

Charles University
Faculty of Education
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Bachelor Thesis

Changes of Meaning of English Vocabulary with Examples from
Works by William Shakespeare

Změny významu slov v anglické slovní zásobě s příklady z díla
Williama Shakespeara

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Author's declaration

Odevzdáním této bakalářské/diplomové práce na téma Změny významu slov v anglické slovní zásobě s příklady z díla Williama Shakespeara potvrzuji, že jsem ji vypracoval/a pod vedením vedoucího práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále potvrzuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se skládá ze 3 částí. Teoretická část obsahuje přehled typů změn významu slov a příkladů k nim, vypracovaného na základě studia teoretické literatury. Druhá část je praktická, pojednává o Anglickém jazyce v dané době a Shakespearově vlastním přínosu k vývoji jazyka. Následují příklady slov vybraných ze dvou Shakespearových komedií, které ilustrují sémantické změny vysvětlené v první části práce. Závěr poté shrnuje zjištěné informace.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Historická sémantika, sémantická změna, William Shakespeare, Anglický jazyk, význam slova, vývoj jazyka

ANNOTATION

This Bachelor thesis consists of three parts. The theoretical part includes an overview of the types of semantic change and their examples, based on studying theoretical literature. The second part is practical. It deals with the English language of the period and provides information about Shakespeare's own contribution to the development of English. It is followed by examples from two of Shakespeare's comedies, which illustrate the semantic change presented in the theoretical part. The conclusion sums up the results of the research.

KEYWORDS

Historical Semantics, Semantic Change, William Shakespeare, the English language, the meaning of word, language development

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1 Introduction

Every language is a living organism, which is in a constant state of evolving. English, from its very beginning in the Anglo-Saxon times to the language that it is today, has come a long way, having been influenced by other languages, religion and social development.

The grammar of English has changed a lot as well as the vocabulary. There are new words created all the time as they are needed to name the ever-expanding world – new inventions or discoveries. They also come from other languages, usually together with the concepts they represent - the English language has acquired many of them from the interaction with other cultures. But there are also words which have been in the language for centuries in the same or just slightly altered forms. Some of these, however, have come to mean something else than what they used to.

The phenomenon is related to as the semantic change or shift, and it is studied by a science called historical semantics. This discipline traces various meanings the word has had throughout history, and it tries to figure out the reasons for such change. Although it seems that most of the changes are rather random, there are some classifications that show the most typical tendencies with which the words alter their meanings.

This bachelor thesis consists of two parts. The first one will offer an overview of the types of semantic change. The classification is based on works of various authors, so that it can cover all of the types, and it will provide examples for each of them. It will also summarize the most common reasons for change of meaning.

In the second part, the previously presented theory shall be applied to concrete examples from two works by William Shakespeare. Since Shakespeare is often related to as one of the greatest innovators of the English language, it is only to be expected, that he also brought about many innovations in the field of semantic development. Thus, two hypotheses have been designed.

1. Shakespeare introduced many new expressions to the English language. Some were devised by himself, other were composed by combining already existing words or linguistic elements. The analysis of the plays will try to discover, how big a part of all the new expressions were created by semantic change, i.e. ascribing the words a new meaning.
2. Based on the theoretical research, the example words from Shakespeare's plays will be divided into groups accordingly. Thus, a comprehensive overview will be

created, which will allow for determination of the most common type of the semantic change. I assume that such type will be semantic broadening.

I chose this topic for my bachelor thesis because though fascinating, the subject has not been taught at the Department of the English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Education within bachelor studies programme. Though it might prove more difficult to put together all the required information and reliable sources without any grounding on this topic, the work will definitely be enlightening for me, a keen student of the English language and history and a Shakespeare enthusiast.

For the theoretical part I primarily worked with books and articles focusing on semantics in general, as well as particularly on the historical semantics. For the practical part, I used mainly books by the linguist David Crystal and his son Ben Crystal, a Shakespeare actor. For the research of the etymologies and word meanings, I worked with the Oxford English Dictionary as a reliable source which offers extensive amount of information on the topic of history of the English language.

2 Theoretical part

2.1 Semantics – what is meaning

The meaning of words in a language, the fact that they convey a certain concept when used in a particular place in the structure of a sentence, is studied by a branch of linguistics called semantics. (*How Language Works* 186)

Contemporary semantics opts for a conventionalist point of view, which claims that the words chosen to carry a particular meaning are purely arbitrary – as opposed to a naturalist viewpoint which claims that there is a certain connection between the sound of the words and the idea or the object in the real world that that the word represents. The exception are the so called onomatopoeic words such as ‘splash’, ‘bang’, ‘boom’ etc. that describe the phenomenon in the real world quite credibly. (*How Language works* 187)

There are various views on the connection between the real world and language, but all of them ultimately agree on the fact, that when people encounter the things in the real world – the referents, they create an idea or a concept of those things in their minds and they assign names to them, i.e. words. That does not, however, mean that there is one unique word for each item in the real world, sometimes a single word form can stand for various things and vice versa, one thing can have various names. Also, not all the languages are the same and the connection between the language and reality may differ. The Czech word ‘noha’ can stand for either the English ‘leg’ or ‘foot’, or ‘ruka’ can refer to either the whole arm or just the hand. In the case of ‘cousin’, English only has one word for the family members of both genders while for example Czech or French distinguish them (‘bratranec/sestřenice’ and ‘cousin/cousine’). (*How Language works* 188)

In many cases it is not easy or even possible to tell the word’s meaning if it stands alone – the word ‘table’ could mean ‘a piece of furniture with one or more legs and a flat top providing a level surface to for eating, writing etc’ or it could be ‘a set of facts or figures systematically displayed, especially in columns’ (Oxford English Dictionary). The context of a sentence or at least some further information is needed to distinguish which one of the possible meanings is used. Those words are called polysemic and most of the language consists of such words. (*How Language Works* 29). The words that have only one meaning in the language, i.e. Monosemous words in most cases denote very unique things such as proper names or they are scientific terms. The meaning of those is fully obvious even without any other context.

Talking about a meaning of a word may not always lead to a precise definition – there are multi-word expressions, where each word, when it stands alone means something fundamentally different than the whole phrase. Such expressions can be for example idioms such as ‘kick the bucket’ (to die), etc. So to avoid confusion, if the distinction is not clear, it is better to talk about ‘lexemes’ or ‘lexical terms’ when dealing with basic units of semantic meaning. (*How language works* 30)

In reality, meaning is also subject to individual use, even though there are dictionary definitions of what each word means. It depends on the speaker’s social standing, mental state, age, or interest in a particular field. A child might call a dolphin a fish because he or she made this distinction only on the basis of what he or she already knows (has fins, swims and lives in water). Or a person with interest or knowledge of astronomy may argue with others that shooting stars are not stars at all and that the Sun is. (Hock 282) The differences are there, but they can usually be overcome and differences explained based on the situation.

2.2 Semantic fields

From the semantic point of view, to work with the whole lexicon of English at once is impossible. Also using the alphabetical order typical for dictionaries does not make the task much easier either. Many words that relate to each other are separated by countless other entries based only on their ‘physical form’ and not how their meanings relate to each other. That is why a much more practical approach is often employed. It is based on separating words into so called semantic fields. Those group words with meaning related to a certain concept that relate to each other, such as parts of the body, foods, moods etc. (*How language works* 30)

2.3 Change of meaning

As it has been stated, language never stays the same, but due to various influences it changes, so that it can suffice the current needs of its speakers. It is obvious when it comes to vocabulary, where every day new words are ‘born’ through some of the word formation processes or ‘die’ by slowly falling out of use when they are replaced by a newer and more popular expression. That is a matter dealt with by lexicology. Words can, however, even

without changing their form, undergo the transformation by acquiring a new meaning, i.e. by undergoing a semantic change.

It is important not to forget the fact that language, especially when it comes to semantics and word meaning, cannot be studied only from the linguistic point of view, as it is closely intertwined with the real world as well as the society. It is the people who speak the language and their understanding of the world, on whom the language depends on the most. It is a long process from somebody using a word or an expression in an innovative way, to such time when the word with this new meaning becomes fully integrated in the structure of the language. (Gábor 4 - 6) (Blank and Koch 4-6)

The change of meaning of words and expressions happens in every language all the time. Luckily for the speakers, this change usually takes quite a long time, and therefore gives the users of the language the chance to adapt to it. In fact, there is usually a period of time, when the two or more meanings coexist in the language side by side. Usually, only the preferred meaning survives. If the language's lexicon changed every time somebody used a word to describe something else than what has been established as conventionalized meaning, the language would become incomprehensible within a very short time. It is, however, how the semantic change can be brought about.

Most of the semantic changes traced in English appear to be rather random, but there is one tendency. The language is created by its speakers and they, for the sake of comprehensibility, usually choose to give the word a new meaning based on some sort of similarity or relatedness to the old one. It is easier to accept for both the speaker and the hearer than coming up with a brand-new expression or using one that is absolutely unrelated.

So even though it is not easy to follow and classify the semantic change that has happened and to figure out what triggered it, there are several established types of change.

2.4 Types of semantic change

Semantic widening and Semantic narrowing are very common types of semantic change. They operate on the basis of hypernymy and hyponymy – a classification of words where one word is superordinate to a group of other words or in more layman's terms it names the group – for example the word 'flower' is a hypernym to a group of co-hyponyms such as 'rose', 'tulip', 'daisy' ... and others.

Pejoration and Amelioration are meaning change processes that cause the word to gain more negative or positive meaning than it used to have.

Metaphor and Metonymy operate on the basis of some similarity or closeness between the real world referents. If such connection can be found, than a word originally denoting one of the things can be used to refer also to the other one.

2.4.1 Semantic widening

Semantic widening, i.e. broadening or generalization of meaning is a process of semantic change that causes a situation where the word's meaning becomes more general, or as the name suggests: wider – it encompasses more concepts. This type of change results in quite an understandable alteration. The original meaning of the word is still included in the new meaning.

There is a couple of examples of the semantic widening in the vocabulary for the animal kingdom. One of them is the word 'bird'. The very origin of the word is unknown, however, there was one, quite similar word in Old English: 'brid'. It would stand for a baby bird or a chick. The word for an adult bird used at the time was 'fowl', (now still in the language, but with a different meaning see semantic narrowing). 'Bird' and 'brid' coexisted in English until about the 15th century, from whence on only 'bird' remained in the general language. 'Bird' was later also used in British slang in association with women. The origin of this association could, however, be traced back to the Middle Ages, when there was the word 'burd' used for young women. Thus, it is not certain, from which form the slang use arose. (Cresswell)

The process of semantic widening also affected the word 'hound', which until the Middle Ages was the term naming all the canine animals. Now it refers only to particular breeds of dogs. (Cresswell)

A similar process identifies with the word 'apple', which, in the period of Old English could stand for any fruit, while now it only refers to one type. The reason for this transition is unknown. It might, however, have something to do with the fact that the apples are the most common fruit in Middle and northern Europe. Thus, before the times when people started to travel more, it could have been the only fruit generally known. (Cresswell)

2.4.2 Semantic narrowing

Semantic narrowing or specialization is a process of meaning change opposite to semantic widening. When a word undergoes this process, its meaning becomes more specific. The new meaning of a word, which has been altered through the process of semantic narrowing, is usually one of the more specific meanings included in the original word. Often, it is the one meaning that is used more frequently than the other meanings or the general one.

The previously mentioned word ‘fowl’ (in the Old English period meaning any kind of adult bird) has swapped places with ‘bird’ and narrowed its meaning down only to a chick of domestic breeds of birds such as poultry. It is, nevertheless, still in use in current English as a ‘wildfowl’ and ‘waterfowl’. (Cresswell)

One of the most well-known examples is the word ‘deer’. It comes from the Indo-European root which used to mean ‘breathing creature’, so there is no wonder that in Old English, it could refer to any four-legged animal. It was narrowed down to its current meaning the Middle Ages. (Cresswell)

Similar is the case of ‘meat’ a word derived from the Old English ‘mete’, which, back then, could denote any kind of meal or food instead of the con-current, much narrower meaning, animal flesh. (Cresswell)

Semantic narrowing affected also two words related to females. The first one is ‘girl’. Though its origin is uncertain, nowadays we know that up to about 16th century it could refer to a child of any gender. The other word is ‘wife’, which is used in Modern English for a married woman. Originally, however, it could stand for any woman, no matter her marital status. Its old meaning is in use only in Scotland nowadays. (Cresswell)

There is a special case of this type of change that affects place names. It is manifested by the usage of a general word denoting a place, a building, a part of town etc, for naming a particular site that is so famous or significant that no other designation is needed. The word ‘city’ is still used to mean a large town, but when spelled as The City it stands for the central part of London where many large companies reside. Similarly, The word ‘tower’ normally refers to a high narrow building which is often a part of a church or a castle. It can be, however, used in connection to a famous fortress in London, The Tower. Also, the word ‘highlands’ meaning a mountainous area could be used as a name for a part of Scotland.

(Palada 2) Those words have not changed their meaning, the original one is still used in everyday speech and thus they became polysemic. It is, however, clear that when they are used together with a definite article (and in written text with a capital letter), they signify certain places and not random ones of that description.

2.4.3 Amelioration

In opposition to semantic narrowing and widening, when a word undergoes the process of amelioration, it has nothing to do with its specificity, but the newly acquired meaning is more positive than the old one. The shift in the connotative meaning is usually not from completely negative to a perfectly positive, but it is more subtle.

‘Pretty’, for instance, has come a long way from its original meaning ‘cunning or crafty’. It acquired its modern sense ‘attractive’ in about 15th century, but in the meanwhile it would also stand for ‘skilful, brave or admirable’. (Cresswell)

‘Knight’, (‘chiht’ at the time) was in Old English used to stand for a boy or a servant. During the Middle Ages it would signify a man who rose to an honourable military rank after being a servant to a nobleman. (Cresswell)

‘Terribly’ is a word derived from ‘terror’. It still bears the meaning of something ‘awful or horrible’, but it is often used instead of ‘very’, as in ‘terribly sorry’ etc. (Cresswell)

2.4.4 Pejoration

Pejoration is a process opposite to amelioration. The new meaning the word gains is more negative or even derogatory. This process is far more common than amelioration.

In the Old English Period, ‘silly’ had a rather positive connotation, as it used to mean ‘happy’ or ‘lucky’ or even ‘blessed by God’. In the later Middle Ages, however, people started to relate goodness with simplicity or even stupidity and thus the meaning of the word changed to ‘foolish’. (Cresswell)

‘Villain’ is derived from the Latin word ‘villa’ – a country house. In its original sense it would relate to a feudal. The word got its negative sense when people started to use it as an

insult for anyone low-born and later it became associated with a person who committed a crime. (Cresswell)

‘Notorious’ was originally an equivalent of ‘well-known’. However, it has been used in connection with something negative so often, that the word itself became negative. (Cresswell)

Many words are influenced by the process of pejoration because they are frequently used as a euphemism. It could be a euphemism for something that is considered a taboo in the society or any time, when the speaker wants to avoid saying something openly. Such words may gradually replace the original expression and in this way gain more negative meaning. (‘Pejoration in Language’)

2.4.5 Metaphor

Metaphor is generally known as a literary device used in literature and poetry to make the artistic work more interesting and colourful, but it is also a type of semantic change. In its essence, metaphor is a perceived similarity between the two objects or concepts. (‘Why Study Semantic Change?’ 6) And when such a comparison is used often enough, it is accepted by the linguistic community and the word gains a new meaning. Therefore, in opposition to such processes as semantic narrowing, widening, amelioration and pejoration, the word does not lose its old denotation, but it gains a new one and the two or more meanings coexist in the language side by side, i.e. the word becomes polysemic.

The semantic change created through the metaphorical usage is quite frequent, and it is based on some similarity between the two. Also, it usually involves a word with a rather concrete meaning that acquires a more abstract one. (‘Why Study Semantic Change?’ 6) Logically, the concrete things in the real world were named sooner than the abstract concepts, which, in many cases were created or became of any concern to the society much later.

Also, the linguistic use of metaphor differs from the artistic one. The artistic metaphor is being used in its full wording and it is clear to both the author and the receiver that the connection is only figurative. With the words affected by metaphor as a trigger of semantic change, the comparison is no longer required and is often even forgotten. All that remains is an old word with a new, fully conventionalised meaning. (Palada 4 - 5)

The words that were altered while being used as metaphorical expressions, in most cases retain their original meaning. 'Foot' still denotes a part of a body but it can be also used as 'a foot of a hill'. The analogy here is based on the similar position. 'Eye' as an organ of sight coexists with 'an eye of a needle'. They have a similar shape, but otherwise they are completely different. Change of meaning, or rather addition of a new one based on resemblance of the two objects is often employed when there is a need to name a new invention. Thus, we have a 'computer mouse', a device that helps us operate a computer, not that dissimilar to the small rodent. Alike is also the case of 'computer or television screen' which comes from the word 'screen' meaning 'a wooden panel used to part a room into two parts'. (Hollmann 531)

Some adjectives relating to sensory experiences have changed the to what they can relate to, i.e. moved from one sense to another. It is based on similarity of experiences people feel when they encounter those. So, for example words originally relating only to touch may be also associated with taste; or adjectives for taste may be transferred to smell. Thus, there are expressions like: 'sour smell', 'loud colours' or 'sharp taste'. (Krifka 2)

2.4.6 Metonymy

Metonymy is a type of semantic change based on contiguity of two concepts. There are several types of metonymy, although their classification often differs. The types of metonymy involve 'substitution of part for the whole or whole for a part', 'shift between cause and effect', 'replacing the names of container for the contained' and also 'a place of origin or a maker for a product'.

The words that acquired a new meaning through being used as a metonymy usually still retain their original meaning. But when used in a specific situation and context, it becomes obvious which of their various senses is being denoted.

Quite a frequent example of the phenomenon can be observed in a situation when a word denoting a part of something is used to signify a whole. Thus, when mentioning for example 'factory hands' or 'field hands', the word 'hand' does not stand for only the part of the human body, but it denotes the workers. The reason why this term became a regular part of the language is quite logical, as hands are the part of the body associated with getting things done. No wonder then that the word 'hand' may be used in many more similar

expressions such as ‘Do you need a hand’ (do you need help with something), or a slightly altered form - ‘handy’ meaning ‘useful or convenient for easy usage’, i.e. ‘likely to help us get things done’. Other examples may be ‘head’ (as in ‘head count’, when people who are present, not only their heads are being counted), or ‘word’ as in ‘I want to have a word with you’ meaning ‘I want to discuss something with you’,

Another case is such where a term for a product is substituted by the name of its creator, inventor or manufacturer. This type of shift is often applied to technical units such as ‘Ampere’, ‘Watt’, ‘Volt’, etc., which are originally names of the scientists who discovered them. (Palada 6) Quite frequent is also naming a whole branch of products by the name of one, i.e. the most famous manufacturer or brand, which produces these items. Thus, when asked for a ‘Kleenex’ a ‘Hoover’ or a pair of ‘Wellingtons’, it is not the ownership of an international company or a person who popularised wearing of waterproof boots, that is being requested, but one of their products.

The substitution of an author’s or artist’s name for their works is quite common as well, and nobody stops in confusion and wonders how can ‘a Shakespeare be read’ or ‘a newly purchased Picasso be hung on the wall in a person’s living room’. Such change can also involve place names, and thus ‘The White House’ or ‘The Downing Street’ can make an important announcement. As they are so generally known for who resides and works in them, it is apparent that the statement was not made by the buildings and neither by the common staff. (Palada 6)

A place of origin can also be used instead of a name of a product or an object. Most people are familiar with such wines as Champagne or Burgundy, but not many stop to wonder, where those names came from and that they are actually the same as the place the products come from. ‘Jeans’ originated in an Italian town of Genova, the usage of the name of the fabric for a pair of trousers has, however, nothing to do with a similarly sounding name of the place of origin. It represents the ‘material for the product’, i.e. a type of metonymy. Similar cases are: nickel, glass, or iron. (Palada 5)

2.4.7 Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization is a special case of semantic change that touches not only the lexicon of the language, it but reaches also to morphology and syntax. It is concerned with semantic shifts which have resulted in lexical words becoming grammatical ones.

It is by this process that the English constructions for denoting future processes originated. The verbs 'go' and 'will' originally bore only the meanings of 'motion' and 'desire' respectively, but in Modern English they can function as parts of constructions for talking about the future. Both of them, however, retained even their original meaning. It is nonetheless important to distinguish those two. For example, especially in spoken English, it is quite common to shorten the expression 'going to' to 'gonna' when it is being used so as to talk about future. It is, however, incorrect when the verb is being used to signify motion, as in 'I'm gonna to London.' (Hollmann 538 – 539)

Another case of grammaticalization of the word 'very'. Originally it comes from French 'vrai', meaning 'true' or 'real'. Nowadays, it is used as an intensifier of other adjectives. Other examples may be 'really' and 'right' (Hollmann 533)

2.5 Reasons for the semantic change

The semantic change is quite a common type of vocabulary change. In most cases the reason for it is unknown. It is the reason why this phenomenon has often been overlooked by linguists. As scientists in any other field, in ideal case, they would aim for defining some patterns for the changes and not only create lists of single examples. (Hollmann 532-533) Also, with such irregularity in the process of semantic change in the past, it is impossible to predict what the future may bring. There are, though, some situations which can trigger the shift from one meaning to another.

One that has been explained earlier is the similarity between the two concepts, which results in first using the word in metaphorical comparison, and later in the word acquiring a new meaning. Similar is the case of metonymy, which is based on contiguity or closeness of the two likened concepts.

Another situation which gives rise to semantic change occurs when people find it necessary to invent or use a new expression for a well-known concept when dealing with

taboos. Endeavour to avoid anything unpleasant is deeply rooted in the human nature. Thus, when people cannot avoid addressing those unpopular topics completely, they tend to become rather inventive and come up with euphemisms or synonyms. Hock, in his *Principles of historical semantics* when dealing with this particular topic states: 'A common avoidance strategy is to replace the tabooed item by a different, frequently euphemistic expression which is semantically appropriate. But the new expression, in turn, tends to become taboo, since it is likewise felt to be too closely linked with the tabooed point of reference. The consequence may be a chain of ever-changing replacements, a constant turnover in vocabulary. (Hock 293) He then provides an example of a list of various expressions for denoting toilet, as this is one of the areas that is often subject to taboo. Crystal, for example, devotes a whole chapter of *Words in Time and Place* to different words for dying used throughout the history of the English language.

Some words, especially in the last century, acquired a meaning that has absolutely nothing to do with their original one. All that only owed to the younger speakers of the language and their fondness of slang. Young people are always trying to differ from the older generations and that includes even their language preferences. Well-known is the expression that something is 'cool', meaning super or fashionable, though the word's original meaning refers to temperature.

Generally, it is also important to state, that as language is a human construct, it is dependent on its speakers and all the social and cultural changes. This can result in changing the connotative meaning depending on the social status of the referent, as it happened with various names for the Afro-American citizens. Old words can also gain a new meaning when there is a need for naming a new invention such as 'a car' or 'a truck.' (Hock 300) Common is also the change of meaning started off when the word was associated with something negative, i.e. tabooed and was no longer used.

3 Practical part

Shakespeare is one of the most influential personas when it comes to the English language. The plays he wrote are still widely studied and performed all around the world. It is a common knowledge that he is the author of many new expressions and words that are still used in the English language.

He lived and worked during the Elizabethan period. In comparison with the past, the English used at the time was already quite similar to the language we use today. It is therefore quite understandable for the contemporary. But from time to time the readers may still encounter passages that seem to be incomprehensible. That may be for various reasons. Either they are not familiar with the allusions to other art works or the realia of time when the works were created. Or it may be because the language has changed since the work was written – some words may have changed their form or meaning, or they may not have been used at all since then.

This bachelor thesis focuses on semantic change. Its first part presented an overview of such changes and provided a couple of examples to illustrate how each of the changes works. This part will present some basic information on the overall changes of the language in the 16-17th centuries as well as Shakespeare's own contribution to the development of the language. It will also impart examples of words and expressions that are used differently now or that have had various meanings at the time.

The presented examples are chosen from *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. The reason why these two comedies were chosen not so often a subject to literary and linguistic studies. They are, nevertheless, likely to offer many examples of the innovative usage of language. Also, the two plays chosen for this analysis were written at various points in Shakespeare's career and it is therefore quite probable that they might provide some examples of semantic development.

The example words are divided into categories according to the type of change that they underwent. Some of the words have changed more times but for the sake of clarity they are listed just under type of semantic change. The categories are the same as in the first part of this thesis. Grammaticalization has been omitted from this part, because it is not purely matter of semantics and the most common examples of it have been described in the theoretical part. Each of the example words is accompanied by several example phrases from Shakespeare's texts so that all the plausible meanings are illustrated.

Knowing something about the change of meaning may be helpful when studying the plays. Some of the words used in them might not be used at all anymore and some may have meant something different at the time. And as the words that have changed their meaning retain the same form as they used to have, they may sometimes lead the viewers to think that the text does not make sense. Theatre plays are texts primarily written to be performed on stage, which means there is no time to check a dictionary for an unknown expression. Thus, it is good to be familiarized with as many potentially problematic expressions as possible in advance. (Shakespeare 18)

3.1 The development of the English language during the Elizabethan period from historical and sociological perspective

The renaissance in England was, as elsewhere in Europe, time of huge changes in the society. Although it arrived there almost two centuries later than it started in Italy, the British managed to develop their unique style.

The renaissance started as an opposition to people's medieval views and the ubiquitous presence church. It focused mainly on the people and their everyday lives. Thus, people had more time to produce art, amuse themselves with various forms of entertainment or work on scientific discoveries. The word renaissance means re-birth, in this case it is the rebirth of the Classical culture. The themes typical for the Greek and Roman times were rediscovered in Renaissance and images from their mythology or allusions to it were often the central motives of the artworks.

From the political point of view, the Elizabethan period was finally a rather peaceful time in the country after the extensive period of the civil war. There was, however, the constant threat from the catholic countries, which did not approve of England being protestant. In opposition to that, this period is often called the Golden Age. It is due to the rapid spread of the British Empire as a result of foreign travels, which brought new territories alongside with various material riches.

The language of the period was what we now call the Early Modern English. It is usually dated between 1476 (introduction of printing press in England) and the end of the 18th century. It was the period of transition between Middle English and the Modern English that is spoken today.

During this period, the English language underwent many changes, although not so dramatic as in the previous one. Many linguists started to work on fixing the countless

inconsistencies in spelling, as well as the usage of certain word forms. As a consequence, the language finally started getting its first standardized form. Since the centre of the power and culture was London, the southern version of the language became the model for this standard. There was a yet distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ English. This distinction was formed on the frequency of usage of the ‘learned’ and the ‘rude’ i.e. Anglo-Saxon language. (*The Stories of English* 297-298)

The vocabulary of the language grew immensely. English borrowed many words from Latin or Greek as it was believed that using expressions of foreign origin made a person sound more educated. It was also due to the advances in various natural sciences, law and religion, which required specialized terminology. New vocabulary also appeared hand in hand with discoveries from travelling the world. Many words were created by transition from one word class to another i.e. functional shift, and also frequent usage of prefixes and suffixes. Some words were also subject to semantic change and thus have been used with a new meaning from the Early Modern English period on. (*The Stories of English* 285-291)

The renaissance period was very encouraging for artists of all kinds, but especially for writers and poets it must have been indeed interesting. The evolution and growth of the language presented new possibilities. It resulted in the usage of more playful and often metaphorical language. This playfulness allowed for creation of a wide-spread obsession with various coded inscriptions and messages and other forms of sophisticated riddles. (*A Very British Renaissance*, Episode 2)

Culture regained its interest in the Classical period and thus not only reopened the whole mass of topics from classical mythology but also the society’s fondness for theatre. Also, the form of a sonnet was brought over from Italy and provided a new fashionable form of poetry.

3.2 Shakespeare’s contribution to the evolution of the English language

It is common knowledge that Shakespeare himself was one of the most influential contributors to the language of his period. He, however, also made use of all the possibilities the period offered for his own artistic purposes.

He abundantly wrote sonnets. Even though they were still rather new, he altered the established verse pattern and thus created the so called ‘Shakespearian sonnet’, which became very famous.

As a playwright, he produced all the types of plays common during renaissance, i.e. comedies, tragedies, and historical plays. As for the topics of his plays, he often copied stories previously devised by other authors. It is, however, due to his masterful usage of language that they were the plays he wrote, which survived and are performed and celebrated to this day.

Shakespeare's contribution to the language is immense. He is praised for introducing many new words to the English language. There are countless studies and articles on this topic. The new words come from various sources.

A frequently employed technique of Shakespeare's is creating new vocabulary by the means of conversion. In other words, no new word form is created by this process but rather an already existing word is used as a different part of speech. Thus, verbs become nouns, nouns begin to be used as adjectives etc. The examples would be: beseech (verb to noun), impair (verb to adjective), glove (noun to verb), etc. ('Functional Shift') The process is called zero derivation, as there is nothing changed about the form of the. Words can also become another part of speech when various suffixes, which carry this type of change, are added to them. For instance, suffixes such as -able, -ant, -ful cause that the word becomes an adjective, or when -ly is added, the word is altered to an adverb. Quite common is also the opposite process, when the suffix is taken away and thus the words are back-formed. It is used for changing nouns into verbs.

Shakespeare often created new words by adding prefixes to already existing expressions and thus assigning them a new meaning. Among the quite famous examples are the words altered by the usage of the prefix out-, such as 'outpray', 'outswear' or 'outvillain'. They are not in use anymore. (*The Stories of English* 322) Quite common is adding prefixes such as 'un-', 'in-', 'dis-' etc. which causes that the word gains an opposite meaning.

Shakespeare did not only recycle words that were commonly used, but also devised some completely new ones. He did so in order to have an expression that would fully suffice his needs and express precisely what he needed.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Shakespeare is the author of 2035 expressions. But in reality, the fact that he was the first one to have used them in writing does not prove that he invented them. Especially when it comes to the rather common expressions, it is more probable that they were used in daily basis and he just overheard them somewhere. He then employed them in his works when he felt they might fit into a character's speech. In case of the more unusual words that were not part of the everyday language, it is more likely that he came up with them on his own for his own purposes. It is, however, impossible to be

certain, which of the words attributed to him, he actually coined and which ones he just reutilized. But even if we decide to only accept that he was the author of only half of them, it is still the largest contribution to the English language anyone has ever made. (*The Stories of English* 332)

The matter of how many new words Shakespeare created is not the only reason why he is celebrated for influencing the English language so much. It is also how he could work with the more common vocabulary. He was a master of using language in unexpected ways and thus being very innovative with it.

A frequently used strategy is repetition, where a single word form is used several times within a space of a couple of lines. The word, however carries a different meaning each time, or it is used as another part of speech. This repetition makes the text more interesting to read and it also shows the author's genius in being able to employ or even design various meanings for the word.

It is well known that Shakespeare often used blank verse – the unrhymed iambic pentameter in his plays. The form is usually limited to speeches of the characters from the higher social classes. In opposition to that, when a speech or a line is written for somebody of lower social standing, they speak in prose. Also, the vocabulary they use differs. The noblemen's language tends to be full of the 'high' language words, namely of French or Latin origin, while the common men's speeches would be the 'low' sort of the language. What may as well sometimes cause confusion when we study the texts of Shakespeare's plays is the varied word order. In most cases it was employed so that the chosen words can fit into the iambic metre. For the same reason, some words are shortened or otherwise altered.

One of the most typical features of Shakespeare's writing is the usage of figurative expressions. Some of them are still part of everyday language, or they are at least familiar to the general public. 'In my mind's eye' used in (*Hamlet*), 'I have been in such a pickle' (*The Tempest*) are just a couple of examples chosen from many others that have survived the four centuries. The texts of the plays are full of metaphors and similes. There are some extended ones such as the 'Seven stages of man's age' speech from *As you like it*, where the human life is compared to a theatre play. There are also some that are not so memorable or were used only on a single occasion. Nevertheless, they still make the text of the plays much more interesting to read.

The texts of the plays are full of allusions to other literary texts or to the classical mythology. Though the original stories were generally known in the period when the plays were written, they might present a problem today when people are often not familiar with

them. Some knowledge that reaches beyond familiarity with the language is also required for example with the famous flower scene from *Hamlet*. Ophelia, who loses her mind after being rejected by Hamlet and her father's death, returns to the Elsinore castle with a bunch of flowers. She then hands the flowers out to particular people to express what she feels towards them. Although it may seem just like an act from an insane person, each of the flowers has a special meaning. Not knowing the symbolism may cause a part of the ingeniousness of the scene to be lost.

Describing everything that the English language owes to William Shakespeare would provide enough material for a whole book. And in truth, there are countless books and other linguistic and historical works written about the bard and his work. This bachelor thesis, however, focuses on semantic change, and thus that will be the topic of the following part.

3.3 The works used

Both the plays contain characters from low as well as high social classes, and thus there are examples of 'high' and 'low' speech. There is blank verse used and so is prose. They have other features typical for Shakespeare's plays, such as magic, mistaken identities, unrequited love etc.

3.3.1 Love's labour's lost

This play is usually dated sometime around 1595, though it is not possible to say for sure, it is still in the first half of the bard's career. It follows a story of the king of Navarre and his three friends. They swear to each other to abstain from most of the worldly pleasures and plunge themselves into studying for the upcoming three years. This oath of theirs includes constant studies, fasting and avoiding the company of women.

Then, however, a French princess and her three ladies come to visit the court of Navarre and the men are under obligation to meet them. To their misfortune, they each fall in love with one of the ladies. The play then depicts the men's pursuit of the women, the love letters, poems, and gifts they send them and also their unsuccessful attempts to hide their feelings from the rest of their group. Ultimately, they agree to break their oath and pursue the ladies. They dress up as Russians to woo the women. But since the ladies know about the

plan, they manage to confuse them by masking themselves and exchanging the gifts they were given by their followers in order to mock them.

The lords then return as themselves and have their servants perform a play for the ladies. During the performance the princess obtains bad news from her homeland about her father's death. She and her ladies are therefore compelled to return home immediately and grieve for a year. But they tell their men that if they will serve them and successfully perform various tasks for them for a period on one year, and by the end of that year still love them, they will get married. (*Love's Labour's Lost*)

3.3.2 The Tempest

The Tempest is one of the plays written towards the end of Shakespeare's career. It is a fairy tale full of magic. It is set on an island, where the rightful Duke of Milan, Prospero, lives with his daughter Miranda since they wrecked there many years ago after being forced out of their hometown.

Prospero has in his command the spirit Ariel, whom he saved from dying in a magic tree. He orders the spirit to bring a storm, that causes a shipwreck of the ship of the king of Naples which also carries his son Ferdinand and Prospero's brother Antonio, the usurping duke of Milan and their crew. Everybody survives the shipwreck, but they are scattered on the island. Miranda meets Ferdinand, and they fall in love with each other. Prospero approves, but he first tests the prince on his persistence, to see whether he is worthy of his daughter.

In the meanwhile, the king's and duke's men plot against the king so that they can claim the throne, but the spirit Ariel stops them. The servants of the ship's crew, lost on another part of the island, encounter Prospero's servant, the savage Caliban. They plan to kill Prospero together, but before they can even start doing something, they get drunk and Ariel punishes them.

At the end, Ariel brings the lords to Prospero, and they all ask for his forgiveness. He grants it, releases the spirit Ariel, as he had promised, and together they celebrate Miranda's and Ferdinand's engagement. (*The Tempest*)

3.4 Analysis

The following examples chosen from the two plays are divided into the same categories as were used in the first part of this thesis.

3.4.1 Semantic narrowing

Our court shall be a little Academe,
Still and contemplative in living **art**. (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.13-14)
If by your **art**, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, (The Tempest 1.2.72-73)

Art (n.) – today this word is connected primarily to the visual arts, but when it originally entered the English language it meant ‘method or knowledge to achieve something. It could be also used in connection to magic. When the word was used to express skill in some specific area, some further qualification was needed, such as in ‘art of writing’ or ‘art of numbers’, etc. The most common current meaning, the visual arts and other creative activities, only began to be used in 17th century. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word ‘art’ in its current meaning without any extra specification has not been part of the English dictionaries until the 19th century. (Oxford English Dictionary)

When reading an Early Modern English text, the readers may frequently find the word form ‘art’ also as a verb. It has nothing to do with any artistic skills or work, but it was a form of the verb to ‘to be’.

Costard the swain and he shall be our **sport**; (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.177)
There be some **sports** are painful, and their labour
Delight in them sets off (The Tempest, 3.1.1-2)

Sport (n.) – Not used in the modern sense of the word primarily used today. It is a shortened form of ‘disport’, which denotes ‘division from serious routines’. The meaning here is drawn on the original sense of the word – ‘entertainment, fun’ of any kind (games, jokes, theatre plays, etc.), which entered the language around 1425. As in the first example, it could be used to label a person who is supposed to provide entertainment for the rest of the company. In this sense, the word is now archaic.

The sense denoting a physical activity appeared already at the end of 15th century. It, however, took over no sooner than in 19th century, when organized sport activities, such as races and matches became more popular. Until then, the word could be used to talk about a kind of physical activity. Also, together with the words ‘game’ and ‘play’ it was often associated with hunting.

The same sense development can be observed with the word when used as a verb.
(Oxford English Dictionary)

when Queen Guinover of Britain was a little
wench, as touching the hit it. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 4.1.124-25)

Wench (n.) – Developed from the Old English Word ‘wenschel’ meaning a child of any gender. During the Middle English period, the meaning narrowed down, and it was only used for girls or young women. This meaning is now only dialectal, but in general English it is not used anymore. In the 14th century, the word acquired a negative connotation of a wanton or light woman, i.e. a prostitute. This usage is now also extinct and thus the word only survives in certain dialects. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Though the word is not used anymore, it presents an interesting example of a word that was affected by more types of semantic change, narrowing and pejoration.

MOTH

A woman, master.

ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Of what **complexion**?

MOTH

Of all the four, or the three, or the two, or one of the four.

ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Tell me precisely of what **complexion**.

MOTH

Of the sea-water green, sir.

ADRIANO DE ARMADO

Is that one of the four **complexions**?

MOTH

As I have read, sir; and the best of them too. (Love's Labour's Lost 1.2.75-82)

Complexion (n.) - provides an example of repetition, a word play with a single word form while making use of its various meanings. The word has roots in Latin, but to English it was taken from Old French as 'complectere' meaning 'encompass' in the 14th century. At the time, it would refer to a person's physical constitution or temperament, as the two were dependent the 'humours' – the four bodily fluids that were believed to affect the person in various aspects. The word is not used in this meaning anymore. The new meaning arose in the 16th century. Now the word described a natural colour of a person's face. Nowadays it is used to refer to skin especially on the face. (Oxford English Dictionary) (Cresswell)

If you be **maid** or no? (The Tempest 1.2.425)

If not, I'll die your **maid**: to be your fellow

You may deny me; but I'll be your servant,

Whether you will or no. (The Tempest 3.1.84-86)

Maid (n.) – from the very beginning the word had two meanings, that were often indistinguishable – 'a young woman' and 'a virgin'. They coexisted in the language from the beginning of the 13th century. The meaning 'servant' appeared around the year 1300, but the word was usually accompanied by some sort of further definition as in 'chamber-maid' or 'nurse-maid'. This is the only sense that is still used in contemporary English, while the original two meanings are used only rarely and considered archaic. (Oxford English Dictionary)

I smell **false** Latin (Love's Labour's Lost 5.1.74)

Is likewise yours: we to ourselves prove **false**,

By being once **false** for ever to be true

To those that make us both,--fair ladies, you:

And even that **falsehood**, in itself a sin,

Thus purifies itself and turns to grace. (Love's Labour's Lost 5.2.767-71)

False (adj.) – It is an Old English Word of Latin origin meaning ‘wrong, not correct’. From the 14th century on it started to have other meanings, such as ‘unfair’ of a play, ‘out of pitch’ in music. The meaning ‘deceitful or treacherous’ appeared in the 13th century, ‘artificial’ as well. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any **engine**,
Would I not have; (The Tempest 2.1.155-156)

Engine (n.) – Though it might seem the word with its generally known meanings must have been created sometime in the last two centuries, its origins reach as far as the beginning of the 14th century. At the time it entered the language, it used to denote a kind of ‘ingenuity or artfulness’, sometimes with negative connotation. Soon after, the word began to be used to mean ‘a manner of construction or a design’ and also ‘intelligence or talent’. The meaning of ‘an instrument of war or a weapon’ appeared by the end of the 14th century. Those meanings are now mostly extinct.

As the time went, the word started to be used to name any kind of ‘invention or machine made of moving parts’, such as heat-engine, water-engine and later the steam engine. Engine as a motor in boats and cars as well as the locomotive of a train started to be used in the 19th century. It is the meaning used the most today. (Oxford English Dictionary)

which the **rude** multitude call the afternoon. (Love’s Labour’s Lost 5.1.84)

Rude (adj.) – as in ‘uncivilized’, this earliest meaning is dated back to 14th century. The meaning of ‘rude’ as ‘harsh or impolite’ appeared about a century later. It could refer to the person’s speech as well as the person himself. It is the most common meaning in the Modern English. (Oxford English Dictionary)

This will prove a **brave** kingdom to me, where I shall
have my music for nothing. (The Tempest 3.2.41-41)

How beauteous mankind is! O **brave** new world,
That has such people in't! (The Tempest 5.1.183-84)

Brave (adj.) – the word, with the meaning that is known today, was probably coined by Shakespeare in his *Henry VI*, but it was not the first instance when this word was used. The word arrived in the English language from French, which borrowed it from Italian word ‘bravo’, meaning ‘gallant’ or ‘fine’. The sample phrase above is the illustration of the original meaning, when the word could be used to refer to various positive qualities, from which the denotation ‘courageous’ evolved as an example of semantic narrowing. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Hence comes the common misconception about the title of Huxley’s novel *Brave New World*, whose name is based on a line from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. The name of the novel is supposed to be a satirical statement about the ‘better’ society depicted in the book and thus the original meaning of the word is used in it. In other words, the title might be ‘*Beautiful*’ or ‘*Fine*’ *New World*, as the sense ‘courageous’ does not really make sense.

Once more I’ll mark how love can vary **wit**. (Love’s Labour’s Lost 4.3.98)

This civil war of **wits** were much better used

On Navarre and his book-men; for here ‘tis abused. (Love’s Labour’s Lost 2.1.212-13)

wit shall not go unrewarded while I am king of this country. (The Tempest 4.1.240-41)

Wit (n.) – ‘Wit’ is a word of many meanings. It appeared as soon as in the Old English period. Initially it denoted ‘the seat of consciousness or mind’ as well as the ‘mental capacity’. For a time, the word could stand for ‘the five human wits’ as in ‘senses’, but this meaning is not used anymore. From the 14th century on, the word had a denotation of ‘cleverness or certain talents’ but it is also considered archaic now. The meaning that survived to Modern English appeared in the 16th century. It refers to ‘sharp mind’, or with a reference to an utterance ‘an ability to come with a quick and amusing answer’.

Fair weather after you. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 1.2.138)

Fair payment for foul words is more than due. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 4.1.19)

Fair (adj.) – is another word of many meanings. The original one in the Old English was, however, ‘beautiful, pretty’ (as in appearance), but also ‘agreeable or pleasant’. Thus, it could be used for people as well as inanimate objects or phenomena. In the 12th century the word gained a sense ‘blond or pale’ as those qualities were often associated with beauty. Although the meaning ‘beautiful’ still in use, it is now rather archaic. The word could be also used in ‘the fair sex’ to denote women in general.

In the 14th century the word started to be used to describe actions or methods that are ‘objective, unbiassed’. It could have been used to describe any situation or action that was free from obstacles as in ‘A stand where you may make the fairest shoot.’ (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 4.1.10) The meaning ‘reasonable or adequate’ as in ‘lacking any serious fault but not perfect’ arose in the 17th century.

The wordform ‘fair’ can be encountered as a noun meaning ‘a public gathering’ or ‘market’. It has, however nothing to do with the adjective described before. ‘Fair’ in this sense it comes from a different root related to celebration of religious holidays. (Oxford English Dictionary)

3.4.2 Semantic Widening

The only soil of his fair **virtue's** gloss,
If **virtue's** gloss will stain with any soil,
Is a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 2.1.47-49)

Virtue (n.) – In Shakespeare’s time, this word was already used in a sense that is common today. Prior to that, the meaning was narrower – it denoted a good moral quality, but only of men or sometimes even ‘manliness’ – ‘vir’ in Latin means a man. (Cresswell) Throughout history, the word could stand for various kinds of positive qualities, such as godliness, courage, chastity, etc. (Oxford English Dictionary)

there is remuneration; for the best **ward** of mine
honour is rewarding my dependents. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 3.1.129-31)

Is so possess'd with guilt: come from thy **ward**,
For I can here disarm thee with this stick
And make thy weapon drop. (The Tempest, 1.2.471-73)

Ward (n.) – used in its original sense – a guard. The word comes from old Germanic ‘weard’, first as a reference to a ‘watchman’ then as a name for the action of guarding something. Later on, the sense extended to also stand for objects and people who were guarded such as castle fortifications (13th century, now extinct), a child (15th century), or a part of a hospital in the 18th. (Cresswell) (Oxford English Dictionary)

Although it may seem that the word ‘wardrobe’ was created by a connection of ‘ward’ and ‘robe’ (as in clothes) and thus was always used for a large cupboard for storing clothes, it is not true. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word was borrowed from French in the current form and its earliest denotation was ‘a privy’. It only gained the meaning that is used today in the 15th century. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Nay, never paint me now:
Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the **brow**. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 4.1.16-17)

When shall you hear that I
Will praise a hand, a foot, a face, an eye,
A gait, a state, a **brow**, a breast, a waist,
A leg, a limb? (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 4.3.181-84)

Brow (n.) – arrived into the English language from the Germanic languages meaning ‘an eyebrow’ but its sense has been extended several times throughout its history. Still during the Old English period, the word started to denote the eyelashes, the eyelids and also the arched above the eyes. In the 16th century, the word would be used to name the whole forehead. Shakespeare started to use this word to denote the person’s facial expression in general.

The word can be also used to label various edges or rims that are physically similar to the arch of the eyebrows such as hills or cliffs. (Oxford English Dictionary)

We must of force dispense with this decree;
She must **lie** here on mere necessity. (Love’s Labour’s Lost 1.1.145-46)

Lie (v.) – Here used in the meaning of ‘positioning a body in a horizontal position’, not of ‘telling untruths’, which actually comes from a different source. ‘Lie’ has existed in English since the Old English period. Throughout history it has had various meanings associated with ‘being in a certain situation’. In the presented example, the word is used to denote ‘staying somewhere for a period of time’. This meaning appeared in the 14th century but it is now considered archaic. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Nothing of him that doth **fade**

But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange. (The Tempest 1.2.399-401)

Fade (v.) –The word is of French origin. It entered the English language in the mid-14th century. Initially, it used to be said about flowers or plants in the meaning ‘to lose freshness, to wither’. The meaning eventually extended to ‘gradually lose a quality of any kind’. It was used to describe ‘weakening’ or ‘decay’ (15 – 18th century), ‘to lose colour or brilliancy of the colour’ (from the 14th century on) or to disappear gradually (from the end of 16th century on). (Oxford English Dictionary)

3.4.3 Pejoration

Which the base **vulgar** do call three (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 1.2.48)

O’my troth, most sweet jests, most incony **vulgar** wit (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 4.1.143)

Vulgar (adj.) – Derived from Latin *vulgus*, the term for common people appears in the English language since the beginning of the 15th century. It is this original sense in which the word is employed in the play. The meaning of the word shifted from ‘common’ to ‘lacking refinement’ to ‘explicitly offensive’ and started to be used primarily in this sense around the middle of 17th century. From the semantic point of view, it is a case of pejoration. (Cresswell) (Oxford English Dictionary)

Villain, thou shalt fast for thy offences ere thou
be pardoned. (Love’s Labour’s Lost 1.2.140-41)

But thy **vile** race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which
good natures
Could not abide to be with (The Tempest 1.2.358-60)

Villain (n.) – This word is used in the same meaning it has today. It is, however, not its original meaning. It is a case of semantic pejoration which is rather similar to how the meaning of the word ‘vulgar’ was altered, i.e. from meaning ‘common’ or ‘low born’ to being openly negative. Together with it was changed the adjective ‘vile’ -from meaning ‘of low price’ it now refers to something bad. (Oxford English Dictionary)

O, my good **knave** Costard! exceedingly well met. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 3.1.141)

Knave (n.) – A word of Germanic origin, used to mean ‘a boy or a servant’ or generally ‘a male of low social status’ in the Old English. Later, in the 13th century, it acquired more and more negative connotations such as ‘dishonest or unpleasant man’, until it was ultimately replaced by the meaning ‘rogue’. The negative meaning developed probably via the connection between ‘being of low social status’ and thus ‘of low morals’. (Online Etymology Dictionary) As the name for the lowest face card, it started appearing in the 17th century. Nowadays, though, ‘jack’ is a more common term. (Oxford English Dictionary)

I am more bound to you than your **fellows**, for they
are but lightly rewarded. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 1.2.145-46)

Fellow (n.) – Arrived from the Scandinavian languages as a word referring to a friend, a person of the same social status or an object belonging to a certain group. For a period of time between 14th and 17th century it could be used to refer to a person’s servant or generally someone of lower social status, but not in a polite way. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Thou and thy **meaner** fellows your last service
Did worthily perform; (The Tempest 4.1.36-36)

This my **mean** task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, (The Tempest, 3.1.4-5)

Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise: (Love's Labour's Lost 2.1.13-14)

Mean (adj.) – may appear to be a bit confusing, but that is because there are two different roots for this word, that have merged into one wordform. The earlier one comes from an Old English 'maene', that was used in a sense 'owned or held commonly or jointly', i.e. 'a shared item'. By the 14th century the word evolved to mean 'inferior', 'insignificant', 'of bad quality'. It might have been caused by the word merging with a similarly sounding word 'meene' (French in origin), which used to refer to 'a mediate position' and later also 'of mediate quality'.

The rather derogatory denotation could refer to objects as well as people. It was also often associated with people of low social standing. Since not being noble was often related to various bad characteristic traits, there is no wonder the word started to be used to describe people who lack good moral qualities. This sense from the 16th century slowly shifted to signify 'not being generous' (19th century).

As many other words with negative connotation, 'mean' was also used as a slang word in the 20th century to mean 'attractive' or 'fashionable'. (Oxford English Dictionary)

3.4.4 Amelioration

Since you are strangers and come here by chance,
We'll not be **nice**: take hands. We will not dance. (Love's Labour's Lost 5.2.218-19)

These are complements, these are humours; these
betray **nice** wenches, that would be betrayed without
these (Love's Labour's Lost 3.1.20-22)

Nice (adj.) – The original meanings of this word have not been frequently used since the 17th century. The word that entered English from Old French used to mean 'foolish, silly' and also 'wanton' (as in the second presented example). The more positive meanings started appearing by evolution via 'punctilious and strict' (15th century) and 'refined' as in 'having good manners' in the 16th century. The meaning that is used today, 'pleasant or attractive' appeared in the mid-18th century. It is the only surviving meaning in the contemporary English. (Oxford English Dictionary)

3.4.5 Metaphor

The grosser manner of these world's delights

He throws upon the gross world's **baser** slaves: (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.29-30)

I will hereupon confess I am in love; and as it is

Base for a soldier to love, so am I in love with a **base**

Wench (Love's Labour's Lost 1.2.56-58)

Base (adj.) – The word is an example of functional shift. The word originally appeared in English as a noun denoting a bottom part of something in about 1325. Not even a century later it started to be used also as an adjective, which at first meant 'of little height' or 'positioned at a low place'. These meanings are rather rare and are considered archaic in the Modern English. The word is, however, still in use in the contemporary language. It is usually used in an abstract sense, which is always connected to a kind of 'lowness'. (Crystal and Crystal 27) Thus it can be used for example to describe a person of low morals or origin or someone or something unworthy or less refined. This meaning arose in 15th century and can be used for persons as well as objects. (Oxford English Dictionary)

And then, to sleep but three hours in the night,

And not be seen to **wink** of all the day—(Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.42-43)

Thou let'st thy fortune sleep--die, rather; **wink'st**

Whiles thou art waking. (The Tempest, 2.1.207-08)

To the perpetual **wink** for aye (The Tempest, 2.1.276)

Wink (n.) – 'Wink' as a verb has been in the English language since the Old English period when it was used to mean 'to close one's eyes'. When it appeared as noun in 14th century, it used to mean 'sleep' and it is the meaning Shakespeare uses. As a noun meaning 'a blink' it was used for the first time by Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* but it only became a part of the common vocabulary in the 18th century. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,

Live register'd upon our **brazen** tombs (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.1-2)

Brazen (adj.) – the original literal meaning 'made of brass' (first appeared around the year 1000), in 14th century began to be also used in an extended meaning derived from the most significant qualities of the material – strong and impenetrable. It can also be used to describe objects that resemble brass in their colour or sound. (Oxford English Dictionary)

In **lead**en contemplation have found out

Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes

Of beauty's tutors have enrich'd you with? (Love's Labour's Lost, 4.3.297-99)

Leaden (adj.) – Derived from the noun lead. Thus, it was initially used to describe objects made out of lead. In the transferred meaning of being 'heavy' or other qualities of the material such as 'cold', 'motionless' or 'base' it appeared in late 16th century. It can be also employed when describing something of the same colour. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Sing, boy; my spirit grows **heavy** in love (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.2.116)

This my mean task

Would be as **heavy** to me as odious, (The Tempest, 3.1.4-5)

Heavy (adj.) – Is derived from an Old English word 'hefe', a word of Germanic origin. Its primary meaning, from the beginning of its existence has been 'of great weight'. It can be also used to describe objects of relatively great weight, i.e. too heavy for their size, of great density, as in 'heavy metals' or 'heavy water'. Around the year 1000 also the meaning of 'great importance' or 'seriousness' appeared.

'Heavy' in the sense of 'sad' or 'grieved' presumably arose from the notion that such emotions may feel like they are weighing the person down. This meaning appeared in the 14th century. Heavy, with a meaning similarly derived, may also denote sleepiness, as in the Tempest in 'The strangeness of your story put /

Heaviness in me.' (The Tempest, 1.2.306-07). Both the literary and the transferred meanings are still used in the contemporary English. (Oxford English Dictionary)

That some **plain** man recount their purposes
Know what they would. (Love's Labour's Lost 5.2.177-78)

Plain (adj.) – Plain is a word of Anglo-Norman origin that used to mean 'without obstacles' or 'frank', 'clear'. It appeared in English in the first half of the 14th century and first it was used to describe even surfaces or landscapes or sea-level and later smooth surfaces of any kind. Those meanings are now considered archaic and their usage is rare. By the end of the 14th century, the meaning extended to also refer to things that are 'undecorated, not embellished', i.e. 'simple', such as undecorated fabrics, simple foods, basic clothes, etc. The notion of 'uncomplicatedness' remained with the word even for its further alterations. In Chaucer's work, it was used to describe something evident or obvious or easy to understand. (Oxford English Dictionary)

So sweet and **voluble** is his discourse (Love's Labour's Lost, 2.1.76)

A most acute juvenal; **voluble** and free of grace! (Love's Labour's Lost, 3.1.64)

Voluble (adj.) – originated in Latin 'volvere' – to turn around. The word came to English via French with that very meaning and it could be also used to refer to something that moves easily. It only started to be used in a sense of 'fluent or eloquent' in the late 16th century by the means of metaphorical likening of 'the words rolling out of the mouth easily' to the fluent speech. This meaning was introduced by Shakespeare in Love's Labour's Lost to be used to describe both the speaker and their speech. (Cresswell) (Oxford English Dictionary)

Samson, master: he was a man of good **carriage**, great
carriage, for he **carried** the town-gates on his back
like a porter: and he was in love (Love's Labour's Lost 1.2.68-70)

Carriage (n.) – The very initial meaning of this word, derived from the verb carry, is the act of carrying something. Its first usage is dated to the end of the 14th century. Shakespeare introduced the extended usage of the word with the meaning 'a way of carrying one's body' and later also 'the manner of one's behaviour in social situations'. The latter one is now rather obsolete. Connected to the meaning of 'a carried object' is another meaning introduced by Shakespeare. In the example from *The Tempest* 'My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and

time / Goes upright with his **carriage**.' (The Tempest 5.1.2-3) the word is used figuratively to signify 'a burden'. It, however, has not remained in common language.

The meaning of 'any kind of a vehicle' appeared around the mid-15th century. The more specialized meaning, 'a vehicle for transporting exclusively people' arose by the beginning of the 18th century. (Oxford English Dictionary)

The example lines from the play represent various meanings – 'a person's bearing', 'the ability to carry or hold something' and 'the verb describing the activity' respectively.

We **arrest** you word. (Love's Labour's Lost 2.1.160)

Arrest (v.) – borrowed from French at the break of 14th and 15th century. It initially meant 'to come to a halt', 'to stop'. The word is not used in this meaning, besides the established phrase 'cardiac arrest'. Later on, it was also used to denote 'to cause to stop' in a reference to an action. The meaning 'to seize, capture', especially by authorities, appeared at the end of the 14th century and it has been preserved up to now. (Oxford English Dictionary)

were no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an

unstaunched wench (The Tempest 1.1.44-45)

Staunch (adj.) – Entered the English language at the beginning of the 15th century from French, meaning watertight or later also of firm construction. During the 17th century, the word had also a figurative meaning. It was also used to describe someone of very strict behaviour. Thus, in the negative form, as in the example above, the word denoted 'of loose morals, promiscuous'. This sense, however, is not used anymore. (Oxford English Dictionary)

By help of her more **potent** ministers, (The Tempest 1.2.275)

Potent (n.) – came from Latin with the meaning 'strong or influential'. It could be said of a person having a great power or influence, be it in an office, in the military or a spiritual position, etc. It could also be said about 'a convincing idea or a theory'. In current English it is used only in literature. Another sense, is in a way similar to the original one. It refers to a strong drink or drug as in 'potent wine', etc. It firstly appeared at the beginning of the 17th

century, thus in Shakespeare's time it was not yet in commonly used. The usage in a sense of 'capable of sexual intercourse' appeared just a couple of decades later. (Oxford English Dictionary)

I will tell you **sensibly**. (Love's Labour's Lost 3.1.111)

He is only an animal, only **sensible** in the duller parts ; (Love's Labour's Lost 4.2.27)

Above the sense of sense; so **sensible**

Seemeth their conference; (Love's Labour's Lost 5.2.259-60)

Sensibly (adv.) – derived from the adjective 'sensible', which comes from Latin meaning 'perceivable by senses'. It could also be used for people, animals and their body parts, in the sense that they are able to feel the stimulus via their senses, as well as for being conscious of something. Those meanings are now mostly archaic.

The meaning 'in accordance with wisdom or intelligence' or relating to the common sense, evolved in the 15th century. It could be used of people and inanimate objects. (Online Etymology Dictionary) (Oxford English Dictionary)

I love not to be **crossed**. (Love's Labour's Lost 1.2.32)

The effect of my intent is to **cross** theirs: (Love's Labour's Lost 5.2.138)

Cross (v.) – Has had various meanings based on the similarity to the geometrical shape. 'Crucify', 'to mark with the sign of a cross', 'to strike out a piece of writing' and to 'cross over a line or a boundary', have been subsequently appearing since 14th century. The figurative meaning 'to oppose to someone' appeared in the middle of the 16th century. 'Cross' as an adjective meaning 'to be angry with someone' comes from 17th century. (Oxford English Dictionary) The figurative meanings arose from the nautical speech. The metaphorical transfer is based on the idea of contrariness when the wind blows from some other side than from behind. (Cresswell)

To have no **screen** between this part he played (The Tempest 1.2.107)

Screen (n.)– has been described in the theoretical part. It is a great example of semantic change by the means of metaphorical comparison based on the physical similarity. To add more detail, the original meaning of the word, ‘a panel used to separate a room or an area into parts’ comes most probably from French. It started appearing in English in the 14th century. The new meaning appeared hand in hand with the arrival of television in the 20th century. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Sweet leaves, **shade** folly (Love’s Labour’s Lost 4.3.41)

Shade (v.) – usually meaning ‘to cast a shadow’ or ‘cover something by a shadow’. Or when used as a noun, it stands for a shadow. In a transferred meaning it can denote screening from other forms of energy, such as heat or as in the presented example, to hide from view. (Oxford English Dictionary)

I praise God for you, sir: your reasons at dinner
have been **sharp** and sententious (Love’s Labour’s Lost 5.1.3)

Sharp (adj.) – the word is of Germanic origin and has been in the English language since the Old English period. Its primary meaning is ‘to be well adapted for cutting’. In a transferred meaning, it can be said of people possessing ‘keen or acute intellect or senses’. Though there are some instances of the usage recorded beforehand, this sense has not been commonly used until the 15th century. It can be also used in as ‘severe or strong’ in various senses in phrases such as ‘severe punishment’, ‘acute pain’, etc. In the 20th century ‘sharp’ was used as a slang word in the USA for anything good or stylish. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Dull thing, I say so (The Tempest 1.2.285)

Was I, to take this drunkard for a god
And worship this **dull** fool! (The Tempest 5.1.296-97)

Dull (adj.) – Even though it is more usual for words to start off with a concrete sense and then acquire a more abstract one, it is not the case of ‘dull’. The word has already existed in the Old English and back then it referred to people who were ‘slow’ or ‘of low intelligence’ or even ‘stupid’. It could also denote the state of lacking a person’s usual good mood.

The literal meaning, as in blunt, evolved in the mid-15th century. Both meanings still exist. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Sir, I invite your highness and your **train**

To my poor cell (The Tempest 5.1.300-01)

Train (n.) – Is a borrowing from French meaning ‘an elongated thing especially when regarded as undivided’, thus it could stand for anything, ranging from a tree branch to a snake’s body or a tail of a comment. By the 15th century, the word started to be used to describe ‘sequences’ or ‘series’ of objects or immaterial things or groups of people (especially when travelling in an organized way). In association to the railway, the word started to be used in the beginning of the 19th century. (Oxford English Dictionary)

There's nothing **ill** can dwell in such a temple:

If the **ill** spirit have so fair a house,

Good things will strive to dwell with't.. (The Tempest, 1.2.447-49)

I am **ill** at reckoning; it fitteth the spirit of a tapster. (Love’s Labour’s Lost, 1.2.40)

Ill (adj.) – Originally this word comes from Old Norse ‘illr’ where it used to mean ‘bad’ or ‘wicked’. From the 12th century it was used as a synonym of ‘evil’, even though ‘evil’ comes from a different root – an Old English word ‘yfel’. This sense is now mostly obsolete, surviving only in Scots or as an adverb in certain compounds such as ‘ill-advised’, ‘ill-bred’, etc.

The meaning of ‘ill’ as in ‘suffering from a disease’ appeared around the year 1500. This meaning shift might have been caused by the medieval beliefs that evil people or spirits may make a person sick. In Shakespeare’s time it could therefore be used in both of its senses – evil and sick. (Cresswell) In Modern English, only the newer meaning is used on a daily basis. (Oxford English Dictionary) Although ‘ill’ is the common expression in British English when referring to ‘suffering from a disease’, in American English, the usage of ‘sick’ is preferred. On the other hand, in British English, ‘sick’ often has a narrower meaning – to vomit.

ROSALINE'

What's your dark meaning, mouse, of this **light** word?

KATHARINE

A **light** condition in a beauty dark.

ROSALINE

We need more **light** to find your meaning out.

KATHARINE

You'll mar the **light** by taking it in snuff;

Therefore I'll darkly end the argument.

ROSALINE

Look what you do, you do it still i' the dark.

KATHARINE

So do not you, for you are a **light** wench.

ROSALINE

Indeed I weigh not you, and therefore **light**. (Love's Labour's Lost 5.2.19-26)

Light (adj.) – The two words with the same form have different origins. 'Light' as 'bright or shining' is connected to Latin *lux*. 'Light' as in weight relates to Old English word for lungs – as they are the lightest organ in the body. Their identical form, however, offers a brilliant opportunity for a wordplay.

'Light' as 'not heavy' developed various extended meanings, all coming from the original one. 'Having a little momentum of force, because of the little weight' can therefore be used to signify 'not violent' as in 'light blow'. It can also be used to denote something 'not significant, simple' or also 'of little value'. 'Light' can be also used of tasks that are 'easy to accomplish, not complicated'. As opposed to the extended meaning of 'heavy' – 'sad', 'light' can be used to refer to a person who is not weighted down by sorrows.

The word, in an extended meaning, is also used in connection to people, especially women, who are promiscuous. This reference arose in the 15th century.

Shakespeare also coined the meaning 'light' as in 'dizzy'

3.4.6 Metonymy

When, spite of **cormorant** devouring Time,
The endeavor of this present breath may buy
That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge
And make us heirs of all eternity. (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.4)

Cormorant (adj.) – As a noun in its denotative meaning, it stands for a large aquatic bird. In a metaphorical sense, based on the characteristic traits of the bird, it can be used as an adjective meaning 'all-devouring', 'insatiable'. The extended meaning appeared in 16th century. In Shakespeare's plays it was used on more occasions with this meaning, but in current English it is not very common.

They are louder than the weather, or our **office**. (The Tempest 1.1.35)

That they devour their reason and scarce think
Their eyes do **offices** of truth, (The Tempest 5.1.155-56)

having both the key
Of **officer** and **office**, (The Tempest 1.2.83-84)

Office (n.) – The word is of Latin origin meaning 'function' or 'responsibility' – especially in church but also in government. Over the time, the word had various meanings referring to the duties and tasks the officers had, but 'office' is not really used in this way anymore. From the 15th century on, the word could also refer to a room or a place, where a particular business was conducted. It was frequently accompanied by a designation of the type of the business or the company's or owner's name. This meaning is the most common in the current English. In an extended usage, Office can be also used to stand for the staff of the office. (Oxford English Dictionary)

My tears for **glasses**, and still make me weep. (Love's Labour's Lost 4.3.37)

no woman's face remember,
Save, from my **glass**, mine own; (The Tempest 3.1.49-50)

Which, but three **glasses** since, we gave out split (The Tempest 5.1.223)

Glass (n.) – comes from the 9th century when it was the name for the substance. It acquired the extended meaning of a mirror in the 13th century as in ‘a looking glass’. The usage for a container for a liquid (initially only the ones made out of glass, now even other materials, but of the same purpose) dates to 13th century. ‘Glass’ as the reference to the drink contained in the vessel comes from the 14th century. The word can be also used to refer to other objects made of glass, such as ‘hourglass’ and also to material that have similar properties. (Oxford English Dictionary)

And wear his **colours** like a tumbler's hoop! (Love’s Labour’s Lost 3.1.185)

Colour (n.) – the word in the example stands for a flag. It is a metonymical transfer from the usual meaning of the word ‘colour’. This meaning came to exist based on the fact that in heraldic tradition, the flags and coats of arms used the basic colours and those were easily recognizable and therefore were the most prominent part of the flags.

In an extended meaning the word can be also used to denote a specific type of something, such as sound, music, but even a person. The adjective colourful can in an extended use refer to something ‘vivid’ as in ‘colourful description’ or ‘diverse’. (Oxford English Dictionary)

By **favours** several which they did bestow. (Love’s Labour’s lost 5.2.125)

Her **favour** turns the fashion of the days (Love’s Labour’s lost 4.3.260)

Favour (n.) – Since its appearance in the English language in the 14th century, the word stood for some kind of ‘good will’ such as ‘an act of kindness’ or ‘aid’. It was during the time when Shakespeare composed his plays, that the word started to be used to denote also ‘a material object given to someone as a mark of favour.’

In the 16th century one more meaning arose, but it is now considered archaic. It was ‘an appearance, an aspect’, in some cases, it could even refer to a person’s face. (Oxford English Dictionary)

For well you know here comes in **embassy**

The French king's daughter with yourself to speak-- (Love's Labour's Lost 1.1.132-133)

Consider who the king your father sends,

To whom he sends, and what's his **embassy**: (Love's Labour's Lost 2.1.3)

Embassy (n.) – a word of Old French origin usually means ‘a delegation from another country’ or it can refer to their residence. It was its original meaning and it is still used in contemporary English. For a time during the 17th and 18th century the word was also used in an extended meaning ‘the message brought by the ambassadors’. (Oxford English Dictionary)

4 Conclusion

Semantic change is a fascinating field in the linguistics studies. Following a development of a meaning of a word often leads to unexpected conclusions. One also learns a lot about the complex intertwined relations within the language, which may easily lead to a better understanding of it. Generally, the research conducted for this bachelor thesis also showed that finding examples of semantic change in a several-hundred-years-old text is quite challenging for a non-native speaker.

The two hypotheses which were established at the beginning of my research proved the following:

Shakespeare has always been considered to be a great innovator of the English language, i.e. not only in his period, which was overall fruitful in language changes, but in general. His language is very flowery and often figurative. Thus, it appeared to be a good idea to use his works to show the examples of semantic change. But using a word or an expression in an innovative way or as a metaphor for just one instance does not mean it gets a new meaning permanently. Shakespeare might have devised many original words and used the common ones in new situations and collocations, but as for triggering semantic change, he was not that productive. Out of the 50 examples presented in the practical part of this thesis, only 5 of them (brave, brow, wink, voluble, carriage) have been attributed to Shakespeare in the Oxford English Dictionary as the one who used them in a particular way for the first time. Semantic change, however, is not a one-time action, but a process that takes place over a long period of time, which is dependent on many factors.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, most new meanings appeared either during the Middle Ages. It is, however, largely impossible to say when the process of semantic change is really finished. In most cases, when a word acquires a new meaning, the old one is still used and if it disappears, it fades out gradually. Thus, the practical part includes short histories of the word's etymologies, to point out the period when a new meaning was first recorded, as well as information about the usage of the certain meaning in current English.

Still, in researching the two plays, I managed to find examples for all the types of semantic change that were presented and explained in the theoretical part. Many of the words' meanings have been altered more than once and thus more types of semantic change may be

observed in them. The most common type appears to be the metaphor, i.e. words acquiring new meanings based on some kind of similarity, either of the physical appearance or of the idea or notion. It was the method of meaning change of almost one half of the sample words. As claimed in the part explaining the metaphorical change of meaning, most of these words have retained their original meanings, and thus exist as polysemic words in current English.

Quite common was also pejoration, i.e. derogating of the word's meaning. It appeared usually with the words referring to people from lower social classes where what initially meant to be born poor resulted in premise of being bad. Amelioration, on the other hand, was really rare, in fact, the practical part includes only a single example – 'nice'. Concerning the semantic widening and narrowing, they did appear also quite abundantly, but without a pattern to them.

The research conducted for this thesis, however, cannot be considered conclusive. Though it seemed that using two plays by one of the world's best-known writers, written about 15 years apart, might show more positive results, it did not. The most probable reason is that only two plays are just too small a sample of the language, even though the language used in the plays is rather common and the examples chosen represent various parts of speech. In order to gain definite conclusions, a further research must be carried out.

Even though it did not manage to fully confirm the hypotheses formed for this thesis, conducting the research and putting the results together was most eye-opening, and I realized how complex the study of language might be. Also, it let me discover various interesting sources and literary works that might prove to be helpful in my further studies of the English language.

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