A Study of Colour Words in Shakespeare's Four Tragedies

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In this thesis, I examined the use of colour words related to black, discussing four tragedies of Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear* and *Macbeth* in chronological order. Colour words are connected with vision, one of the five senses we use to cognize surrounding environments. Factors concerning human cognition are used as the basis of descriptions and explanations of linguistic phenomena in the field of cognitive linguistics. There are not, however, any studies of colour words in which the standpoints of cognitive linguistics are adopted. So I studied colour words, introducing standpoints of cognitive linguistics. I distinguished the places which are focused on and those which are not focused on and called them "figure" and "background" respectively.

After my study of the uses of colour words related to black in chronological order, I found that the objects which colour words related to black are used to refer to change from things which we can see from outside to inner darkness in the two earlier plays, while they are used to describe inner darkness from the beginning in the two later plays. Furthermore, the number of characters who use the colour word "black" decreases, the later the date of composition of the plays. Figure and background are used by Hamlet and Iago to conceal their ruse or intention in the two earlier plays. In *Othello*, in addition to the adoption of figure or background as the characters' intentions demand, they are used more clearly to express changes in certain characters when compared with *Hamlet*. In *King Lear*, they play the role of depicting characters' minds more vividly rather than describing changes in the inner aspects of characters. In *Macbeth*, figure and background are used from the beginning to represent changes in a character's mind, while changes in Othello's internal aspect are depicted from the middle of the play in *Othello*. Furthermore, while only a change of colour words related to black from background to figure is found in *Othello*, a change from figure to background is also found in *Macbeth*. From these facts, it follows that psychological descriptions are made more closely in *Macbeth* than *Othello*.

Considering these points, if we examine the use of colour words related to black in these four tragedies, we can say that their use gradually becomes limited to the description of a certain character's inner aspect and its changes, the later the date of composition of the plays. The internal aspects depicted by colour words related to black are connected with the dark feelings of characters such as vengeance, desire, evilness and so on. It can also be said that figure and background are used more finely when the inner aspects are described. The fact that colour words related to black are associated with dark feelings can be easily guessed without studying the use of the words. By studying the words from the standpoint of figure and background, we can reveal the inner aspects of characters more closely, including changes in their feelings.