

IMPLICIT INTERPRETATION OF ENGLISH COLOUR IDIOMS IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

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ABSTRAK

Pada dasarnya, penelitian ini membahas tentang ungkapan-ungkapan Bahasa Inggris yang memakai warna sebagai komponen utama. Sumber data yang dipakai adalah sebanyak tiga novel yang ditulis oleh penulis terkenal, Jane Austen: Mansfield Park, Northanger Abbey, dan Persuasion. Sebagai penutur asing Bahasa Inggris, bukanlah hal mudah untuk menyerap makna yang terkandung di dalam ungkapan-ungkapan Bahasa Inggris, karena perbedaan budaya dll. Penelitian ini terdiri dari dua bahasan, bentuk ungkapan dan makna yang terkandung dalam ungkapan. Bahasan yang pertama dianalisis dengan mengadopsi teori McMordie (1976), dan bahasan yang kedua mengadopsi teori dari Ogden dan Richards (Palmer:1976) dan beberapa teori warna dari Goethe (1810) dan Gage (2000). Sepuluh ungkapan yang memakai warna sebagai komponen utama ditemukan dan dijadikan data untuk dianalisa. Hasil dari proses analisis menunjukkan bahwa empat jenis bentuk ungkapan: Compound Adjectives, Adjective-Noun Phrases, Miscellaneous Phrases, Idiomatic Commonplace Comparison; dan beberapa interpretasi berbeda dari tiga warna yang berbeda. Setiap warna memberi arti yang berbeda terhadap ungkapan-ungkapan yang ada, tergantung dari konteks yang melingkarinya.

Kata Kunci: Ungkapan, Warna, Novel, Jane Austen

1. Background of the Study

English language is a rich language. Every vocabulary has its distinctive meaning and in order to know the meaning it depends on from point of view it is seen. However, there are still many foreign English speakers, who find this issue difficult, especially when it comes to idiomatic expressions; since idioms are constructions of words or phrases that mean something different from what the words are literally saying, which are passed down through tradition, culture, and history (<http://examples.yourdictionary.com>). It is acknowledged so, simply because the learners are not accustomed to it. Lack of comprehension could lead to

misunderstandings which could cause miscommunication, especially idioms that are contained within sentences. By considering this fact, the current study selects Idioms based on colours as the main topic for the paper, in which the idioms are analysed from semantic point of view.

2. Problems of the Study

Based on the background, these are the problems:

1. What are the forms of English colour Idioms found in the novels?
2. What are the meanings of the English Colour Idioms found in the novels?

3. Aims of the Study

Based on the problems above, the aims of the study are as follows:

1. To find out what forms of English colour Idioms found in the novels.
2. To analyse the implicit meanings of the English Colour Idioms found in the data source.

4. Research Method

4.1 Data Source

The data source in this study were taken from three novels written by Jane Austen, entitled *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion*. These novels contain a lot of of English idioms.

4.2 Method and Technique of Collecting Data

Library research through internet (Ebook) was the method used to collect the data, which did not involve any respondents during the process.

4.3 Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

Descriptive-Narrative method was the method used to analyse the data. The theory proposed by McMordie (1976) was used to analyse the forms of idioms, the theory proposed by Ogden and Richards (Palmer, 1976) was used to interpret the implicit meaning, supported two theories of colour proposed by Gage (2000) and Goethe (1810).

5. The Analysis of Implicit Interpretation Of English Colour Idioms in Jane Austen's Novels.

5.1 Analysis of Sample Data 1:black and plain...

5.1.1 Form of Idiom

Acknowledging word class of an idiom is essential to acquire its form. This first idiom consists of three words: *black*, *and*, *plain*. Both words *black*, *plain* belong to adjective, while the word *and* belongs to conjunction. Therefore, since it resembles one of the characteristics of McMordie's theory about forms of idiom, the idiom *...black and plain...* is formed by Compound Adjectives which particularly goes to pairs of adjective (McMordie, 1976:83).

5.1.2 Interpretation of Idiom

In interpreting idioms, 'Semantic Triangle' theory can be very handy. In the theory, the left angle ('symbol') represents the idiom, which would have to pass through the peak first ('thought or reference') as to gain the right concept meaning of the idiom represented by the right angle ('referent'). When one is given an idiom *...black and plain...*, the first two-thoughts comes to mind would be black, and an unattractive character. Goethe also has defined black as a colour that represents negativity. However, context can also help the interpretation.

"Her brother was not handsome: no, when they first saw him he was absolutely plain, **black and plain**;" (*Mansfield Park*, page 39)

The context above clearly is not telling about a positive thing. After considering the theories and context, the referent of the idiom of 'black and plain' can be interpreted as something that is not bright, unexciting, unattractive or even boring.

5.2 Analysis of Sample Data 2: *...looked rather black upon me...*

5.2.1 Form of Idiom

The second idiom found in *Mansfield Park* is '*black upon me*', which is composed by various word classes in it. This idiom is headed with the adjective 'black', followed by a preposition 'upon' and the object 'me', which if it is analysed with McMordie, this idiom would be classified into idiom formed with Miscellaneous Phrases for the variety of word classes composing the idiom.

5.2.2 Interpretation of Idiom

“and my brother-in-law himself, who is all kindness in general, looked rather **black upon me** when he found what I had been at”. (*Mansfield Field*, page 53)

The ‘symbol’ is represented by the words “black upon me”, while the ‘thought or reference’ tries to recall any knowledge regarding to it; However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the context is telling about someone who is famously known as a man with kind heart, who was looking at the first person in a certain way described with the word ‘black’; Therefore, the process of recalling via thought or reference can be supported by the theory of colour proposed by Gage (2000). Gage defines black as a colour that suggests darkness and negative things. By connecting the context, Gage’s theory, and Semantic Triangle, the idiom ..looked rather *black upon me*.. can be interpreted as a way of looking that is hostile, or less friendly than it usually would have done.

5.3. Analysis of Sample Data 3: ... ‘never’ is a **black word**...

5.3.1 Form of Idiom

The word ‘Black’ is classified as an adjective, whilst ‘word’ is a noun. In accordance with McMordie’s theory, the idiom of ‘*Black word*’ consists of two different words from two distinctive word classes (an adjective and a noun) which would be classified as an idiom formed by Adjective-Noun Phrases.

5.3.2 Interpretation of Idiom

As it has been known that, ‘*black*’ tends to make the hearer or reader would relate it to something mysterious, evil, mean, or even symbol of death, while the word ‘*word*’ refers to a single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing used with others to form a sentence. Gage (2000) also defines black as a colour that suggests darkness and negative things. However, the context of idiom ‘*black word*’ is not to be neglected:

"Do you think the church itself never chosen, then?", "'Never' is a **black word**. But yes, in the never-of-conversation, which means ‘not very often’, I do think it." (*Mansfield Park*, page 83)

Any readers would take the concept of the idiom ‘*black word*’ in the context as something that is off limits or forbidden, since the second speaker does not agree with the usage of the word uttered by the first speaker. The referent of ...‘never’ is a *black word*’ ... which is a word that is neither prohibited nor inappropriate to convey.

5.4 Analysis of Sample Data 4: *.November was the **black month** fixed for his return.*

5.4.1 Form of Idiom

Since the idiom ‘*black month*’ merely consists of not more than two words: ‘black’ and ‘month’ can be categorised as an idiom formed by Adjective-Noun phrases (McMordie, 1976:51).

5.4.2 Interpretation of Idiom

The word ‘*black*’ is taken as the darkest colour as the opposite of white; whilst ‘*month*’ is defined as a unit of time corresponding approximately to one cycle of the moon’s phase, or about thirty days or four weeks. Gage defines black as a colour that suggests darkness and negative things. Though, after all, it is important to consider the context as well:

“November was the **black month** fixed for his return. Sir Thomas wrote of it with as much decision as experience and anxiety could authorize. he consequently looked forward with the hope of being with his beloved family again early in November.” (*Mansfield Park*, page 97)

According to the context and after linking and processing the ‘symbol’ via ‘thought or reference’, the interpretation of the idiom ‘*black month*’ would be a time, specifically when it is put as in a month that positions anyone into an unfavourable-unpleasant situation.

5.5 Analysis of Sample Data 5: *..Mr.Rushworth turned to her with a **black look***

5.5.1 Form of Idiom

Since the idiom ‘*black look*’ merely consists of not more than two words: ‘black’ and ‘look’ can be categorised as an idiom formed by Adjective-Noun phrases (McMordie, 1976:51).

5.5.2 Interpretation of Idiom

As ‘thought or reference’ tries to define black as the darkest colour that tends to make people assume negative things, and ‘look’ as an act of directing one's gaze in order to see someone or something, its context also plays an important role:

“and the day came at last, when Mr.Rushworth turned to her with a **black look**" (*Mansfield Park*, page 150)

The context indicates that the idiom ‘*black look*’ is a certain way of how Mr.Rushworth gazes at a woman. Further, in accordance with Goethe’s theory, black is defined as a colour that represents negative connotations; and after going throughout several stages starting from the ‘Semantic Triangle’ theory, the context, and Goethe’s theory of colour (1810), ‘*black look*’ can be distinguished as a look that happens to someone to have (or make) which is done in a hostile way.

5.6 Analysis of Sample Data 6: .. *as red as she had been white before*..

5.6.1 Form of Idiom

The idiom ‘*as red as she had been white before*’ is an Idiomatic Commonplace Comparison. The reason would be that the idiom itself contains two different objects (that are being compared to each other).

5.6.2 Interpretation of Idiom

The idiom ‘*as red as she had been white*’ would give a picture of comparison between two colours associated with someone’s condition. Goethe defines red as a colour that conveys an impression of sentiments of awe, anger, dignity (Goethe, 1810:315); and white as a colour that is associated with light, innocence, purity. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the context:

“Julia was the first to move and speak again. Jealousy and bitterness had been suspended; but at the moment of her appearance, Frederick was listening with looks of devotion to Agatha's narrative, and pressing her hand to his heart; and as soon as she could notice this, and see that, in spite of the shock of her words, he still kept his station and retained her sister's hand, her wounded heart swelled again with injury, and looking **as red as she had been white** before, she turned out of the room, saying, "I need not be afraid of appearing before him." (*Mansfield Park*, page 157)

From the foregoing passage about the meaning of the colours, according to Goethe, red in the idiom would be processed as one of wide ranges of emotion, which is according to the context, represents the state of anger for the experience she has just had; On the other hand, the colour white is used to describe the state of emotion Julia had initially. Therefore, '*as red as she had been white*' is interpreted as the calmness of oneself that can quickly escalate into (great) anger in no time at all.

5.7 Analysis of Sample Data 7: ...my cheeks would have been *as red as your roses*...

5.7.1 Form of Idiom

The idiom '*as red as your roses*' indicates a certain comparison between certain things using red and roses as the component. This on-going idiom ('*as red as your roses*') would fall under Idiomatic Commonplace Comparison-form.

5.7.2 Interpretation of Idiom

"..your brother and I were agreeing this morning that, though it is vastly well to be here for a few weeks, we would not live here for millions. We soon found out that our tastes were exactly alike in preferring the country to every other place; really, our opinions were so exactly the same, it was quite ridiculous! I would not have had you by for the world; you are such a sly thing, I am sure you would have made some droll remark or other about it."

"No, indeed I should not."

"Oh, yes you would indeed; you would have told us that we seemed born for each other or some nonsense of that kind; my cheeks would have been **as red as your roses**." - *Northanger Abbey*, page 33

The idiom '*as red as your roses*' can be interpreted as one of the emotional ranges that contextually indicates embarrassment. It can be seen from how 'thought' recalls the components of the idiom, the context, and how Goethe defines red (ranges of emotion).

6. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis, the conclusion can be described as follows: English idioms with colours found in Jane Austen's novels have various kinds of forms; however, the mostly used kind of form found in the novels is Adjective-Noun phrases. Out of ten, there are six data formed by Adjective-Noun phrases, and one is

formed with Compound Adjective Phrases, one sample is formed with Miscellaneous Phrases, and two data are formed with Idiomatic Comparison Commonplace Phrases.

Secondly, there are three colours used as the components of idioms found in the data: black, red, and silver. From the analysis in the prior chapter, the sample idioms using black tend to highlight the interpretation negatively; the sample idioms using red colour tend to describe ranges of emotion like anger and embarrassment; while the sample idioms using silver is interpreted as a peaceful thing. The instances of the sample idioms are: ‘*Black and plain*’ which is interpreted as something that is rather unexciting, unattractive, and even (beyond) boring; ‘Looked rather *black upon me*’ which is interpreted as one unfriendly or hostile way of looking at someone; till a violent death or a religious retirement closed their *black career* is interpreted as one bad action done in certain period of time; ‘looking *as red as she had been white*’ is interpreted as a look that one could have when having a quickly escalated emotion from the state of calmness into the state of anger in no time; my cheeks would have been ‘*as red as your roses*’ is interpreted as an emotion of embarrassment; the elegant little clock on the mantel-piece had struck “eleven with its *silver sounds*” is interpreted as a peaceful sound produced by the clock.

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