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## When Neutral and Moral Lexical Items Acquire Sexual Connotations at the Wink of Eye: A Study of Sexual Pejorative Terms in Vernacular Egyptian Arabic

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### ABSTRACT

The Arabic language has inadequately examined the relationship between sexuality and pejoration. Since the commencement of the 21st century, several lexical words in Egyptian Arabic have undergone sexual pejoration. The point of this study is to look into the link between sexuality and derogatory words in Egyptian Arabic, as well as how often people unconsciously think that moral and neutral words have sexual meanings. The research employs a historical semantic methodology to do thorough evaluations of pejoration in Egyptian Arabic. The study's sample consisted of thirty-six lexical items recognized as containing derogatory language. The research classifies the analyzed lexical elements into moral and neutral categories. The study indicated that in Egyptian Arabic, the majority of lexical terms having sexual connotations are considerably more prone to having negative meanings. Neutral lexemes have increased resilience to pejoration relative to moral lexemes. Nouns and verbs are less susceptible to pejoration than adjectives. Moral and neutral lexemes impart derogatory sexual overtones when referring to women, and this process transpires subconsciously. The disparity between Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian colloquial Arabic is considerable owing to pejoration. The research indicates a possible reciprocal link between morality and pejoration in the Arabic language, warranting more investigation and analysis.

**Keywords:** Moral Lexemes; Neutral Lexemes; Perception; Pejoration; Sexuality; Semantic Shift

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## 1. Introduction

Pejoration is characterized as a type of lexical semantic modification. Terms that deviate from their original historical meanings get negative implications. Pejoration has recently surfaced as a controversial linguistic feature in Egyptian Arabic. The lexical gap between Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic has intensified. It further intensifies the disparity between MSA and ECA. Polysemy, wherein a single term possesses numerous meanings, is often associated with a lexical semantic shift. The meaning of a term may acquire new senses that can either replace or coexist with existing ones. Al-aboudi<sup>[1]</sup> observes that the modern Arab audience is prone to misinterpreting the original intent of traditional and religious literature due to lexical semantic alterations in the classical and traditional vocabulary. Zaydan<sup>[2]</sup> noted that the noun عين “*ayn*” in classical Arabic possesses 35 meanings. Al-Suyūti<sup>[3]</sup> recorded numerous interpretations of عين “*ayn*,” including material sustenance, water source, currency, truth, reality, joy, pleasure, and examination, among others. In contemporary Egyptian Arabic, the term عين “*ayn*” has come to signify an envious individual.

In Egyptian Arabic, many lexical elements have undergone semantic derogation. These encompass “Ṭayyib” طيب (good), “baraka” بركة (bliss), “ibn halal” (dutiful son), “sheikh” (a title bestowed upon highly esteemed old folks), “pasha” (a Turkish term granted to the aristocratic and affluent), and “*tawil al’aid*” طويل اليد (generous) (see **Table 1**). These phrases have recently acquired negative implications. An individual who is uninformed is termed Ṭayyib in Egyptian Arabic. Baraka has recently adopted a negative connotation, referring to an impotent individual. The MSA and Classical meanings of the lexical elements seem to be obscured by pejoration. Pejoration often entraps common individuals. They occasionally interpret Classical and MSA texts inadvertently via the lens of contemporary speech. Ayan<sup>[4]</sup> asserts that the receptors’ understanding of Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic has been considerably affected by colloquial language. Receptors are unable to understand the meanings of several lexical elements in Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. They are able to understand the connotations of these words in colloquial usage. Ibn manzūr<sup>[5]</sup> states that “Nāzīh” نزيه signifies a person who is moral, honest, and courteous. However, “Nāzīh” signifies a prodigal in the colloquial Arabic of Egypt<sup>[4]</sup>. Nāzīh is

regarded by the public as a spendthrift. The Classical and MSA interpretations of “Nāzīh” are fundamentally contradictory. A derogatory connotation can considerably affect the collective consciousness of ordinary and illiterate folk, hence shaping their image of Classical Arabic.

Many Arabic linguists say that the classical meanings of the Arabic language do not change over time or space. However, this study suggests that the meanings of many of these lexical items are changing more and more, to the point where words that used to mean moral and ethical values have changed over time to mean things that are not moral or ethical. Sometimes, the negative and immoral connotations have replaced the moral meanings of the lexical items. In addition, in Egyptian Arabic, most changes in the classical items are based on sexual connotations. For example, words like *Barakh*, بركة, have been understood in vernacular Egyptian as a sexually impotent person, or foolish person, and so on. In addition, moral classical words like *Tayyab*, طيب, *Tawīl*, *’alyad* طويل الايد, and so on are used frequently in everyday speech with highly negative implications, which is often opposite to their classical meanings. In Classical Arabic, the expression “*Tawīl ’alyad*” طويل اليد refers to a generous person. This positive meaning is clearly stated in a prophetic Hadith, as Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) uses the expression “*Tawīl ’alyad*” as an equivalent of generosity, kindness and gratitude. However, it has recently been degraded in its semantic value to mean light-fingered or sexual harasser.

Therefore, the present study is mainly interested in tracing a number of neutral and moral lexical items and explaining how their classical meanings have been changing over time in the vernacular language. To show how ethics and values affect the language, this study only looks at the everyday Egyptian Arabic language. It shows how these new negative meanings are more noticeable in Egyptian Arabic than in Saudi Arabic, Jordanian Arabic, or any other form of the language.

The aim of the present study is to investigate pejoration in Egyptian Arabic from a historical viewpoint. What is the historical development of Arabic vocabulary? What is the difference between the negative connotation of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Fusha? How may the derogatory connotation affect the collective consciousness of the general public and replace the original meaning? What has been the

Table 1. Pejoration of moral lexemes.

No.	Lexical Item	Syntactic Category	Transliteration	Classical Meaning in Lisan Alarab/MSA	Pejorative Meaning of the Word
1	طويل اليد	Adjective	Tawīl 'alyad	A generous person.	A thief.
2	طيب	Adjective	Tayyab	Good, kind, helpful, and so on.	Tayyib can be perceived as naïve, foolish and easily to be fooled.
3	بركة	Noun	Barakah	God's bliss in sustenance.	Sexually impotent man and to naïve and foolish man.
4	شيخ	Noun	"shaikh"	An elderly and aged man	shaikh, is used as a title for mocking people.
5	حبيب	Adjective	Hābīb	Beloved or lovely.	A naïve and foolish
6	طيب	Adjective	Tāyib	Good, virtuous and kind.	Foolish, sometimes it means ok.
7	ابن حلال	Noun	"ibnhālā"	Dutiful son kind man, good hearted	A Mentally retarded person.

historical impact of pejoration on the reception of classical and devotional Arabic writings among the general populace? What are the principal reasons for pejoration in Egyptian Arabic? The goal of this study is to find out if pejoration is a normal part of everyday Arabic, where the original meaning of a word is kept along with its modern derogatory meaning. The study aims to investigate the impact of prevailing ethics and value systems on the pejoration in Egyptian Arabic. This work aims to critically assess the Western semantic theory related to pejoration to fill the evident gap in Arabic studies on the subject.

## 2. Review of Literature

There is a dearth of studies addressing the issue of the impact of socio-economic realities and politics of culture on the pejoration of moral and ethical language. Anis<sup>[6]</sup> examined the causes of pejoration in the Arabic language, attributing it to various circumstances, including the decline of political, economic, and social situations. He presents the following example: the lexical word *hajib* حاجب was utilized in Andalusia to signify prime minister; however, it has since been devalued to denote doorman. He further states that pejoration might arise from psychological and emotional factors, as the lexical item may carry negative connotations linked to dirtiness or sexuality. Languages may forfeit certain vocabulary elements that signify extreme dirtiness or sexual desire, since these terms may disappear or be supplanted

with more ambiguous words to impart a euphemistic connotation. Traditional Arabic studies seem to have focused on polysemy while neglecting pejoration as a type of semantic lexical shift. Moreover, modern Arabic study on pejoration was theoretical and failed to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the Arabic language. The research did not utilize a clear technique for investigating pejoration in Arabic, as they focused on highlighting pejoration in certain Arabic lexical elements.

The meanings of many lexical words in classical Arabic poetry have recently diminished in Egyptian Arabic. To illustrate, Al-Mutanabbi<sup>[7]</sup> says: *al-Khayl wāllayl wa-al-baydā' t'rfny wa-al-sayf wālrnh wālqrṭ's wa-al-qalam*, which translates as, the steed, the nights, and the white dawn recognize me, as do the sword, the spear, the quill, and the parchment. According to alMutanabi, the Arabic term *al-qūrtās* refers classically to parchment. Nonetheless, the phrase "*al-qūrtās*" has recently declined in significance, now signifying "a paper bag in which food can be packed in." Furthermore, in Egyptian vernacular speech, "*al-qūrtās*" denotes "to deceive or mislead someone." For example, *Mā tqṛṣnysh*, which means, "never fool me." Al-Mutanabi's Diwan, "*Ghrybun kṣālḥin fī thmwd*"<sup>[7]</sup>, a stranger as the Prophet Saleh among the people of Thamud, various lexical elements have diminished implications. In classical Arabic, the term *altūla* denotes the neck, as illustrated in the sentence: *kam qatīl kama qūlatat shahīd lūbayid altūla wā ward alkhūdud*. Recently, it has been devalued and is now

synonymous with “painting.” Taymour<sup>[8]</sup> noted that in the early 20th century, many Arabic language courses were developed to alleviate the adverse effects of colloquialism on the intellect of Egyptian students in preparatory and secondary schools. The traditional definitions of the lexical elements were juxtaposed with their interpretations in colloquial language in these courses. These lectures provided tables that displayed the erroneous interpretation of the lexical item in colloquialism with its accurate meaning in Classical Arabic. Al-aboudi<sup>[1]</sup> noted that most colloquial terms originated from Classical Arabic during his compilation of a vernacular dictionary, as he investigated the etymology of several vernacular phrases. There are Numerous studies have addressed pejoration across multiple languages in Western literature; nevertheless, there is a paucity of research on pejoration in both classical and popular Arabic. Consequently, there is limited research examining pejoration, and even those that do are deficient in methodology and lack a focused emphasis on its features. Furthermore, the investigations did not explain why moral and ethical words are being replaced with immoral and insulting ones.

However, Western literature has extensively studied pejoration in Western culture. Finkbeiner, Meibauer, and Wiese assert that “pejoration is defined as a semantic property of verbal expressions that elicit negative or derogatory connotations<sup>[9]</sup>.” Pejoration occurs when terms of greater ethical and prestigious standing are historically downgraded to lesser significance. “It transpires when a term conveys negatively charged values that are not intrinsic to its historically original meaning<sup>[10]</sup>.” According to Grygiel and Kleparski<sup>[11]</sup>, extralinguistic components compel pejoration by bridging the gap between meaning and the external environment. Finkbeiner, Meibauer, and Wiese observe that “there is a lack of systematic investigation into pejoration<sup>[9]</sup>.” They state: “However, two trends in contemporary linguistics have stimulated a resurgence of interest in pejoration<sup>[9]</sup>.” Advocates of the initial perspective, such as Potts<sup>[12]</sup> and Gutzmann<sup>[13]</sup> contend that negative language is expressive. Potts identifies six characteristics of derogatory language: independence, nondisplaceability, perspective dependency, descriptive immediacy, immediacy, and repetition<sup>[12]</sup>. These characteristics indicate that derogatory phrases constitute distinct linguistic domains, as the negative connotation is inherent in the word itself, with context playing a diminished

role in the process of pejoration. Gutzmann<sup>[13]</sup> contends that the category of expressives includes pejoration. Expressives are characterized as a collection of words and phrases that communicate evaluative attitudes and emotions with significant intensity. Finkbeiner, Meibauer, and Wiese assert that “pejoration is linked to a cognitive attitude and therefore constitutes a conceptual domain separate from language<sup>[1]</sup>.” This disposition can be articulated via language and manifested through linguistic methods. Thus, derogatory connotations significantly rely on the mental representations of words held by speakers, which establish conceptual frameworks for diverse interpretations. In other words, meaning is regarded as a reflection of the speakers’ mental state. The speaker’s surrounding circumstances significantly impact their conceptualizations, resulting in the formation of negative meanings in their brains. In their foundational work, Greenberg and Harman<sup>[14]</sup> examine the conceptual function in semantic evolution, as the meanings of words are dictated by their application. Conceptual role semantics posits that meaning arises from the integration of speakers’ thoughts with symbols, depicting the words via perceptual representation, recognizing implications, modeling, inferring, naming, categorizing, reasoning, planning, and regulating action. Pejoration is a cognitive process influenced by the conceptual frameworks of the speaker, listener, and context. The advocates of the second tendency include Delgado & Stefancic<sup>[15]</sup> and Langton<sup>[16]</sup>, Langton, Haslanger, and Anderson<sup>[17]</sup> Maitra and McGowan<sup>[18]</sup>, Meibauer<sup>[19]</sup>. Meibauer investigate the semantics and pragmatics of ethnic insults in the context of hate speech. Pejoration is frequently influenced by its surrounding circumstances<sup>[19]</sup>. Wedgwood examines pejoration in moral contexts and assesses lexical elements based on their logic and their comprehensibility, clarity, significance, or detachment from external reality<sup>[20]</sup>. Detaching meanings from external reality renders them unintelligible and devoid of significance. Pejoration is determined by the contextual circumstances of the speakers and listeners. This discovery indicates that cultural, historical, and social factors shape the setting in which pejoration emerges and evolves. Consequently, pejoration exemplifies how individuals may impose the socio-cultural reality of their environment onto the meanings of words. Therefore, the current study adopts the second category, which links pejoration to cognitive processes. The study also examines the speaker’s attitude and how cultural

and socio-economic realities influence people's perception and production of language.

### 3. Methods

The study used manual data collection to create a limited dataset. The corpus illustrates the historical progression of particular Arabic terms. There is currently no online corpus that chronicles the historical growth of Arabic vocabulary, particularly with pejorative terms and lexical items. The study sample was manually curated and is representative; although modest in size, it encompasses a diverse array of instances suitable for the study's aims.

Two principal sources provide the data. The primary source examines the historical pejoration in Egyptian colloquial language, with a particular emphasis on oral data derived from input from individuals, as well as from literature, journalism, cinema, and television. The second source analyzes the historical degradation of several classical Arabic terms, highlighting the transformation of their meanings over time. The direct correlation between the examined data and pejoration underpins its significance. It's better that this study uses words from different types of writing because it shows how morals affect Egyptian society by looking at how people talk, how well they understand Arabic, and how they understand religious and traditional writings. The research focuses on oral data primarily pertaining to the pejorative application of moral language.

The chosen data exemplify terms with ethical or neutral meanings that have undergone a derogatory shift. On top of that, the pejoration in moral and neutral language is clear in real-life situations, with most of the data coming from real conversations. The data originates from broader contexts, as "the context influences our discourse, and our discourse influences the context" (Halliday)<sup>[21]</sup>. The semantic fields and the interaction of diverse properties are employed to classify the data in the study sample. A semantic field is defined as a set of lexicons that embrace a specific conceptual domain and exhibit identifiable relationships with others. The data utilized in the study sample is sourced from "real data," indicating authentic occurrences of oral or written communication, rather than false or created data.

The criteria for data collection can be stated as follows:

- Frequency: the occurrence of lexical items with nega-

tive connotations in both written and spoken Egyptian Arabic.

- Saliency: it clarifies the significance of the chosen data in illustrating how the pejorative phrases reflect the moral norms of Egyptian society. The data's comprehensiveness encompasses both formal Arabic language and dialectal terminology and idioms. The obtained data indicates a deterioration in both classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic.
- The accessibility and ubiquity of data are marked by a broad distribution range. Pejorative phrases are employed in everyday conversation, cinema, literature, and blogging.
- The historical scope of the data: The obtained data is deemed indicative of the mid-20th century to the early 21st century. The Arab world has experienced a significant transition in its social and value systems over this period.
- The indexicality of language: The collected data investigates the conditions under which pejoration has supplanted the original meaning in Classical Arabic.

### 4. Results

The method examines the recent pejoration of moral and neutral lexical components into diminished phrases and expressions within their specific settings. The study sample comprises 34 lexical items that have undergone diachronic semantic deterioration. 13 disparaging terms were categorized as nouns, and 21 as adjectives, with pejoration primarily noted in adjectives than nouns, verbs, and adverbs. The study tables reveal that pejoration predominantly occurs in words with sexual connotations describing woman and most pejorative descriptions either sexual or unethical produced in the form of slur are mainly used to describe the woman with a few describing me. For example, among the sample of the study, there are 16 lexical items used to describe women as prostitutes, and 10 used to slurs against women. Only pejorative items are used to describe both male and female, which are neutral in their description

#### 4.1. Sexual Pejoration: Pejorative Meaning Substituting the Classical Meaning,

The debasement of many classical words with negative classical meanings, such as calling women whores, has

occurred. The classical meaning has been completely lost, and the insulting pejorative meaning has taken over and controlled how modern Arabic speakers think. *A'hir*, عاهرة

*mūmis*, مومس, *qāhāba*, قحبة, *bāghyia*, بغية and *fāhisha* are several adjectives in ancient Arabic that identify a lady as a prostitute<sup>[5]</sup> (see **Table 2**).

**Table 2.** Sexual Pejoration: the substitution of the classical meaning for the pejorative meaning.

No	Lexical Item	Syntactic Category	Transliteration	The Classical Origin in Lisan Arab	Pejorative Meaning of the Word
1	عاهر	Adjective	<i>a'hir</i>	corrupt & indecent man.	Whore: However, it is no longer used to describe male.
2	قحبه	Adjective	<i>Qāhāba</i>	The cough of elderly	<i>whore</i>
3	مومس	Adjective	<i>mūmis</i>	Friction of two things	<i>whore</i>
4	بغية	adjective	<i>baghyia</i>	Oppression	<i>whore</i>

## 4.2. Sexual Pejoration with Maintaining the Classical Meaning of the Woman

There are many Classical Arabic terms and expressions. The meanings of these expressions varied, ranging from neutral terms to words of ethical meaning; however, most of these words have been used with pejorative meanings when describing the woman, and most of these words have been lately used to describe women as prostitutes. In modern standard Arabic, the word “prostitute” is connected to a number of other words, such as *as mītinaka*, *sāqita*, *shīmal*, *khībra*, *shārmūta*, *mashyia ala hal sha'raha*, *hayiga*, *mīkayfah*, and *la'ub* (see **Table 3**). Positive lexical notions related to women have been associated with negative implications. According to Ibn Manzur, *Mitnāq* is derived from the root, *nak*, which is a Classical Arabic lexical item and it was used as a polite expression that means “to have sexual intercourse with a woman.” It also means to fall asleep and to rain<sup>[5]</sup>. The word has recently lost its polite form. It has evolved into a highly offensive and impolite slur, gaining widespread avoidance due to its taboo status. So, *Ibn Mitinaqa* means son of a bitch. Example: Obama Al-masry says: *Wahid ibn mitinaka zai ma untum shayfin*. Have a look, my dear. He's son bitch<sup>[22]</sup>. Similarly, “*Saqita*” in classical Arabic signifies the falling of something<sup>[5]</sup>. Prophet Muhammad once said, “As I was going to bed, I saw a fruit fall on my bed. I started to eat it, But I stopped for fear that it might be charity.” Although the classical Arabic words refer to the act of falling down, which is widely used for objects falling down, it has been metaphorically linked with the unethical act of prostitution, linking chastity to a higher position and prostitution to a lower status. Therefore, when a woman practices adultery,

she falls from heaven to earth, which might be closely linked to the story of Adam's falling down from heaven to earth. However, since the Egyptian mind is largely affected by religious discourse, the act of falling down has been linked to prostitution, and the question here is why homosexuality is not described in the same way, which might provide an explanation for why women are looked down upon in some cultures, which is evident in how the collective minds are thinking when describing women.

Other meanings, such as indecency and prostitution, extend the metaphor of falling down. Almighty God said: “*Idh yatalaqa al-mutalqyan an alyamin wa an al-shimal qaid*” (Surat qaf, 17)<sup>[23]</sup>. When the two receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left (Surat qaf, 17)<sup>[23]</sup>. However, it has been recently degraded to describe a prostitute woman. *Messi Qāl*: “*ilbint di bint shīmal*.” This girl is a prostitute<sup>[24]</sup>.

In addition, *Māshyih 'Alī ḥall shi'rihā* is composed of two lexical items: *Māshyih* and *'Alī. ḥall shi'rihā*. When combined, they convey a derogatory meaning. It refers to a slut who violates the social norms of her community. *Alharif* says: *min yūm ma itālqat wi hya mashya ala hal sha'raha*. She has violated all of the societal norms since her divorce<sup>[25]</sup>.

The term “*hayiga*” The Arabic word “*hag*” is the source of this term<sup>[5]</sup>. which signifies rebellion, conflict, and revolt. The metaphor is about a woman who is sexually aroused and requires someone to satiate her body desire. *S'ad* stated, “*Al-maraha hayga nar*,” a woman is experiencing sexual excitement<sup>[26]</sup>. *Antarha bin Shadad* says: *La'ub bi al-bab al-rījal ka'inha idha asfrat badr bada fi al-mahshid*. She manipulates people's perceptions by appearing as bright as the moon<sup>[27]</sup>. Thus, the exquisite attractiveness of a woman

is what the ancient definition of la'uib alludes to. "La'uib" refers to both an elegant and beautiful woman and a "playful" man. People have derogated the term to refer to a flirtatious woman, but they do not use it to describe a man as playful or sexy. That is to say, some lexical items have derogated when describing women, but they maintain their positive connotation when describing men.

In the Classical Arabic, *Khibrah* refers to experience and knowledge<sup>[5]</sup>. In the Egyptian movie titled "Al-tagraba Al-dinmarkyia," the protagonist of the movie, Imam, says "dī khibra, khibra, khibra al-khibra, mish ad'a awal dūkhlā,"

this girl seems to be a slut<sup>[28]</sup>. The situation was comic and sarcastic as well. In the situation, there is a discrepancy between the literal meaning of the words and the social context<sup>[29]</sup>. The word *khibra* undergoes a phonological change when used with an ironic tone. In the pejorative sense, the pitch is significantly higher, and the duration of the utterance is smaller. Arabic perceives high pitch as a sign of kindness or irony. Pejoration is derived from the power of irony, which "often emerges by the contradiction between literal content and vocal expression<sup>[30]</sup>.

**Table 3.** Sexual Pejoration with maintaining the classical meaning of the word.

No	Lexical Item	Syntactic Category	Transliteration	Classical Meaning in Lisn Alarab	Pejorative Meaning of the Word
1	ابن متناكة	Noun	Ibn Mitnākah	It is derived from the Arabic root "nak" to have sexual intercourse with a woman." It also means to fall asleep and to rain	son of bitch
2	ساقطة	Adjective	sāqita	Falling down	sāqita maintains its pejorative meaning.
3	شمال	Adjective	Shīmal	North.	Prostitute.
4	ماشية علي حل شعرها	adverb	Māshyh 'Alī ḥall shi'rihā	Unveiled or exposing her hair.	Slut
5	هايجه	Adjective	hayiga	It is derived from the Arabic root, haj, هج which means to revolt, to fight, to rebel	Hayiga means sexually excited lady.
6	مكيفة	adjective	mīkayfah	to adjust, adapt or to condition.	Prostitute
7	نجسة	Adjective	nīgisaha	Dirty, indecent, mean, and filthy.	whore
8	شرموطة	adjective	shārmūta	Stripes	Prostitute
9	لعوب	Adjective	la'ub	So charm and sexually attractive lady	coquettish woman
10	خبرة	adjective	Khibrah	Experience	Slut or perverted girl
11	عاهر/عاهرة	adjective	a'hir/ a'hirah	the noun, "a'hir" is used to describe man as adulterous and woman as adulteress.	In MSA and vernacular speech such a word is no longer used to describe man as adulterous as it describes only woman as adulteress

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this girl seems to be a slut<sup>[28]</sup>. The situation was comic and sarcastic as well. In the situation, there is a difference between the literal meaning of the words and their social context<sup>[29]</sup>. The word *khibra* undergoes a phonological change

when used with an ironic tone. In the pejorative sense, the pitch is significantly higher, and the duration of the utterance is smaller. Arabic perceives high pitch as a sign of kindness or irony. Irony, which “often emerges by the contradiction between literal content and vocal expression<sup>[30]</sup>,” is the source of pejoration.

### 4.3. Pejoration of Positive and Neutral Lexical Items Naming Women

The pejorative meaning also includes the words of positive connotation, such as *Jaryiah*, *Bint*, *Hārīm*, and *Imr’ah* (see **Table 4**). These lexical items are classically positive. Despite their semantic evolution in Modern Standard Arabic, these lexical items have maintained their positive connotations. However, in vernacular Egyptian, their use carries a negative implication when referring to women. When the lexical item “hārīm” collocates with “aldar”; it means the belongings of the house. It also collocates with *Rajul*, a man, to refer to things and possessions under his protection and custody, for which he is prepared to fight<sup>[5]</sup>. Al-farahidi defined hārīm as objects that no one can touch or approach<sup>[31]</sup>. Hārīm has semantically changed to mean “the wife,” which objectifies women and relegates them to a lower status, as if they were sexual objects owned by men. This word has been recently degraded. It is to be used when a male tries to disparage a female by addressing her with the title “hūrama.” Although all Arab countries share one Arabic language, the pejorative connotation of the lexical item hūrama is not common among all Arab countries; in Gulf countries and other Arabic-speaking countries, the term hūrama has no insulting sense, nor does it refer negatively to wives. The case is different in Egypt, where designating a woman by the word *Hurma* is a kind of pejoration. For example, in al-Prince TV episodes (2020), Radwan uses the word “hūrama” in the following context: “*Waldī qal li law līk hāq ind hūrama sibuh, waslak al-klam ya hūrama*. If a lady already owes you money, my father told me not to pursue her for your debt. Have you listened to my advice, coward?<sup>[32]</sup>. In addition, the word hūrama is used with the meaning of concubine, and this is used in the Turkish TV series known as *Harem Al Sultan*. Classical Arabic uses the lexical item *bint* to refer to both daughters and females<sup>[5]</sup>. The lexical item “*bint*,” has been phonologically changed to “bit,” which is an insulting word used to belittle the social status of girls, particularly in

rustic areas in Upper Egypt. In an opera soap opera program entitled “*Sit il-Sitatat*,” Salah (2019), a young Egyptian actress recounted the director’s mockery of her movie in which she played a role by calling her as follows: “*Ta’ali ya bit ya sūda*,” or “Black poor girl, come here<sup>[33]</sup>!”

Almighty God said, “And women in the city said,” “The wife of al-‘Azeez is seeking to seduce her slave boy; he has impassioned her with love. Indeed, we see her as being in clear error. (30: Yusuf<sup>[23]</sup>) Recently the lexical item *imr’ah* has degraded to subjugate and humiliate women, it is almost similar to concubine and has phonologically changed to “marah,” which emphasizes women’s lower social status. In a conversation taken from an Egyptian TV series (2018): Inside a jail, the following conversation between two female prisoners: the first woman said, *Ama. ūmak tilat marah iwrah fī al-tābīkh*. The second woman replied, *jak mūr; marah ushtah būzik, lama umai ana tuba marah, umal umak inti tub; ah ayh*. The first woman: Your mother is a clever in cooking. The second woman replied, Curse upon you; shut up your mouth, if my mother is Maraha, so who is then your mother?<sup>[34]</sup>

### 4.4. Animals as Pejorative Language Describing Woman

A significant reservoir of negative connotations regarding women exists within the realm of animals. *būma* (owl) is a symbol of pessimism in the Arabic culture, and it always lives in abandoned and gloomy places; therefore, it is a metaphor, describing a woman as gloomy and ominous who turns the life of her husband into hell. In the Mahraganat song entitled *Ya Būma*, “*Hasdani Lih*,” Al-Sawah describes his ex-girlfriend as Būma, explaining his true intention of using such a description by providing some synonyms like *bayra*, *mi’afanah*, *iglah*, *fishlah*, *safrah*, *khankah*, and *ya buma*. In other words, the term “buma” can denote a sinister, dirty, fat, yellow, and insane woman<sup>[35]</sup> (see **Table 5**).

In Egyptian culture, the word “*Mi’za*” (goat) denotes a lady who is unattractive. Abu Abdelrahman says: *Ili ma’h me’me’azah urbutaha*. Shackle your goat<sup>[36]</sup>. The goat is notorious for its ability to corrupt the farms and spoil the harvests. In addition, a goat is also known for its ugly appearance. It is a symbol of ugliness in the Egyptian culture. These two qualities are metaphorically attributed to women. Not only is she physically attractive, but she also exhibits



**Table 4.** Immoral pejoration evolved from neutral lexical items describing woman.

No	Lexical Item	Syntactic Category	Transliteration	Classical Meaning in Lisan Alarab/MSA	Pejorative Meaning of the Word
1	جارية	Noun	<i>jaryiah</i>	A little girl and young beautiful woman.	This word has lost its positive semantic value and has become equivalent to odalisque or concubine in a harem
2	بنت	Noun	<i>bint</i>	Girl	<i>Bint</i> has been phonologically changed into “bit” which is an insulting word used to belittle the social status of the girls.
3	حريم	Noun	<i>Hārīm</i>	Belongings of the house and man’s possessions	has been phonologically changed into <i>hurama</i> , an an insulting title given to wife to disparage her.
4	امرأة	Noun	<i>imr’ah</i>	The word “ <i>imr’ah</i> ,” is equivalent to women.	It is phonologically changed to “ <i>marah</i> ,” to stress the lower social status of women.

**Table 5.** Animals and birds’ names charged with negative senses when describing women.

No	Lexical Item	Syntactic Category	Transliteration	Classical Meaning/MSA	Pejorative Meaning of the Word
1	بومة	Noun	<i>būma</i>	owl	A gloomy and bad omen woman.
2	معزة	Noun	<i>Mī’za</i>	goat	An ugly women
3	قطه	Noun	<i>Qūta</i>	Kitty	Sexually attractive woman
4	كلبه	Noun	<i>Qlabaha</i>	feminine dog	Bitch
5	جاموسة	Noun	<i>Gamūsa</i>	Buffalo	Bad looking woman.
6	بقرة	Noun	<i>Baqara</i>	cow	It refers to fatty, naïve woman

a sense of entitlement in everything she comes into contact with.

In the Egyptian culture, *Kalbah* is a metaphor for viciousness, immorality and adulteress. Ezz Eldeen says: “*Ana kalabah mas’ourah ya sit jamalat.*” I’m hydrophobic doggess<sup>[37]</sup>. Mabrouk says, mat’oulish saybani dhai al-kalabah. Do not say he abandoned me like a doggess<sup>[38]</sup>. Pragmatically speaking, the lady confides in Shaykh Mabrouk Attia, a religious scholar, faculty member at alazhr and TV presenter of a religious teaching program, about her personal issues with her husband, who has neglected her both physically and emotionally. In her complaint, she expressed that her husband has abandoned her like a doggess. This derogatory term can be analyzed metaphorically in terms of conversational implicature and conventionally in terms of conventional implicature, as the Egyptian culture considers the dog insulting when used to describe people.

The contextual significance of language is crucial for understanding; thus, any effort to clarify the shift of a neutral or positive term to a negative one must depend on “a series of cognitive primitives such as prototype-based reasoning,

including the activation of stereotypes, ideal cases, and radial categories<sup>[39]</sup>.” Ozóg posits that a culture’s value system influences language development in individuals’ cognition<sup>[40]</sup>.

## 5. Discussion

The collective consciousness of individuals is largely shaped by sociological and cultural ideals, as well as socioeconomic conditions. These dominant sociological, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions form the basis of public discourse in any given society. Public discourse, thus, influences cognition. of language users and shapes their attitude toward language use. The suppressive factors that pervade societies, including sexual, social, and political suppressions, are often linked to psychological projections, which initially have negative effects on our perception and use of language. At this point, it is clear that the Egyptian is suffering from both conscious and subconscious sexual suppression. This includes giving neutral and moral language sexual meanings as we have reached a conclusion that any word could have sexual meanings. Pejorative terms, deeply ingrained

in Egyptian vernacular, denote illicit and immoral behaviors associated with a latent state of repression. These traumatic emotions stem from poverty, social inequality, injustice, and political oppression. The adverse socioeconomic conditions have led to a deterioration of morals and ethics, which are implicitly shown in language. I argue that changing words with neutral or moral meanings into words with negative meanings is a way for people to subtly or unconsciously fight against the oppressions that society puts on them. Because they couldn't say what they were angry and disgusted about directly, they showed it in a more subtle way by replacing moral and religious words with immoral and sexual ones. As the study has shown, the majority of pejorative lexical items tend to be feminine rather than masculine in designating women with insulting language. This suggests that the male-dominant culture acted as the oppressor by using these terms to characterize women with the most undesirable traits, primarily centered on suppressed sexual urges. In addition, with the widening gap between social classes and the shrinking middle class, the language used in the streets has become much less polite. People now use words with unethical and immoral meanings instead of those with moral ones. This is a way for people to protest and become enraged about the unjust social conditions that impact societies.

According to the study findings, the majority of derogatory lexical words were employed in discourse during the final two decades of the 20th century, and they are still increasing to their highest level in the 21st. The social framework of semantically pejorative terms and their contextual actuality appears to correlate with the decline of ethics. The notion of socially pejorative language among humans arises from the degradation of morals and ethics within societal systems. Miller and Swift (1976:50) contend that language functions as a cultural medium reflecting dominant society ideas<sup>[41]</sup>. With the blurring of the lines between language and culture, language has evolved into a medium for communicating social ideology and culture. We have not devalued the language; rather, we have degraded its social and cultural significance. Bynon asserts that the lexicon is intricately linked to the spiritual and material cultures of its speakers and that semantic change should be comprehended within a cultural framework<sup>[42]</sup>. Two primary mechanisms are intimately linked, leading to the degradation of Egyptian Arabic. Socialization is shaped mostly by societal norms,

with an individual's worldview playing a secondary role. Dominant societal standards and ethics significantly influence individual views in a culture<sup>[43]</sup>. The comprehension of lexical elements by speakers is profoundly shaped by societal norms, value systems, and ethics. In the Preface to his Dictionary, Dr. Johnson observes a reciprocal link between the prevailing ethics of countries and their language, claiming that "[...] languages, like governments, have an inherent inclination toward degeneration [...]"<sup>[44]</sup>. He asserts that "words, akin to their creators, often degrade from their original forms<sup>[44]</sup>". Trench (1892) contends that dominant ethical concepts and morals mostly influence the development of moral language<sup>[45]</sup>. Borkowska and Kleparski contend that:

The origin of "knight" exemplifies this phenomenon, as cultural changes frequently prompt the re-evaluation of terminology. Initially, "knight" signified 'a lad,' but it evolved into a term of rank linked to military and feudal circumstances. The term "minister" has had a semantic evolution; it originally signified 'servant,' but now refers to 'the head of a government agency' or 'a diplomatic official generally ranking below an ambassador, representing a state or sovereign internationally<sup>[46]</sup>.'

Moral language is getting worse because cultural values and social bonds are breaking down, there are too many shallow religious beliefs, there is no social justice or religious freedom, and people are being sexually repressed. Terms such as *tayyib* and *baraka*, formerly signifying positive attributes, are now carrying negative connotations. One could interpret the decline of moral lexical phrases as an unconscious rebellion against the fundamental degradation of these values. Cultures see moral and ethical standards as signs of fragility. When the value system deteriorates, it can lead to frailty, ignorance, and stupidity. Individuals inadvertently project their adverse emotions about the fractured value system onto moral linguistic entities, obliterating their positive connotations and supplanting them with unequivocally negative interpretations. Stern asserted that negative alterations are more emotionally charged than ameliorative adjustments. He said that pejorative extensions occur when the speaker perceives a characteristic of the referent as negative, humiliating, or trivial<sup>[46]</sup>. Situational factors, cultural

norms, socioeconomic realities, and other factors in the environment all have different effects that make words mostly have negative meanings. This is how language fits in with its surroundings.

## 6. Conclusions

In Egyptian Arabic, pejoration is prominent, evident in sexually suggestive vocabulary phrases. Pejorative lexical elements are disproportionately evident in terms that describe women. Moreover, moral lexical elements overrepresent negative lexical items. Pejoration has significantly intensified in Egyptian Arabic since the beginning of the 21st century. The century clearly displays vernacular language and colloquial expressions. Informal language significantly affects individuals. They begin to comprehend classical and religious writings through the lens of their vernacular background rather than through modern standard Arabic and classical texts. The significance of lexical items in colloquial language has diverged from Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. The ethically and semantically negative terms contradict their original meanings. In certain instances, a derogatory connotation might entirely replace the original meaning in both official Arabic and colloquial discourse. Consequently, contemporary Arab audiences are unlikely to comprehend the original significance of classical and formal literature, nor can they interpret the oral religious or cultural messages conveyed in formal Arabic. A multitude of Classical Arabic terms employed in religious and traditional manuscripts have undergone pejoration in meaning, elucidating the current ambiguity present in many old texts. As a result, one important finding of this study is that it emphasizes the need for historical linguists to look into pejorative language in Classical Arabic literature in order to fully understand and correctly interpret the texts' unclear and confusing messages. This study recommends further investigation into cross-cultural comparisons by examining the use of derogatory terms in Arabic, along with other languages, which is widespread. Such an analysis aims to identify both commonalities and distinctive characteristics, thereby augmenting the linguistic value of the research. It is also important to look into what pejorative language means for language education and policy, especially when it comes to promoting

inclusive language practices and fighting linguistic bias. The implementation of these recommendations will significantly deepen the understanding of pejoration within the Arabic language and its broader societal ramifications.

## Author Contributions

This research is written by S.M.I. and M.A.S.K. S.M.I.'s contribution is 80%. Conceptualization, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; methodology, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; investigation, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; resources, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; data curation, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; writing—original draft preparation, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; writing—review and editing, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; visualization, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; supervision, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K.; project administration, S.M.I. and M.A.S.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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