

# **Descriptive Study on Lexical Changes of Meaning of Old English Nouns in Jonathan Slocum's Corpus and Modern English Nouns in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, Seventh Edition 2005**

*(Deskripsi tentang Perubahan Makna Kata Benda Bahasa Inggris Kuno di Korpus Jonathan Slocum dan Kata Benda Bahasa Inggris Modern di Kamus Oxford Advanced Learner, Edisi Ke VII 2005)*

Nurul Hikmah, Hadiri, Hari Supriono.  
English Department, Faculty of Letters, Jember University (UNEJ)  
Jln. Kalimantan 37 Jember 68121  
E-Mail: [iyick.wina@yahoo.com](mailto:iyick.wina@yahoo.com)

## **Abstrak**

*Kajian ini fokus pada perubahan lexical, khususnya perubahan makna kata-nya. Kata benda bahasa Inggris kuno yang digunakan adalah korpus yang disusun oleh Jonathan Slocum. Tujuan dari kajian ini adalah untuk menunjukkan bahwa perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggris selalu mengalami perubahan, pertumbuhan dan rusak/hilang. Teori yang diterapkan dalam kajian ini adalah teori Baugh dan Cable yang menyatakan bahwa dalam perkembangannya, sebuah kata akan mengalami perubahan makna meluas, menyempit, penyoratif (membaik) dan amelioratif (memburuk). Jenis data dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif. Kajian ini hanya menganalisis kata yang mengalami perubahan makna meluas dan menyempit. Dari 59 kata benda Bahasa Inggris kuno yang ditemukan, terdapat 45 kata benda yang mengalami perubahan makna meluas dan 14 kata benda yang mengalami perubahan makna menyempit. Selanjutnya, dari kaca mata sejarah alasan perubahan makna pada kosakata bahasa Inggris kuno adalah karena kondisi negara dan penduduknya sedang tidak stabil—perang dan pengaruh bahasa luar yang masuk dalam bahasa Inggris. Kondisi semacam ini juga didapati dalam kekiniannya sehingga bukan tidak mungkin fenomena perubahan makna dalam Bahasa Inggris akan terus terjadi.*

**Kata kunci:** makna, leksikologi, Bahasa Inggris kuno, Bahasa Inggris modern

## **Abstract**

This study concerns with lexical change, especially semantic change. It investigates the meaning of word changes in selected Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus. The goals of this study are to show that the vocabularies of English are never stable, never static, but are constantly changing, growing and decaying. The theory employed in this study is the Baugh and Cable's theory that in the sense of development, words often undergo certain tendencies, namely: extension or broadening of meaning, narrowing of meaning, degeneration and regeneration. The type of the data is qualitative. This study merely investigates broadening and narrowing tendencies. There are 59 Old English nouns to be described and analyzed. The finding shows from 59 Old English nouns, there are 45 nouns which undergo change of meaning into broadening and only 14 nouns change the meaning into narrowing. Later, diachronically the lexical changes happened due to domestic unrests and the constant influences that the language received. Such situations characterizes the currency of English which facilitate the re-occurrence of the lexical changes in English language vocabularies.

**Keywords:** meaning, lexicology, Old English, Modern English

## **Introduction**

The main changes commonly in the matter of vocabulary are meaning, pronunciation, spelling and a bit in the matter of grammar (Barber, 1993:266). In terms of the

change in meaning, there are many factors that come into play, from the narrowing meaning into the broadening meaning and conversely. According to Baugh and Cable (2002:290) that in the sense of development, words often undergo certain tendencies, namely: extension or broadening

of meaning, narrowing of meaning, degeneration and regeneration. Eventually, the meanings of words may change considerably dramatically that may suggest a completely new lexical entity.

This study concerns with the change of meaning of Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus. Old English is chosen to be the main object of this study because Old English is the first chapter of the diachronic development of the English language. From various perspectives Old and Modern English periods, of course, are different. It invites the writer's interests to analyze the change of meaning of the selected vocabularies relevant to those periods.

The writer formulates some research questions. They are:

1. Which nouns in the Jonathan Slocum's corpus undergo the change of meaning into broadening or narrowing?
2. What areas of language use that cover a large change of meaning of those words?

The purposes of this study are:

1. This research aims at exploring lexicology and lexical changes, particularly the meaning of word changes in selected Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's Corpus.
2. Testing a theory. It means elaborating the theory in every aspects and see if the aspects are well clarified or deconstructed.
3. Showing that the vocabularies of any language, including English, are never stable, never static, but it is constantly changing, growing and decaying—particularly the change of meaning.
4. By studying or comparing the records of Old English and Modern English, particularly the vocabulary, we can see how English has changed in the last two thousands years.

## Research Methodology

In this study, library research is applied to solve the problems. It means that the data are taken from books, articles, journal and essay from internet. Some literary references concerning with the problems and theoretical reviews are also used. Qualitative research is used to explain and explore the information, the data and, to a very limited extent, the socio historical facts behind the use and development of the lexical quality of the lexis. It is used to strengthen the opinion based on the data collected. The qualitative data in this study are the selected Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus taken from <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/engol-EI-X.html>.

After collecting the data, I start to analyze by reading and comprehending the meanings. Those selected Old English nouns will be interpreted and compared with the equivalent meanings in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, Seventh Edition 2005. From the comparison, we can infer which of the nouns in the Jonathan Slocum's corpus undergo the change of meaning

into broadening or narrowing. Later, some areas of language use that cover a large change of meaning of those words will be known by classifying the words which have the same category.

## Results

From the result, it is found that the selected Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's Corpus undergo change of meaning into broadening and narrowing. The analysis shows that 59 Old English nouns have been found in Jonathan Slocum's Corpus. 45 nouns change their meaning into widening or broadening sense. They are; *lond* (realm), *rīce* (reign), *gemōt* (council), *cyning* (king), *æpeling* (nobleman), *ealdor* (elder, parent, prince), *drihten* (lord, prince, ruler), *here* (enemy), *werod* (army), *gūðe* (battle), *sceaþena* (enemy, warrior), *brimmen* (sailor), *þegn* (thane, warrior), *sigle* (brooch, jewel, necklace), *gold* (gold), *gestrēon* (treasure, wealth), *port* (port, harbour), *bisceop* (bishop), *cirice* (church), *candel* (candle), *preost* (priest), *engel* (angel), *papa* (pope), *hālig* (holy), *æra* (artery), *tounge* (tongue) *muð* (mouth), *jaw* (cheek), *heall* (hall), *eard* (home, land), *eorðan* (earth), *bearn* (child), *fæder* (father), *modor* (mother), *gebrōþru* (brother), *feterum* (fetter, shackles), *mōd* (mood, mind, heart), *scomu* (shame), *sorg* (sorrow, grief, distress), *genēat* (goose), *cēapes* (cattle), *gatu* (gate), *duru* (door), *ruf* (roof). Then, 14 nouns undergo change of meaning into specialization or narrowing sense. They are; *cwen* (queen), *bēg* (crown, ring), *hof* (court), *þegn* (thane, warrior), *weard* (guard, keeper, ward), *āre* (honor, favor), *fof/fet* (foot), *hondum* (hand), *heortan* (heart), *nacan* (boat), *hus* (house), *corn* (corn, grain), *earn* (eagle), *bera* (bear). Based on these findings, the writer concludes that Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus are mostly changing their meanings into broadening than narrowing sense.

Later, nouns are classified into some categories by comprehending the meanings. Several categories found, namely: Government and Administration, Army and Navy, Fashion and Food, Building, Religion, House property, Parts of Body, Home, Family, Mental State, Transportation and Animals-related. The area classifications of language use that undergo a large change of broadening and narrowing meaning in Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus are 'Government and Administration', 'Army & Navy', and 'Religion' categories. More specifically, 11 words belong to Government and Administration, 8 words are included into Army and Navy category and 7 words deal with Religion.

## Discussion

This section explains about the discussion of the result of the lexical changes of meaning that occur in the selected Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus. Lexical change is a change in the contents of a lexicon. In this case, the change is in the meaning of a word that is known as semantic change.

Broadening is a process to expand the original meaning of a word to a more general one. As noted above,

there are 59 Old English nouns which are found in Jonathan Slocum's Corpus. From those numbers of nouns, the researcher finds 45 nouns that are undergoing change of meaning into broadening.

To clarify this hypothesis, 45 nouns of the Old English nouns in Jonathan Slocum's corpus are analyzed and compared with Modern English nouns in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Seventh Edition 2005. Those nouns can be seen in the following examples.

Old English nouns which undergo changes the meaning into broadening are *lond* (realm), *rīce* (reign), *hof* (court), *gemōt* (council), *cyning* (king), *ealdor* (elder, parent, prince), and *drihten* (lord, prince, ruler).

Old English *lond* means 'realm, land, country' in Jonathan Slocum's corpus. The word *lond* means 'realm' in Modern English. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 'realm' means 1) an area of activity, interest, or knowledge, 2) (*Informal*) a country ruled by a king or queen (2005:1257).

Old English *rīce* means 'reign, kingdom' in Jonathan Slocum's corpus. The word *rīce* means 'reign' in Modern English. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 'reign' means 1) the period during which a king, queen, emperor, etc. rules. 2) the period during which somebody is in charge of an organization, a team, etc. (2005:1275).

Old English *cyning* means 'king' in Modern English. The word *cyning* in Jonathan Slocum's corpus means 'king', a man who leads the kingdom. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 'king' means

- 1) the male ruler of an independent state has a royal family, 2) a person, an animal or a thing that is thought to be the best or most important of a particular type, 3) the most important piece used in the game of chess that can move one square in any direction, 4) a playing card with the picture of a king on it. (2005:848)

Old English *hof* means 'court' in Jonathan Slocum's corpus. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 'court' means

- 1) *Law*: a. the place where legal trials take place and where chimes, etc. are judged. b. The people in a court, especially those who make the decisions, such as the judge and jury. 2) *For sport*: A place where games such as tennis are played. 3) *Kings/Queens*: a. the official place where kings and queens live. b. The king or queen, their family, and the people who work for them and/or give advice to them. 4) *Buildings*: a. Courtyard. b. Used in the names of blocks of flats or apartment buildings, or of some short streets; (in Britain) used in the name of some large houses. c. A large open section of a building, often with a glass roof. (2005:352)

Those words are changing their meaning into widening or broadening. How can we know that Old English

nouns "*lond*, *rīce*, *hof*, *gemōt*, *cyning*, *ealdor*, and *drihten*" are changing meaning into broadening in Modern English? Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English gives multiple meanings or definitions to each of those words. The meanings of those words are getting richer in its development. Social causes influence the expansion of those meanings. Social condition influences the original function of those words. A lot of activities make the modern people (society) develop the meaning of those words. However, the meaning of the new word is higher or better than the previous meaning. In this case, the quality of the connotative meaning of the words "*lond* (realm), *rīce* (reign), *hof* (court), *gemōt* (council), *cyning* (king), *ealdor* (elder, parent, prince), and *drihten* (lord, prince, ruler)" are positive.

How and why the meaning of nouns above appeared in Old English period? Studying Old English vocabulary opens another case, foreign language influence. It can change words—in the form as well as the meaning. Foreign influences on Old English means there is a contact of English with other languages. In this case, Latin was the most influential language for Old English. Barber explains Old English borrowed a small number of words from other languages, especially for the concepts and institutions of Christianity (1993:122). Yule (2006:187) emphasizes that from the sixth to the eighth century, "there was an extended period during which these Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity and a number of terms from Latin (the language of the religion) came into English at that time".

The unstable condition of the country and the people influenced the meaning of words (nouns) which appeared in the Old English period. For several hundred years, before the Anglo-Saxon came to England and continued the Old English period, they (Anglo-Saxon-Jute) had various relations with the Romans through Latin. Anglo-Saxon acquired a considerable number of Latin words. Latin was the language of a highly regarded civilization, one from which the Anglo Saxons wanted to learn. Contact with the civilization, at first commercial and military, later religious and intellectual (Baugh and Cable, 2002:70). When Old English period is began, England was unstable country. It was until the end of Old English that England still was invaded by foreign kingdoms. This condition contributes a great deal of chances in developing the English language vocabularies which were based mainly from the Germanic language root.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

From the analysis and the result, it can be concluded that: first, from 59 Old English nouns, 45 nouns are undergoing the change of meaning into broadening and 14 nouns undergo the change of meaning into narrowing. Second, based on the relevance of meanings and language use, those nouns are classified into several areas of use. They are government and administration, army navy, and religion. Those are the large area of language use found in Jonathan Slocum's corpus.

Finally, the result of this research is expected to contribute a better conceptual understanding in the issues of



lexical change in English vocabularies. Hopefully by doing this research, we can get a better understanding in language change, in general. The similarities of the factors that situate the lexical changes of the Old English vocabularies may shed light to our current study of the English vocabularies. Our understanding that Modern English vocabularies may also experience the same lexical changes may open further possibilities to acknowledge the future narrowing and broadening of the meanings, and to the greatest extent, any lexical change.

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