



An Analysis of Denotation and Connotation in Chairil Anwar’s Poem

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Abstract

This study primarily investigates denotative and connotative meaning in words. Both of denotation and connotation are helpful for readers of poetry to find the interpretations and implied meaning. This analysis focuses on meaning of words that was taken randomly from a poem. The data is analyzed descriptively using Griffith’s concept about three stages of interpretation, there are literal meaning, explication and implicature. The result shows that a word not only has denotation, but also negative and positive connotation. Both of negative and positive connotations are possible that refer to an expression or a word. The major finding of the study is every word has one connotative meaning either negative or positive.

1. Introduction

Word is a form of expressions that has meaning. People sometimes have their own words to express something special for them, they create several words with particular meaning. There are two types of word meaning, the first type is conceptual or denotative meaning and the second one is connotative meaning (Rababah, 2015). Denotative meaning is a meaning that does not contain any other meanings or values (Saifuddin, 2018), and it is based on dictionary meaning. On the other hand, connotative meaning is meaning with additional value or sense which is indirect and unreal (Saifuddin, 2018a). In addition, denotation is the literal meaning or linguistic meaning of the expression, and connotation is the contrast of denotation which means about social and affective meaning (Finegan, 2008). Therefore, a word may have more than one meaning in its limitation that express people’s thought and feeling beyond the literal meaning (Rao, 2017).

The main aim of this study is to analyze denotative and connotative meaning in a poem. In poetry, there are a lot of manipulation language than the others literary work (Cavanagh, Gillis, & Keown, 2011), then people sometime have some difficulties in understanding and finding the meaning. Therefore, the research objective in this analysis is explaining denotative and connotative meaning of the words (*penjara, bunuh diri, bernyawa, dan menatap*) from “Sebuah Kamar” poem by Chairil Anwar. In addition, Chairil Anwar is one of the best poets in Indonesia with many literary works. As one of the great figures of Indonesian literature, he frequently conveyed his ideas and feelings in form of literary works. Furthermore, both of

denotation and connotation are helpful for the readers of poetry to find the other interpretations and meanings out of their minds. Denotation and connotation help the readers to easily understand the whole meaning of the poem that expressed by the poet (Anindita & Satoto, 2017).

There are a lot of studies that have discussed denotative and connotative meaning. However, those studies mostly investigate and discuss denotative and connotative meaning in song, movie, and prose with several differences and similarities. There are two theses and two journal articles that used qualitative approach in their analysis, but the contents of discussions are different. For instance, Prayitna (2015) in her thesis took Leech's theory to investigate connotative meaning and messages in song. She found that connotation contains word, phrase, and sentence to send the messages in case of motivating and persuasive. Muslimin (2017) in her thesis investigated denotation and connotation in Masha and The Bear cartoon movie with semiotic analysis, she used Roland Barthes theory that related to semiotic. Her discussion showed that connotative and denotative meaning in movie has several functions. Also, Saifuddin (2018) in her research used same theory which is Roland Barthes theory to analyze connotation in Lombok Musical instruments. In addition, a journal article with the same method analyzed about connotative meaning of words in the Jakarta Post online newspaper, the research showed that the headline in news used negative connotation a lot than positive connotation (Candra & Martiarini, 2018).

Some of studies used common words or expression in society as the subject in their research. For example, Anjomshoa and Sadighi (2015) compared the connotation of animal words in English and Persian expressions. In this case, they used semantic and pragmatic approaches to find the comparison in both of English and Persian, the discussion showed that the animal expressions have same connotation, but also different connotation caused by several backgrounds, such as environment, history, religion, and customs. Not only that, there is a journal article about conceptual and connotative meanings of black and white colours (Rabab'ah & Al-Saidat, 2014), taking native speakers from Jordanian Arabic as subject and questionnaire method to investigate the connotation of white and black colours in society, the study showed that white colours has positive connotation, while black has negative connotation.

The object in this study is words (*penjara*, *bunuh diri*, *bernyawa*, dan *menatap*) from a poem with the title "Sebuah Kamar" by Chairil Anwar. This study will use Griffiths' theory in analyzing the denotative and connotative meaning of words in a poem. There are three stages of interpretation, the first stage uses literal meaning to analyze the denotative meaning, and connotative meaning is analyzed using the second and third stage of interpretation which are explicature and implicature (Griffiths, 2006). In his theory, literal meaning is based on the meaning of word in particular language without any others context consideration, whereas explicature is a meaning that related to the textual information of the expression, then implicature tries to find the hinted meaning in particular context. In conclusion, this study will analyze denotation and connotation of words in a poem using Griffith's theory which is dissimilar with the other studies.

A. *Semantics*

One of the theories that can be used to provide in this paper as like as what Ogden and Richard (1996:54) stated that to understand the meaning in a word, or ambiguous words are not easy. We must find it more obviously and deeply in order to make sure that we have the same and appropriate meaning (goleman, daniel; boyatzis, Richard; Mckee, 2016). Meaning is to one of the most ambiguous and most controversial terms in the theory of language. Semantics is the subfield that is devoted to the study of meaning and it is also the study of how people trying to interpret the meaning from the expression, sounds, context and so on. It is often used in ordinary

language for denoting a problem of understanding that comes down to word selection or connotation (Prapanca, 2015). Traditionally, Semantics has included the study of connotative *sense* and denotative *reference* and so on. Therefore, Denotative and connotative are two ways of how the meaning can be suggested as literal meaning or other meaning that is related from one word. Besides, we may also use the semiotics to help us in finding the solution of the problem. However, in this case, we will analyze several words that include into denotative and connotative in poem “Sebuah Kamar by Chairil Anwar using Semantics rules.

B. Denotation

Denotative meaning is the first order meaning which is objective that can be given to symbols. It is by linking directly between the symbols with a reality or the designated phenomenon (Saifuddin, 2018b). Denotation is generally defined as literal meaning or a word that has only one specific meaning. Sometimes, denotation doesn't relate to society, culture, ideology and other aspects and it even does not contain other meanings or values. In other words, denotation is the basic meaning of visual signs. This is the first level of signification (Isfandiyary, 2013). For instance, a word “*home*” in denotative, there is no other meaning except a place where one lives in. The other example is the word ‘rose flower’. Denotative meaning of *rose flower* is plant in flower categories that has thorns in stems and petals and usually red, white, and pink colors, and so on. Denotative meaning is also known as conceptual meaning deals with the core meaning of expression or literal meaning. We can directly find the meaning of the word through the dictionary and direct meaning that makes us automatically understand by the meaning of the word.

C. Connotation

Connotation refers to the wide collection of positive and negative associations that most words carry with them (Elnaili, 2013). Connotation is defined as a word means something else, the additional meaning or sense value contained in a word. It describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotion of their users and the values of their culture. Connotation is the second order meaning that can be given to symbols with reference to cultural values that are therefore on the second level (Saifuddin, 2018c). For instance, a word “*home*” in connotative, it suggests security, love, comfort, and family. It means that connotation is considered one of the methods of describing the meanings of words and the cultural background they carry in the text. It represents different social overtones, cultural implications, and emotional meanings associated with the sign (word) (Elnaili, 2013).

D. Concept of Denotation and Connotation

Words have two basic meanings: denotation and connotation. In English the words are mostly can be used denotatively and connotatively. Denotation has a specific meaning while connotation is an idea that can be associated with a word, a word can be suggested to one or more meanings. Generally, a word can be used in connotative or denotative, it can be positive or negative depending on contextual situation, it means that the usage of words may be good or bad sense, impression, experience, feeling, etc. for example, politicians and advertisers may prefer words with positive connotations in view of expressing their message attractively while it also can be negative connotation with other meaning. In literature, connotation paves way for creativity by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, symbolism, personification etc (Rao & Science, 2017).

Connotation and denotation are not separate, they both exist together. There will be several ways to identify whether the word is included as connotation or denotation. To analysis whether the word is categorized as connotative or denotative, we must find the specific signal that can be examined through two orders of signification. In the first order, the sign can be identified its background. This order is the denotative order by interpreting the signs literally. After finding the literal meaning, then go to the second order of signification that is connotative meaning. In this second order of signification, the cultural, environment, and other contexts are needed (Saifuddin, 2018c). According to the paper discussion, we can use several steps above in order to solve the problem and difficulties finding the denotative and connotative meaning (*penjara, bunuh diri, bernyawa, dan menatap*) from the poem “Sebuah Kamar” by Chairil anwar.

E. Previous Studies

Saifuddin (2013), in her journal, she analyzed denotative and connotative meaning in the sign of Lombok Musical Instrument (Gendang Beleg). She used quantitative method by collecting several data sources that will be analyzed. She wanted to make this analysis process easier than other one by giving a table and brief discussion. Fatimah attempted to introduce the cultural heritage of Lombok Musical Instrument by understanding the connotative and denotative meaning because every part of the signs has its meaning and intention for people.

Chandra and Martiarini (2018) in their journal, they made a journal of analyzing the connotation meaning in the Jakarta Post Online Headline News by using qualitative method. They investigated the connotative meaning in newspaper and found out the use of positive and negative connotation meaning in newspaper.

Muslimin (2017) in her Thesis, she focused on analyze the study of its denotative and connotative through the dialogue in Marsha and The Bear, she used qualitative research method to make it valid.

Anjomshoa and Sadighi (2015) in their journal, they analyzed connotation in animal’s word and expression in English and Persian languages. The process of collecting the data is taken from the written English and Persia dictionaries of proverbs or idioms. The researchers wanted to show some lingual misunderstanding through animal expression.

Rabab’ah and Al-Saidat (2014) in their journal, they investigated the conceptual and connotative meaning of black and white colour that used in Jordian society as the sign of something else. In the Jordanian, society interpret that white colour means something positive while black colour means something negative.

Prayitna (2015) in her thesis, she analyzed the connotative meaning and some messages in a song in order to make the listener understand what the writer’s intentions are, so the listener can express their feeling and thoughts through the song. This analysis used qualitative approach because the data is in the form of lyrics.

2. Research Methods

This study is categorized as descriptive qualitative research because the data are analyzed descriptively, and using several document reviews (Astalin, 2013). In addition, qualitative methodology has a wide meaning regarding to the research which the result in form of descriptive data or written words (Taylor, 2016). The data was taken randomly from words (*penjara, bunuh diri, bernyawa, dan menatap*) in a poem. The technique of collecting the data can be described through some steps, such as comparing many famous poets in Indonesia and choose the best one. After that, we considered which one of the literary works that is suitable with our study, and finally we take a poem as the source of data. As a result, we use the poem with the title “Sebuah

Kamar” from a great poet, Chairil Anwar. He is one of the best poets in Indonesia and known as the pioneer of 45th generation who was born in 1922. He often wrote literary works, especially poetry that describe and represent the struggle of the Indonesian nation at that time.

The data in this research will be analyzed based on Griffiths’ interpretation concept. The concept is about three stages of interpretation, there are literal meaning, explicature and implicature (Griffiths, 2006). In addition, denotative meaning is similar with literal meaning in the concept, while explicature and implicature are identified as connotative meaning. Furthermore, connotative meaning has a connection with sense relation that might be had, even though it contrasts with the expression (Kreidler, 2002). In this analysis, we explained the denotative meaning, also the connection of connotative meaning and its sense relation. Each of the words in data analysis will have its denotation and connotation based on analyzing process through three stages of interpretation.

3. Discussions

The discussion of this study is analyzing the denotative and connotative meaning of the words (*penjara*, *bunuh diri*, *bernyawa*, dan *menatap*) using three stages of interpretations. These three stages of interpretations are literal meaning, explicature, and implicature. In addition, denotative meaning is same with literal meaning of the word, whereas connotative meaning can be analyzed through sense relation. In this case, denotative meaning is taken from the dictionary or general meaning then most of people agree with that kind of meaning. In addition, connotative meaning is taken from the context of word which is different between one person to another, or based on everyone’s interpretation.

A. Penjara

Everyone must have the same view regarding the word *penjara* (prison / jail). According to KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), *penjara* means a building or place to lock up the convicted person, or it can be a place in which people are legally held a punishment for a crime they have committed. Related to sense relation, there are three words that have same meaning with *penjara*. The first word is *jeruji besi* that refers to metaphorical elements in the context of sentence. People sometimes say that prison is *jeruji besi* (iron bars), because the shape of that building that identically with big iron. The second word is *bui*, we can assume that this word is the synonym of *penjara*. The last is *lembaga pemasyarakatan* which means correctional constitution. From those words, both of *jeruji besi* and *bui* have negative connotation that refer to *penjara*, while the word of *lembaga pemasyarakatan* has positive connotation although the original form is the same with *penjara* or prison.

Negative connotation of this word appears because it has relation with crime, or people who did crime will live there as the punishment. The meaning of crime in this case is very wide, there are many kinds of crime, such as theft, murder, corruption and others. Those bad people with all the forms of crime gathered in a place that called as *penjara* or prison. Also, the atmosphere of that place which is closed and always monitored by the security officers, and far from any freedom of life adds the negative connotation of *penjara*. People who do not commit crime will be scary when they hear the word prison, it is like place that nobody wants to enter it. Therefore, negative connotation is always attached to that word including *bui* and *jeruji besi*. In the other hand, there are some people who interpret *penjara* with positive connotation, they have their own perspectives which is different based on the context of the word.

The word *penjara* has positive connotation when people uttered it using *lembaga pemasyarakatan*. Even though those words are same, *lembaga pemasyarakatan* has higher level

than *penjara* (Rahma, Nuzula, Safitri, & Hs, 2018). The word *lembaga pemasyarakatan* is believed as a government institution that is responsible for encouraging inmates. In addition, people assume that this institution gives some directions to inmates, then they can be better to face the world after in *lembaga pemasyarakatan*. Lembaga pemasyarakatan is a series of law enforcement aimed at making inmates realize to their mistakes, correcting themselves, not repeating any criminal acts so that they can be re-accepted in society. Not only that, they are expected to be able playing a role in development and live as citizens who are good and responsible. The meaning that attached in this word is positive rather than interpret it as a place for punishment. Therefore, the expression of *lembaga pemasyarakatan* is more highly valued than saying it in form of *bui* or *penjara*.

Connotative meaning of the word *penjara* has a relation with the title. If we investigate the meaning based on poetry context, it relates to the word in title which is *kamar*. The full sentence of the word *penjara* in poem is *keramaian penjara sepi selalu*, it means the prison crowd is always quiet. In case of poetry, this sentence has a meaning that the cramped room felt like a prison, even though it is crowded, but quiet and there is no entertainment because of poverty (Saptawuryandari, 2013). In the other words, we can say that a room in this case is likened to the prison, although there are many people in room, the situation is like prison because nothing entertainment. The family did not have any valuables, they were poor and could not buy any stuff to entertain them, it might be electronic goods, such as television and radio. In that time, radio was a valuable electronic item and it is used as one of people's entertainment media.

B. Bunuh diri

Based on Indonesian dictionary (KBBI), the denotation or literal meaning of the words *bunuh diri* (suicide) is intentionally kill yourself, or an expression in form of words that explain a person who died or killed by himself, or dying at your own hand. Related to sense relation, these words can be interpreted as *mati* or die, but the sense is different. Both of *mati* and *bunuh diri* have same negative connotation that refer to dead. The distinction between those expressions are in the way of die, we interpret *bunuh diri* (suicide) as death by killing himself and it is the sole cause of the death, while the word *mati* means a death that happened because of many causes, such as sick, accident, murder, and so on. There is no positive connotation from the words *bunuh diri*, most of people will get negative connotation about this.

People assumed *bunuh diri* as a bad things or something which is scary, then they have negative connotation with these words. To analyze the connotation, we need to associate it with another word (sense relation). In this case, *bunuh diri* associate with the word "die". All people in this world will surely encounter death, but we do not know when that time will come. People will be sad if there is a person in their life died, because they cannot meet that person anymore. This feeling of loss gives negative connotation in understanding the word died. In addition, no one who wants to lose someone in their life and no one can be blamed as a cause of suicide. People inevitably must accept the reality and be willing his absence for ever after. Therefore, negative connotation dominates the meaning of the words *bunuh diri* rather than positive connotation, even we do not find the positive meaning from these words.

In context of poetry, *bunuh diri* means torment yourself. In this case, this word is an imagery that implied torture or misery to yourself, and it expresses suicide. This word states that some people do something which is miserable for themselves and it is essentially suicide (Saptawuryandari, 2013). Imagery in this poem is a form of expression that relates to daily life, because the poet himself experienced the hardships of life, then he wrote it down as couplet. It can be like work hard to get money, and the fee is not equal with the effort. In addition, this word is

not only related to its sentence, but also the next line that explains it more vivid. It gives the imagination of poverty in a family with circumstances that have been very difficult, it is considered as suicide. Therefore, the connotation of this word in context of poetry is still negative, but the meaning is little bit different with the context of word.

C. Bernyawa

Every word has always one or more meaning based on the perspective of the reader. One of the words that have several meaning in this poem is *bernyawa*. According to the scientist, the word *bernyawa* can be used for all organism including human, animal, plant and so on. While, according to the sense relation in semantics approach, *bernyawa* can be meant denotatively and connotatively. People have the same arguments that *bernyawa* has a positive meaning rather than negative meaning.

The positive connotation of *bernyawa* can be found in a sentence *sudah lima anak bernyawa di sini*, in a poem by Chairil Anwar. The writer wrote this sentence positively without any bad intention. We can analyze if it has positive connotation through every single words in that sentence. The sentence consists of positive meaning, they do not have any negative meaning.

The word *bernyawa* in denotative or literal means *memiliki nyawa* or having a soul. According to KBBI, *bernyawa* is a basic form of *nyawa*. The sense relation of the word *bernyawa* has meaning in verb class or verb so that *bernyawa* can express an action, existence, experience, or other dynamic understanding. This word has denotative meaning *memiliki nyawa* or having soul which all people would agree about that.

Afterwards, the word *bernyawa* has also several connotative meaning such as *hidup* or alive and *bergerak* which means can express any action and so on. Those two connotative words of *bernyawa* have the same positive meaning rather than negative meaning, and all people would agree about that. *Bernyawa* has the sense relation with *hidup* or alive because something alive (*hidup*) always has a soul (*bernyawa*). For instance, human is a creature that has a soul, means that human is alive (*hidup*). Moreover, *bernyawa* has the sense relation with *bergerak* because something that has a soul (*bernyawa*) means they can express an action, experience and other jobs. For instance, human is a creater that can do an action and so on, means that human has a soul.

The poets who mostly use connotative words will make the reader absolutely feel confuse in understanding the meaning or the point of the poem. The readers confess that to understand the denotative meaning they don't have any difficulties but when they find the connotative meaning, they find the difficulties to understand what is contained in the poem.

D. Menatap

In the poem *Sebuah Kamar*, the writer writes a word *menatap* that may have one or more meaning. This word is taken from a sentence *matanya menatap orang tersalib di batu!*. When the reader reads this sentence, it will show several intentions based on their perspective because the word *menatap* may have negative and positive meaning. In this case, the writer freely gives the reader a chance to get the point of this sentence based on their arguments.

In denotative or literal meaning, the word *menatap* or stare means *berhadapan muka* or face to face. According to KBBI, *menatap* is a basic form of *tatap* means seeing or observing an object, usually at close range, with a long and length durations. These two words have the sense relation because when we stare (*menatap*) to other one, it means there must be other person in front of us, so we face to face with other people.

Besides, *menatap* has also several connotative meaning that has negative and positive connotation. The negative connotation of *menatap* is *mencurigai* or suspect. The relation between these two words is that people can use the word *menatap* as negative connotation if this is followed by a context illustrates that he is suspicious, such as the eyebrow wrinkles and narrowed eyes as if staring (*menatap*) with a negative intention.

Moreover, the positive connotation of *menatap* is *penasaran* or curious. In this case, the sense relation between *menatap* and *penasaran* or curious is that we can say someone is curious through the eyes, how deep their eyes keep focus on something they want to know. Other than that, *menatap* can be used instead of *melihat*, *memandang* or looking. *Melihat* is slightly the same with *menatap* because it has the sense relation that when we are staring to other person, it means that we are also looking at them. We are doing an activity from our eyes but the ways are different. For other example is *memandang*, we can say that *memandang* has the same as *melihat* as it is only different in the ways and the context we use it. They have different spelling and sound but the same meaning or connotative meaning.

A word's denotative meaning is the objectives, literal definition that one would find in the dictionary. A word's connotative meaning is the culturally specific, individual, and emotional associations that nuance a word's meaning (Varpio, St.Onge, & Young, 2016). As the definition of connotation is sometimes related to the situation, society, emotion or it is contextually, so we can say *menatap* with multiple meaning based on how people get that point. We cannot judge a word connotatively true based on our perspective, because everybody has the other idea and other perspective that they have their argument to say whether the word has denotative or connotative. There is no single best answer to determine the connotation.

4. Novelties

This study has its own uniqueness and difference with the previous studies. Some of studies use song, movie, and prose as the object or source of the data in their denotative and connotative analysis. In addition, the previous studies also use semiotic approach in analyzing the denotative and connotative meaning, while this study focused on poem as the object of investigation.

5. Conclusion

Every word has denotative meaning that based on agreement in society or people agree with the meaning in word generally. Not only that, every word also has connotative meaning at least one connotation either positive or negative. No one of the words that only explained and analyzed according to its literal meaning or denotation. Almost all the words have negative connotation or positive connotation. We use sense relation or finding the other words which are possible to attach or refer to the expression, then the connotation can be seen easily. In general, connotation comes from social beliefs related to the expression in from of word. If people have bad feeling or bad imagination with the expression, the connotation will be negative. However, it can change into positive when people use different word to utter that expression, such as the word *penjara* that has both of negative and connotative meaning. It is rare to find the word that contain negative and positive connotation. The words *bunuh diri* only have denotative meaning and one negative connotation.

Denotative word leads all people to have the same perspective meaning. In all cases, this literal meaning only has one point meaning, while in connotative every people may have different perspective meaning. One word can have one or more connotative meaning based on how someone can get the point. The word *bernyawa* has only positive connotative meaning which all

people have agreed about it. Moreover, we must be aware in using a word that has positive and negative connotation, because if we misinterpret whether the word has positive or negative intention, then it will confuse ourselves in understanding the connotative word. We must aware of social relation and other aspects related to that specific word, such as the word *menatap* which has the positive connotation and also negative connotation.

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