning of which are categorized under the rubric of moral words, are changed into immoral words." In this respect, Culpeper et al. (2008) write:

As an example of pejoration, consider that English sinister was derived from Latin, where the word did not carry any negative meaning but simply meant 'left'. (It may well be relevant, though, that many of you would refer to your left hand as your 'bad hand').

Pejoration is considered to be a form of degradation of meaning into negative sense. The causes of meaning degradation are difficult to identify. "In terminological dictionaries, you will find that pejoration is defined as a semantic property of verbal expressions triggering negative or derogatory connotations. Often, pejoration is characterized as a type of lexical semantic change" (Finkbeiner, 2016). The negative semantic shift falls when words of higher and lofty positions turn into lower and degraded position. In other words, pejoration falls when words of higher status both ethically and prestigiously have historically been degraded into lower status." It occurs when a word is used to express negatively loaded values not inherent in its historically original (or historically prior) meaning scope" (Borkoska, 2007). Grygiel & Kleparski note that the idea of pejoration is made through extralinguistic elements reflected in the semantics of the world that engulf the gap between meaning and the external world.

Meillet explains that social dialectal factors are among the most important causes of semantic change, as semantic change is activated through the social groups whose communicative system is the major cause of semantic change, which is fueled by various types of human interactions. In the same vein, Ullmann argues that meaning is reproduced out of interrelated and renewed relationship between name and sense as any change occurs to such a type of relationship would enforce the process of semantic change. This intertwined relationship is fuelled by all forms of oral communication. That is to say, "if meaning is seen as a mutual relationship existing between name and sense, then a semantic change will occur whenever a new name becomes attached to a sense and a new sense to a name" (Ullmann, 1957). A word is made up of two major components; name and sense that if a word is regarded to be a union of form (name) and content (sense), the semantic change can be effected when either of which change. Such a type of casual relationship between pejoration and the circumstantial realities would reflect that idea that lexical items in themselves are just lifeless objects that derive their senses from people's perception of the function of the word in relation to something else. This would bring us to an important finding that semantic change is relational in nature in which the newly developed meanings are invented and renewed in relation to a new existing reality, which has something in common with the existing realities. According to Rayevska (1979), this process pertains to those words that have precise denotation (specific names for things), however, during their history, the words lose their denotation and the word's meaning becomes extended and generalized. However, the idea of narrowing is meant to narrow the use of a more broad term and turns it into a more specialized word.

Rayevska defines narrowing of meaning as the special usage of words in terms of a specific context. The third category is referred to as transfer of meaning. Transfer of meaning is a long process of meaning development and change in which a new meaning or a new concept is given to the word due to conceptual association between the older meaning and the new meaning. Many studies addressing the issue of positive and negative semantic changes have attributed the causes of these changes to the social changes and the existing social norms dominating society and the prevalent cultural values, which largely play a pivotal role in either elevating or degrading words. Kleparski remarks that the meaning pejoration is made of social pejoration, aesthetic pejoration, behavioral pejoration, and moral pejoration. Hickey states that there are no clear nor definite studies explaining why language changes. Most results are

speculative in nature with little proof and few direct answers. As such, historical linguistics has traditionally focused on how languages change and not why they do so. This apparently reflects the significance of the current study, the major task of which is to determine the causes of semantic shift in modern Egyptian Arabic. Several studies have been published dealing with phonological innovation and change in various languages and dialects, but there have not been many dealing with semantic change in classical or colloquial Arabic.

There are numerous studies dealing with pejoration in various languages and dialects, but there is a scarcity of studies on pejoration in classical and colloquial Arabic. Finkbeiner define pejoration as a semantic property of verbal expressions triggering negative or derogatory connotations". Gutzmann states that pejoration can be subsumed under the category of expressives. Expressives are defined as a set of words and expressions that convey evaluative attitude, emotions with a high degree of affectedness.

## **Approach**

In order to address the questions of the study and its problems, which are focused on historical pejoration of moral and neutral lexical items, this study used a historical semantic framework of analysis known as 'historical-philological semantics' as its approach. More specifically, the study draws heavily on Stetkevych's theoretical approach, which is best described as a lexical-historical approach that seems to be appropriate to the current study. In this way, sociolinguistic approach was also considered in the current study as it adopted the sociolinguist Jennifer Coates' principle entailing that linguistic change as occurring in the context of linguistic heterogeneity. She explains that "linguistic change can be said to have taken place when a new linguistic form, used by some sub-group within a speech community, is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm". Contextual realities surrounding the diachronic development of lexical items are to be taken into consideration, including the conceptual role of semantics through which pejoration can be identified by the recognition of implications, modeling, inference, labeling, and categorization. Stetkevych explains that Arabic neologisms are molded on the basis of two criteria: derivations and semantic extensions. However, semantic extension seems to be "loose and uninformative" (Beeston, 1972). Therefore, semantic extension in pejoration is always coupled with historical change. That is to say, pejoration is extended historically. Such a process of historical extension can be metaphorical, cultural, social, aesthetic, behavioural or moral. Therefore, the study adopts Kleparski's classification of pejoration, which is made up of the following elements; social pejoration, aesthetic pejoration, behavioural pejoration, and moral pejoration. However, it specifically focuses on social pejoration, behavioural pejoration and moral pejoration. Through resorting to the historical semantic framework of analysis, the study focuses on tracing pejoration in different types of semantic fields, like moral semantic field, sexual semantic field, vituperative terms and expressions semantic field, in contemporary Egyptian Arabic.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Since there has not been an online corpus tracing the historical change of Arabic words, the study resorted to collecting the data manually in an attempt to make a small corpus of the historical development of some Arabic words. The sample of the study is prepared manually, and its data is representative. That is to say, the sample used in this study is relatively small, but it includes a variety of examples, which fits the purpose of the study.

The data used in the sample of the study is obtained from two main sources. The first source focuses on historically tracing pejoration in Egyptian vernacular speech obtained through feedback from people, fiction, non-fiction, newspaper, movies, and TV shows. The second source draws on historically tracing pejoration occurring to a set of classical Arabic words and how different their meanings are from the past to the present. The relevance of the data analysed was drawn from the idea of how this data is directly related to pejoration. It is more appropriate

for this study to include lexical items taken from different genres, which reveals the effect of ethical values on the Egyptian society through tracing their speech and understanding of Arabic, and reception of traditional and religious texts. The study concentrates on oral data that pertains directly to pejoration occurring to moral words.

The chosen data are representative of how words of ethical semantic values or even of neutral values have undergone a pejorative condition. In addition, data is predominately obtained from real-life communications because the degradation of moral and neutral words occurs in authentic, actual and tested data. In other words, data are taken from larger contexts as "the context plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context" (Halliday, 1978). The sample of the study classifies data in terms of their semantic fields and in terms of the interaction of multiple properties. A semantic field is a set of lexemes which cover a certain conceptual domain and which bear certain specifiable relations to another. The data collected in the sample of the study is taken from "real data," that is, actual instances of oral or written communication as opposed to contrived or made-up data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis focuses on exploring how moral and neutral lexical items have recently been turned into degraded terms and expressions in relation to their own contexts. Pejoration in Egyptian Arabic can be subsumed under the following categories: moral pejoration, behavioral and social pejoration. Social, moral and behavioral pejoration includes the following categories:

- Sexually pejorative words,
- Pejorative words used to describe woman.
- pejorative words used to label crimes, fraud and immoral acts,
- Pejorative words used to strip neutral and religious words off their moral and ethical values.
- Pejorative words used to belittle highly ethical professions like teaching, medical care jobs, preachers and so on.

### Moral Pejoration: Examples of Sexually Pejorative Words

The sexually pejorative words are divided into the following categories: the first category is represented in a set of action verbs that connote the process of sexual intercourse which literally means "to fornicate": *libis, nāk, daq, rikb, zaghab, dakhlah, farah*. The second category is based on nouns that refer to woman as a prostitute: *Qāhāba, lābwaha, sārūkh, khibra, Shūmal, Mamhūnah, Makawah, a'hir, fajir*. Let us consider the following dialogue taken from an Egyptian movie titled, "Al-tagraba Al-dinmarkyia," Danish Experience, starred by Adel Imam, which can give an example of how neutral words can be degraded and acquire sexual connotations through metaphorical extension of meaning.

*Adel Imam: Bahaa (the groom) shāklūh mish hā-yashārfana il-lilādi, bilkūtūr ha-yadīha missed call, būs yad inta wā hūa, awaz youm gawzkūm, kul wahid fīkim yūa'f fī alkūsha dhai al-'asd*

Bahaa, it seems that he will not be able to deflower her tonight; instead he will give her a missed call. Look, my boys, I want you to be like lions at your wedding parties.

*His son: bos ya-bābā, al-arūsa dhai al-asdah.*

Look my father, the bride seems to be like a lioness (connotative of a whore)

*The father: al-wād bāyin alīh ha-yahnag il-lilādi*

The groom seems to be unable to deflower the bride.

*The bride: hahhhhhha (laughs with a sexual overtone)*

The bride laughed with sexual overtones staring at the family members of Imam.

*The father and his sons: il-bint dī khibra, khibra, khibra, al-ad'a di mish ad'a awal dūkhla.*

She is an unchaste girl, a slut, a slut; it seems from her posture that she is not a virgin.

Abbas (Stepfather of the bride: īb, īb, a'likūm, intum gayaīn ti-bawzū al-farh.

Shame upon you! Shame upon you! you have come to spoil the wedding party.

The father (addressing Hamdi, the father of the groom): shūf ya –hamdi ana amīl khatīrk, wa-khatīr - ibnak, wa-khatīr ilbint al-khibra di, il dhai alas!; fāg'ah al-gad'a dah a'm hābib fina dhai al-wābūr, mīn dah- ya-hamdi?

Look, Hamdi, I am just considering your feelings, the feelings of your son, and the feelings of this beautiful slut girl. However, this man started shouting suddenly at us out of the blue. Who is this man?

*Hamdi: da Abbas, jūz um al-arūsa.*

He is Abbas, the stepfather of the bride.

*The father: ah hūa dah al-mūrabīha, ashan kīda il-bint tīla't khibra.*

Oh, he is the one who brought her up so that she becomes a slut.

*The father addressing the bride: mish enit khibra yahabibi*

Lol, aren't you a slut?

*The bride: ah ana khibra ahi'a ahi'a, ah'a*

Yes, I am a slut! Hahahha.

The stepfather: khibra īh ya u'staz, īhna arūstana khibra, dī safalah, wa l'alt adab.

Slut, what do you mean sir? You mean that our pride is slut? What you say is brusque and lacking decorum.

Before analysing the dialogue, it is important to set the background to the dialogue. The context is a wedding party where Adel Imam and his four sons are present. The situation is that the bride starts dancing in a sexual style before the attendees which attracts the attention of Imam's family. The whole situation was comic and cynical. A clear example of how words of positive semantic values have recently been degraded and have acquired sexual connotation is the Arabic word "khibra" which is frequently used in the above dialogue. In Lisan Alarab Lexicon, "khibra" is equivalent to knowledge, food and one's own share of meat. In Modern standard Arabic, it is equivalent to (the process of getting) knowledge or skill from doing, seeing, or feeling things. In vernacular Egyptian speech, the noun "khibra" converts into adjective and becomes equivalent to "slut".

What is obviously remarked is that the context has reshaped and colored the meaning of a lexical item and made it compatible with the current socio-political realities. However, the idea to be addressed is why khibra is used frequently in the media and in vernacular speech with the meaning of slut. Mills attributes the semantic change occurring to the lexical items dealing with women to dominating social and culture values. In addition, the sexual connotation in khibra can be interpreted in relation to conceptual metaphor. Khibra is equivalent to an expert. The concept of experience is degraded to imply sexual connotation. As such, "khibra" has become equivalent to a sexually active woman who is experienced in having lavish promiscuous sexual relationships.

The lexical item, yasharfana, which is derived from the root, sharaf, an equivalent of "honor", has been contextually degraded to mean "to deflower his groom". The concept of honor

is no longer focused on the chastity of the girl, but it has come to include the ability of groom to deflower his bride at the night of the wedding party. This may reflect the change of the value system and the mores of the contemporary Egyptian society. In the classical Arab Community, the concept of honor has nothing to do with the ability of the groom to deflower his bride. Patil writes that "what is even more remarkable is that the sharaf of men depends almost entirely on the ird of the women of their family. True, a man can lose his sharaf by showing lack of bravery or by lack of hospitality". In the ancient Arabic culture, "honor" refers to courage, hospitality, pride, dignity and protecting the ird. However, in contemporary Egyptian Arabic, the scope of meanings has been enlarged to include even sexual connotation.

The question posed here is: how can the audiences' collective minds detect the sexual connotation in such moral terms and expressions such as *khirba* & *sharaf*? How can Egyptians perceive moral terms and expressions with the meaning of unchaste girl, sexually perverted girl? Most importantly, why is "khibra" given such a sexual and immoral connotation despite the fact that the term in itself has no connection with sex or sexuality? This can be analysed in connection with the theory of Conceptual Blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998; 2002) which helps explain the complex reasoning process that provides the juxtaposition of differing pragmatic associations found in such a term as *khibra*.

It seems that the concept of prostitution in Egyptian culture has been subject to a long process of pejoration where numerous words of positive connotations have derogated to become equivalents of whore. There are many words in classical Arabic that describe woman as a prostitute like; *a'hir*, *mūmis*, *qāhāba*, *bāghyia*, *fāhisha* and so on. These descriptions were specifically used in the classical Arabic language. However, the word prostitute has taken different names in modern standard Arabic like *mītinaka*, *sāqita*, *khībra*, *shārmūta*, *hayiga*, *mīkayfah*, *nīgsaha*, *fāyrah*, *sūkhna*, *khafīfah*. The idea is that positive lexical items designating women have been charged with negative elements. The lexical item "binī" girl, has been phonologically changed into "bit" which is an insulting word used to belittle the social status of girls, particularly in rustic areas in Upper Egypt. In the same vein, the word *imar'ah*, which is equivalent to woman, has been recently degraded to be used as a means of subjugation and humiliation of women, and is almost similar to concubine and it has phonologically changed to "marah" which is used to stress the lower social status of woman.

The domain of the animals provides a rich source for negatively charged meanings describing women. The lexical item, *būma* (owl) is given to describe a gloomy and ominous woman who turns the life of her husband into hell. *Mi'za* (goat) refers to an ugly woman in the Egyptian culture. *Qūta* (kitty) refers to a sexually attractive woman. *Qalbah*, feminine dog, means bitch. *Gamūsa*, buffalo, refers to a foolish and bad looking woman. *Baqara*, cow, refers to a fat, naïve, rustic woman. Language cannot be processed without being related to its context; therefore, any attempt to understand why a neutral or positive word turns negative should be based on "a series of cognitive primitives such as prototype-based reasoning, including the activation of stereotypes, ideal cases, and radial categories" (Lakoff, 1987). Ožóg states that culture is responsible for shaping language in the minds of the receptors through its value system. In turn, Bynon (1983) stresses that:

It must not, on the other hand, be forgotten that the lexicon is the part of a language which has the most direct links with the spiritual and material culture of its speakers and that semantic developments may only be comprehensible by reference to the cultural background. (63)

The social and cultural values of a society, the socio-economic realities, and public discourse constitute the collective consciousness of people, which is mainly responsible for shaping the conceptual system of the users of a particular language. The cultural and moral disintegration and sheer condition of paradoxical value systems are always accompanied with relegating ethical and moral expressions to a degraded and lower status. The idea of repression including sexual, social, and political repressions is often coupled with a psychological projection, which

is first reflected through pejorative meanings. The sexual repression entails charging neutral and moral words with sexual connotations.

### Behavioural Pejoration

Pejoration is often linked to degraded behaviors and manners. Some moral or neutral lexical items may be degraded to connote illegal, sexual or immoral behaviors. The Arabic word “*bārid*” is another example. In *Lisan Alarab*, it means cold and it is always used with water and weather; so Arab speaker may say “*m'a bārid*” which means cold water. In vernacular and colloquial speech, it is used to describe a girl or lady who is not sexually excited. In *lessan Alarab*, the noun, “a’her” is used to describe man as adulterous and woman as adulteress. In MSA, such a word is no longer used to describe man as adulterous as it describes only woman as adulteress. The word “*la’uib*” refers to an elegant and beautiful woman and it also refers to “playful” man. However, it has been derogated to be equivalent of coquettish woman and it has not been used to describe man as playful nor does it describe man as sexy. That is to say, some lexical items have derogated when describing women, but they maintain their positive connotation when describing man.

### Pejorative Words Used to Strip Neutral and Religious Words off Their Moral and Ethical Values

Consider how semantic change affects the meaning of the following Arabic adjective:  
Nāzīh

A: In *Lisan Al'arab* dictionary, *Nāzīh* means someone who is polite, honest, and virtuous.  
Ex: Yajib an yākūn almurashah *Nāzīh*, which means that the candidate should be honest.

B: In colloquial Egyptian language of media, TV shows, movies, *Nāzīh* means spendthrift.  
Ex: Yajib an yākūn almurashah *Nāzīh*, which means that “the candidate should be a spendthrift”.

The meaning of *Nāzīh* is degraded and the recipient understands a different message from the original message intended by the author. It has reversed the message of the speaker as instead of describing the candidate as honest and committed, it describes him as being extravagant. The idea is that the meaning of *Nāzīh* has degraded to reflect deteriorated qualities other than honesty and commitment. Other examples include words like “*tayab*,” “*habib*,” “*ahabal*,” and so on. It seems that language is a social phenomenon through which people express their thoughts and the speaker is usually motivated by his/her feelings like love and hate while choosing and articulating his/her language (abushirifa, 1989). The semantic degradation in the above example can be explained in connection with the psycholinguistic-oriented approach adopted by Bréal (1897), as he remarks that among the causes of semantic degradation is the malicious nature and wickedness of humans. Another example of pejoration in religious terms includes “*barka*”, which refers to God’s bliss. This word has degraded to refer to a sexually impotent man, and sometimes it refers to a naïve or foolish man.

### Pejoration of Unpleasant Words

Some unpleasant words in Arabic have recently been replaced by different lexical items expressing a similar meaning. Pejoration has become a means of euphemism where harsh, impolite, and unpleasant words are substituted by polite and indirect expressions communicating a similar message. The word “*bārbur*” is an example taken from fusha. *Lisan Alarab* explains that “*bārbur*” is originally a classical Arabic word, which is semantically degraded. In classical Arabic, “*bārbur*” means the grass taken from the arable land, known as al-bar. In addition, *barbara* is also the voice of the goat which is notorious for its noisiness and strangeness. This



word has been semantically degraded to mean *mukhat*, which is an equivalent of nasal mucus. The Arabic word *bārbur* has almost disappeared and been substituted with *mukhat*. *Bārbur* has recently been designated as an insulting, abusive and vulgar expression. It is infrequently used among very close friends where rules of social etiquette are not heavily stressed. These words are notorious for permanent semantic change as no sooner had they been used by people than they started to vanish due to rules of social etiquette as they are replaced by other expressions from the Arabic language or from foreign languages. Another example is represented in the expressions of urination and defecation. This is clearly reflected in the following item: *al-kānīf* is a classical word which means toilet, and it was replaced by *al-kursi*, *al-mistrah*, *bayat al-raha*, *almirhad*, *kabanīh*, which all mean restroom, bathroom or toilet.

### Pejorative Words for Describing Moral Crimes

The Egyptian vernacular speech abounds with pejorative words that describe crimes and illegal and unethical acts. For example, the Arabic word *shai* which means tea, is degraded to refer to a bribe. This kind of bribe is only given to the junior governmental employees in order to complete the documents and the procedures of the Egyptian citizens. *Tahat altarbyiaza* is another meaning for *bribe*, but it is used to show that the value of bribe is big and it is given to the senior governmental officials.

It is noticed that the pejoration process of moral lexical items has increased since later years in the 20th century. It seems that pejoration is affected by the surrounding realities and the societal schema of semantically degraded words. The socially degraded words are conceptually constituted into the minds of the receptors due to changes in the social structure of societies in which morals and ethics have deteriorated and lost their value in the eyes of people. Miller and Swift argue that language is a cultural vehicle that reflects the current societal values. Language has turned into a vehicle that transmits the ideology of a society and its culture, as the lines of demarcation between culture and language have disappeared. Actually, language has not derogated, but the societal and cultural values have. In turn, Bynon stresses that: "the lexicon is the part of a language which has the most direct links with the spiritual and material culture of its speakers and semantic developments may only be comprehensible by reference to the cultural background.(70)" The degradation in meaning of Egyptian words can be attributed to two major causes, which are closely interdependent. The first major cause is the norms of socialization prevalent in the society, and the second is the attitude of individuals. The attitudes of individuals in a certain society are largely influenced by the norms of the prevalent social values and ethics.

These social norms, value systems and ethics would considerably shape the speakers' perceptions of lexical items. Dr Johnson in the Preface to his Dictionary remarks that there is a reciprocal relationship between the prevailed ethics of nations and their language, as he puts it in the following: "[...] tongues like governments have a natural tendency to degeneration [...]. It is incident to words as their authors to degenerate from their ancestors". Trench (1892) asserts that common ethical values and morality are mainly responsible for reshaping the moral words. Borkowska & Kleparski (2007) write:

Note that society often reverses itself over the course of time, and words – which were once disapproved of – may become respectable while others that had social favour may lose it. The history of the word knight provides a good illustration of this process. Originally, in Anglo-Saxon times knight meant merely 'a boy',<sup>11</sup> and through military and feudal associations it came to its later user as a title of rank. Likewise, the term minister has undergone the process of elevation, since in earlier times it meant 'servant' and nowadays it is used in the sense 'a head of the government department' or 'a diplomatic agent usually ranking below and ambassador, representing a state or sovereign in a foreign country'(37).

The disintegration of cultural values, degradation of social ties, the emergence of deceptive religious values which invites people to believe in superficialities and to ignore the essence of issues, the lack of social justice and freedom of faith, and sexual repression lead to pejoration in moral lexical items where highly positive words like *tayib and baraka* acquire negative connotations (see Appendix 1). It may be posited that the degradation of moral lexical items is a kind of unconscious revolt against the collapse of these values into their depth. When the value system collapses, moral and ethical values are regarded by societies as signs of vulnerability, weakness, naivety, and foolishness. Therefore, people project their negative reception of the collapsed value system unconsciously onto the moral lexical items and strip these terms of their hitherto positive connotations and replace them with distinctly negative connotations. As early as in the 1930s, Stern observed that pejorative developments are more emotive in character than ameliorative changes and that the causes triggering pejorative extensions are to be sought in circumstances when the user of the language finds one of the characteristics of the referent disadvantageous, contemptible or ridiculous (411). The surrounding conditions, the circumstantial realities, the dominating cultural values, and the socioeconomic realities impose different realities that make words acquire new connotations that are mostly negative in order to make language consistent with its surrounding realities.

## CONCLUSION

In Egyptian Arabic, pejoration is extensively reflected in sexually connotative lexical items. Pejorative lexical items are excessively demonstrated in words describing woman. In addition, pejorative lexical items are also shown excessively in moral lexical items. Pejoration has been largely accelerated in Egyptian Arabic since the beginning of the 21st century. Pejoration has been clearly shown in vernacular speech and colloquialism. People are largely influenced by colloquial speech. They start understanding classical and religious texts from their colloquial background rather than their MSA and classical texts. The meaning of lexical items in colloquialism has deviated from the classical Arabic and MSA. The morally pejorative words contradict their original meanings both ethically and semantically. In some cases, a pejorative meaning can completely substitute the original meaning in both formal Arabic and in vernacular speech. Therefore, it is likely that contemporary Arab audiences will not understand the original meaning of the classical and formal texts nor can they decipher the oral religious or cultural message that uses formal Arabic as a medium of communication. Many of the Classical Arabic words used in religious and traditional manuscripts have been subjected to pejoration in meaning, which can explain the reasons behind the modern vagueness of some traditional texts. Therefore, another significant finding of the current study is that it draws the attention of the historical linguists to tracing pejoration in the Classical Arabic texts in order to have an accurate understanding and precise interpretation of the ambiguous and vague messages of these texts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is supported by Deanship of Scientific research Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University.

## REFERENCES

- Abu Shirifa, A, Laqi, H & Ghatasha, D. (1989). *Ilm Aldālā and Alm'ajmAl'arabi*. DarAlfikir, Baghdad.
- Al-aboudi, N. (143). Dictionary of colloquial lexical items derived from Fusha lexical roots. Riyadh: King Abdul-Aziz Public Library.
- Al-mutnabi, A. (1983). *Diwan Al-mutanbi*. Beirut: Dar Beirut Publishing House.
- Anis, I. (1976). *Dālālat Al-'alfadh*. Cairo: Anglo Publishing House.
- Ayan, A. (n.d). The tradition of slaves in ruling the contemporary Egypt: A study in historical social science. Cairo.
- Beeston, A.F.L. (1972). The modern arabic literary language: lexical and stylistic developments. *In: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 35, 138-141.
- Boretzky, P. (1977). *Introduction to historical linguistics*. Reinbek: Rowoholt TaschenbuchVerlag, GmbH.

- Borkowska, P., & Grzegorz, A.K. (2007). It befalls words to fall down: Pejoration as a type of semantic change. *Zezyt*, 47(2007): 33-50.
- Bréal, M. (1879). *The scientific review of France and Abroad*.
- Bynon, T. (1983). *Historical linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coates, J. (1993). *Women, men and language: A sociolinguistic account of gender differences in language*. London: Studies in language and linguistics.
- Culpeper, J., Kerswill, P., Wodak, R., McEnery, A & Katamba, F. (2008). *English language: Description, variation and context*. London: Palgrave.
- Culpeper, J., Katamba, F., Kerswill, P., Wodak, R., & McEnery, T. (2009). *English language: Description, variation and context*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2004). *Understanding words that wound*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Dubossarsky, H., Tsvetkov, Y., Dyer, C., & Grossman, E. (2015). A bottom up approach to category mapping and meaning change. *Proceedings of the NetWords Final Conference*.
- Dominguez, P.J.Ch. (2007). Linguistic interdiction: Its status question is and possible future research lines. *Language Sciences*, 31(4), 428-446.
- Finkbeiner, R., Meibauer, J., & Wiese, H. (2016). *What is pejoration, and how can it be expressed in language?* Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing.
- Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Grygiel, M., & Kleparski, G.A. (2007). Main trends in historical semantics.
- Gutzmann, D. (2013). *Expressives and beyond. An introduction to varieties of use conditional meaning*. Leiden: Brill.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hare, M. (1952). *The language of morals*. London: Oxford Clarendon Press.
- Hickey, R. (2010). *Eighteenth-century English: Ideology and change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kamboj, J.L. (1986). *Semantic change in Sanskrit*. Delhi: Nirman Prakashan.
- Kiełtyka, R. (2005). The axiological-cognitive analysis of the evaluative developments in the domain of "equidae": A pilot study. *Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, 3(25), 59-75.
- Kleparski, G.A. (1986). *Semantic change and componential analysis*. An inquiry in pejorative developments in English. Regensburg: Friedrich PustetVerlag.
- Kleparski, G.A. (1988). Semantic change and semantic components: A study of English evaluative developments in the domain of humans.
- Kleparski, G.A. (1990). *Semantic change in English: A study of evaluative developments in the domain of humans*. Lublin: The Catholic University of Lublin Printing House.
- Kochman-Haładaj, B., & Kleparski, G.A. (2011). *On pejoration of women terms in the history of english*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Langton, R. (2012). Beyond belief: Pragmatics in hate speech and pornography.
- Langton, R., Haslanger, S., & Anderson, L. (2012). *Language and race: The routledge companion to philosophy of language*. New York: Routledge.
- Lushin, N. (2008). Mabahith in Ilm Al-ughawaaManahagAlbahath Al-lughwi. Alexandria: Al-makatabAlgamaiAlhadith.
- Maitra, I., & McGowan, M.K. (2012). *Speech and harm: Controversies over free speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meillet, A. (1974). *How the words change their purpose*. On the theory of language change.
- Meibauer, J. (2009). *Implicature*. In: *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics, (2nd edition)*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Miller, C., & Swift, K. (1976). *Words and women*. New York: Anchor Press.
- Ożóg, K. (2001). *The Polish language at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries: selected issues*. Rzeszów: Phrase.
- Pati, R. (2014). *The Arab mind*. USA: Recovery Resources Press.
- Paul, H. (1880). *Principles of the history of language, (9th edition)*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Potts, C. (2007). The expressive dimension. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 33, 165-198.
- Rayevska, N.M. (1979). *English lexicology*. Kiev: VyscaSkola Publishers.
- Stern, G. (1931). *Meaning and change of meaning: With special reference to the english language*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Stetkevych, J. (2006). *The modern Arabic literary language: Lexical and stylistic developments*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Stevick, R.D. (1968). *English and its history: The evolution of language*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Trench, R. (1892). *The study of words*. Ann Arbor: Gryphon Books.
- Ullmann, S. (1952). *Words and their use*. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc.
- Ullmann, S. (1957). *The principles of semantics*. Glasgow: Jackson, Son and Co.
- Warren, B. (1992). *Sense developments: A contrastive study of the developments of slang sense and novel standard senses in English*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International.
- Zaydān, J. (1957). *The history of Arabic literature*.