

**Words of Pain in Hawthorne's Novel *The Scarlet Letter*: A Semantic Study****Assist. Lect. Shaima Ni'ma Mohammad & Assist. Lect. Zainab Hussein Alwan*****College of Tourist Sciences-- Karbala University*****Zainab.alwan@uokerbala.edu.iq****Abstract**

Pain is a natural state of human daily life and all people are subject to it. It ranges from the highest degree of agony to the lowest one. Being a multidimensional experience, pain differs from one person to another.

Linguistically, pain is difficult to be expressed. Nevertheless, there are certain words that are used to describe the feeling of pain. The current study deals with the semantic properties of some words of pain in Hawthorne's Novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

In the light of the data selected, it is found that both men and women have employed words of pain. The difference is that women, in this particular novel, such as: Hester and Pearl have made use of the words in a way which decrease their pains successfully. Men, on the other hand, have endeavoured to minimize the consequences of pain by using some words, however; their attempts are in vain. Regardless of the physical stimulus, it is also concluded that pain has psychological, religious and social impulses.

**Words of Pain in Hawthorne's Novel *The Scarlet Letter*: A Semantic Study****م.م شيماء نعمه محمد / كلية العلوم السياحية - جامعة كربلاء****م.م زينب حسين علوان / كلية العلوم السياحية - جامعة كربلاء****الخلاصة**

الألم هو حالة طبيعية تحدث في حياة الإنسان اليومية إذ إن البشر جميعهم خاضع للإحساس بالألم، فهو عندهم يتراوح بين أعلى درجة من العذاب إلى أدنى درجة منه. ويختلف الألم بوصفه مفهوما ذا إبعاد متعددة من شخص لآخر، فبالرغم من صعوبة التعبير عن الألم لغوياً، هناك بعض الكلمات التي تستعمل لوصف الشعور به. وهذه الدراسة تتوقف عند بعض الخصائص الدلالية لبعض كلمات الألم في رواية هوثورن (الشارة القرمزية). ومن خلال العينة التي تم انتقاؤها، تم التوصل أن توظيف كلمات الألم يظهر عند كلا الجنسين، لكن الفرق هو إن كلمات الألم التي تستعملها النساء، مثل (هستر براين وبييرل)، ساعدت على تخفيف الشعور بالألم وبصورة ناجحة. في حين سعى الرجال، مثل (ديمسديل وشيلينجورث)، لاستعمال كلمات الألم لتقليل العواقب الوخيمة للإحساس بهذا الألم، بيد إن محاولاتهم كانت من دون جدوى. ويغض النظر عن الدافع المادي، فقد وجد أيضاً أن الألم ذو بواعث نفسية، ودينية، واجتماعية.

**Section One****Introduction****1.1 Definitions of Pain**

Etymologically speaking, pain is derived from Old French "peine" which means "suffering"(Harper, 2001:1). It has been variously defined by many scholars. In the Merriam Webster Dictionary, pain is "a mental or emotional suffering: sadness caused by some emotional or mental problem"(<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pain>).

Geistfeld (1995:781) defines pain as "a category of damages including not only physical *pain*, but also a wide range of intangible injuries such as fright, nervousness, grief, anxiety, and indignity." Similarly, McCarthy and O'Dell (2005:10) mention that pain is "the feeling of physical, emotional or mental suffering."

Sussex (2009:1) states that pain is an inner feeling. Semino (2010:2-4) also remarks that pain cannot be easily observed. It looks like the sense of love which is a "private experience."

## 1.2 Different Perspectives on Pain

In the broadest sense, pain covers a wide range of different dimensions, including society, philosophy, psychology, religion and linguistics.

Harrison (1988:1) and Magnusson and Fennell (2011:30-1) agree that there many factors play an essential role in pain. In other words, pain is "a multidimensional concept."

From the philosophical point of view, Radford (1972:189) and Sluga (2011: 17) say that there is a tight connection between pain and pain behaviour.

According to Sussex (2009:1), pain is "always a psychological state."

In their conclusions, Lysne and Wachholtz (2011:11) find out that pain is inescapable. It touches "all individuals" without discrimination. They confirm that religion has no role in increasing one's pain. On the contrary, it can decrease the inner feeling of pain.

Being born to trouble, Fadul (2014:10) also states that pain must occur. For him, pain and suffering "are essential in order to maintain faith and endure hardships. Christians suffer for many reasons....they must suffer because Jesus suffered."

Culturally, Callister(2003:207) and Alvarado(2008:2) highlight that cultural differences play a vital role in one's pain. Alvarado confirms that "In some cultures, pain and the endurance of pain are looked upon as .desirable disciplines and worthwhile experiences."

## 1.3 Linguistic Forms of Pain

In English, Mehack and Torgerson (1971:51-4) emphasize that there are many words which are used to express the sense of pain linguistically. Such words associated with *pain* differ in their classes (i.e. sensory, evaluative or affective) and intensity. The most prominent words of pain, as Johansson and Allwood (1986:3) remark, are: *pain*, *hurt* and *ache*.

From the syntactic point of view, words of pain can be used both transitively and intransitively (Sussex, 2009:1).

1- Intransitive-personal: "I hurt (here)"

2-Intransitive-impersonal: "it hurts (here)"

3-Intransitive + body-part: "my arm hurts / my arm's hurting (in me)"

4-Transitive-impersonal: "it hurts me / it's hurting me (here)"

5-Transitive + body-part: "my arm's hurting me"

Alexander (1988: 212) states that *Have* and *have got* can be followed by nouns "describing pains".

6- I have (got) a cold/a bad headache.

He (ibid: 58) adds that there is a slight difference between the words (*pain* and *pains*) in the sense that the former indicates *suffering*, whereas the latter means *doing something with great difficulty*.

6- I am sorry my news causes you such pain (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pain>).

7- Great pains have been taken to repair the engine perfectly. (ibid)

Idiomatically, Carstairs-McCarthy (2002:11) and McCarthy and O'Dell (2005:10) agree that the word "*pain*" can be combined with many words. Once being linked with them, the word "*pain*" is endowed with new meanings.

8- I *experienced chest pains and dizziness*.

9-*A hot bath may help to relieve the pain*.

10-*He deliberately inflicted pain on his pupils*.

11-*She came in complaining of stomach pains*.

12-*As the pain subsided, I began to relax*.

13-*He is emaciated and racked with pain*.

In similar token, the phrase "a *pain (in the neck)*" can be used informally to give the sense of being "annoying" (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2005:10).

14-That child is a real pain in the neck.

Having the formula *until (duration + end point)*, the word *pain*, as Downing and Locke (2006: 293) assert, can be used with adverb particles.

15-Stay in bed *until the pain* goes away.

Patharakorn (2010:17) and Wright (2011:3) numerate a number of adjectives which can describe the experience of pain. The most common ones are: (sharp, dull, aching, burning ect.)

16-I felt a sharp pain in my foot.

17- She has a burning pain?

To reflect one's attitude, the feeling of pain, as Jovanović (2004:23) and Seaton and Mew (2007:138) affirm, can be transcribed by using some interjections such as: *ah! oh! ouch! ow! wow! yipe! yow!*

18- *Ow*, I feel pain.

In an attempt to classify words of pain, Fabrega and Tyma (1976), as cited in Patharakorn (2010:12) point out that:

*Primary pain words* serve as a base for the description of the perceptual experience of pain... Such as....*pain, ache, hurt, and sore. Secondary pain words* are employed as qualifying metaphors in pain description. Finally, *tertiary pain words* are used to qualify pain in terms of properties like its intensity and duration.

19- I  
was  
deeply  
pained  
by  
his  
harsh  
words

. (*Primary pain word*)

20-I have a throbbing pain. (*Secondary pain word*)

21- I have an intense pain (*tertiary pain word*)

#### 1.4 Types of Words of Pain

Broadly speaking, words of pain can be classified as sensory, evaluative or affective (Melack and Torgerson, 1971:52 and Melzack, 2005:200).

Types of Pain	Words of Pain	Examples
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1- Sensory	<p><i>Temporal</i>: beating, pulsing, throbbing, thumbing etc.</p> <p><i>Spatial</i>: shooting, spreading, jumping, darting etc.</p> <p><i>Punctate Pressure</i>: boring, drilling, penetrating, piercing etc.</p> <p><i>Incisive Pressure</i>: cutting, sharp, jumping, tearing etc.</p> <p><i>Constrictive Pressure</i>: biding, crushing, gnawing, gripping, nipping, pressing etc.</p> <p><i>Traction Pressure</i>: grinding, pulling, wrenching etc</p> <p><i>Thermal</i>: burning, hot, scalding , searing etc</p> <p><i>Brightness</i>: itchy, tickling, stinging , rasping etc</p> <p><i>Dullness</i>: aching, blinding, dull , heavy, hurting, tender etc</p>	-I burn up at the mention of his name.
2- Affective	<p><i>Tension</i>: dragging, fatiguing, nagging , exhausting, tiring etc</p> <p><i>Autonomic</i>: choking, nauseating, sickening , suffocating etc</p> <p><i>Fear</i>: awful, fearful, dreadful , frightful, terrifying etc</p> <p><i>Punishment</i>: killing, punishing, grueling , cruel, torturing etc</p>	-Endless questions fatigue me.
3- Evaluative	agonizing, annoying, discomforting , bearable, intense, distressing ,miserable, savage, etc.	-She lives in a deep misery.

### 1.5 Metaphorical Use of Pain

Conceptualizing one's experience, the figurative use of pain is very frequent. Sussex (2009:8) and Vera (2012:282,286) shed much light on the semantic aspect of pain.

1- Pain is a sharp object: A sharp stab of pain made her sit back down.

2-Pain is a tormenting animal: A massive killing pain came over my right eye [...] i clawed at my head trying to uproot the fiendish talons from their iron grip.

3-Pain is fire: Pain is fire that can devour the whole body.

4- "Pain" may be interpreted as a possession: "I started having terrible pains"

5-Pain" has variable location within the body: "Is the pain only in the knee?"

6-Body is seen as a container for pain: "I'm feeling pain again here inside."

7- Pain is sound (. 'my head drones'),

8- Pain is destruction (. 'it gnaws my eyes'),

9- Pain is motion ('my stomach is jumping'),

10- Pain is a taste: the bitterness of the situation has been surpassed.

11- Pain has negative emotions (*my stomach hates me*)

## Section Two

### Analysis of Words of Pain in Hawthorne's Novel *The Scarlet Letter*

#### Text-1-

"At the moment when she was about to win her freedom from the pain which had been thus deeply incorporated with her being"

It is unbearable to carry such a pain that Hester has to live with, yet this personal pain is the way of getting her rescued from the pain of the outside world. The scarlet letter defines a protective boundary that keeps her safe and secured regardless the social rejection she faces by the puritan community.

#### Text-2-

"Yet he trembled, and turned to Hester with an expression of doubt and anxiety in his eyes, not the less evidently betrayed, that there was a feeble smile upon his lips."

The word anxiety reflects Hawthorne's description of Dimmesdale's inner feelings of pain when he confronts his society with his sin. He is so anxious that his body starts shivering and his anxiety reveals the hidden scarlet letter which he bears beside his fellow sinner Hester Prynne and their daughter Pearl. In fact, he feels the pain of three scarlet letters: Hester's token, Pearl as a living scarlet letter since she is the fruit of their sin, and his scarlet letter he made on his chest.

#### Text-3-

"Give up this name of Arthur Dimmesdale, and make thyself another, and a high one, such as thou canst wear without fear or shame."

Once one hears of such a word as fear, he or she receives it as a reaction to something undesirable or unacceptable either individually or collectively. Man by nature needs fear otherwise chaos prevail life , yet it depends on the kind of fear that a human being may feel and that kind of fear may lead to make a balance in God's laws of life. As far as *The Scarlet Letter* is concerned, Dimmesdale's fear is

needed especially he represents God. He is torn apart because of his fear from God for committing adultery and that fear of being exposed before his people who used to idealize him as an angel-like priest. All this fear is parallel to his pain and shame which seem to be permanent up to death. Hester , here, advises her fellow sinner to give up his position as a minister and elope with her abroad so he can get rid of this pain. Such an advice is probably suitable for Dimmesdale for he is so weak to handle such a painful fear as that accompanies him everywhere.

#### Text-4-

"The people reverence thee," said Hester. "And surely thou workest good among them! Doth this bring thee no comfort? More misery , Hester!-only the more misery!"

"*No comfort*" measures the intensity of Hester's and Dimmesdale's pain and suffering in their community. Hester is asking whether Dimmesdale's good deeds for his people as a priest make him feel at least comfort. It seems that pain of sin overwhelms Hester's benevolence and Dimmesdale's goodness which results them restless; and comfort has no place in their life. Discomfort parallels their misery the inevitable outcome of which is pain only.

#### Text-5-

"Expression, that fell upon the sufferer's defenceless breast like a rough blow upon an ulcerated wound. Hester had schooled herself long and well."

Using such a word as "*defenceless*", Hawthorne instigates the reader's sympathy for Hester as she is void of any defense mechanism. She appears on the scaffold bearing the pain of being defenceless and helpless. This pain hurts her more than the pain of the scarlet letter which she forcedly wears on her bosom.

#### Text-6-

"Thou knowest," said Hester — for, depressed as she was, she could not endure this last quiet stab at the token of her shame — "thou knowest that I was frank with thee. I felt no love, nor feigned any."

Depression is a normal result for what Hester Prynne has to endure ; the pain of sin , the pain of shame , the pain of blame , the pain of protecting her fellow sinner , the pain of her husband's revenge , and above all the pain of being socially rejected. All these deep pains come out with depression. According to Hawthorne's use of the word "depressed", Hester implicitly states that her depression and her first stab started long years ago. Her pain started with her marriage to Chillingworth and she frankly reveals these hurtful and painful emotions confirming that her

depression already exists for she does not love him. Their marriage is unequal and this may justify her depression which may also have led her to commit adultery.

Text-7-

"There would have been something sad, unutterably dreary, in all this, had I not been conscious that it lay at my own option."

Hawthorne presents "The Custom House" as a sad introduction and a real base for his novel to prepare his readers for the painful experiences that his characters witness throughout the novel. The novelist explicitly uses the word "sad" to reflect the sad mood of the novel and his own sadness because of his painful personal experience caused by Puritanism.

Text-8-

"Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies."

*Grief* is another reflection to the pain that Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale bear. Pearl's grief and pain rely on her mother's and Dimmesdale's painful communication and that pain stems from being fatherless. She longs for a heavenly father that she has told about before, but she is confused whether the man she kisses is the heavenly father or the Black Man. Her pain seems to be greater than the two sinners. Pearl's pain is social.

Text-9-

"But it is a strange experience, to a man of pride and sensibility, to know that his interests are within the control of individuals who neither love nor understand him."

Pain can be considered as a mask that covers one's love. As far as the novel is concerned, characters who experienced a painful love need to control their love so they can get rid of pain caused by such love. The word *control* is used here to indicate how much pain the characters feel and to control this love and pain is something much more hurtful than living the experience itself. Moreover, misunderstanding this kind of control adds more to their devastating pain.

Text-10-

"Invariably hitting the mark, and covering the mother's breast with hurts for which she could find no balm in this world, nor knew how to seek it in another."

In spite of being a child, Pearl feels her mother's pain in addition to her own pain. She always contemplates hurts of the scarlet letter that her mother bears.



However, Pearl believes in the power of this token though it symbolizes shame. She thinks that this painful scarlet letter is ultimately covered by salvation for a better future.

Text-11-

"There was a fire in her, and throughout her; she seemed the unpremeditated offshoot of a passionate moment."

The image of *fire* expresses the spiritual fire of pain inside every character, such as, Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and Pearl. It is the fire of shame that cannot be easily distinguished or avoided.

Text-12-

"Here on this wild outskirts of earth, I shall pitch my tent; for, elsewhere a wanderer, and isolated from human interests, I find here a woman, a man, a child, amongst whom and myself there exist the closest ligaments."

Isolation is one of the psychological defense mechanisms adopted by those who are hurt by an internal or external event. This mechanism is used as a means to escape pain. Isolation is of two types: physical and spiritual. As it has been observed here, Chillingworth expresses a very painful spiritual isolation though he is surrounded by people uniquely respect him as he is the only physician available in the village. However, his separation from Hester renders him to be alone in an atmosphere full of hatred and revenge. Another pain is added that is of revenge; Chillingworth feels that he is also isolated by his desire to avenge his wife's sin. All this pain is added to a former painful isolation because of his deformity as being a hunchbacked old man.

Text-13-

"Unless it avail him somewhat, that he was broken down by long and exquisite suffering; that his mind was darkened and confused by the very remorse which harrowed it."

Another word represents the highest degree of pain; that is "*suffering*". Dimmesdale is convinced that he is doomed to live in suffering and shame for the rest of his live. He is undoubtedly broken and so helpless to express the spiritual suffering caused by sin.

Text-14-

"He requested old Roger Chillingworth's professional advice, "I could be well content, that my labors, and my sorrows, and my sins, and my pains, should shortly end with me, and what is earthly of them be buried in my grave,"

Being under Chillingworth's influence, Dimmesdale unconsciously starts revealing his sorrows and pains caused by his sin. He wants to end all that sorrowful pain and bury them in his grave. Dimmesdale is definitely not ready to a public confession yet. Nevertheless, the spiritual pain makes his mind unstable which is a weakness that Chillingworth intellectually uses for his own.

Text-15-

"Nor is it their custom ignominiously to kick the head which they have just struck off. In short, unpleasant as was my predicament, at best, I saw much reason to congratulate myself that I was on the losing side rather than the triumphant one."

Just like his characters, Hawthorne reveals his pain for what he has seen from the puritans and their rigidness. He measures his current pain according to Hester's pain and the pain of all those who experienced the unpleasant ways that the puritans used to follow making their people suffer and getting hurt. The author's predicament increases to the extent that he congratulates himself to such a loss as he is helpless to stop his own pain and his characters' as well.

Text-16-

"Most of the spectators testified to having seen, on the breast of the unhappy minister, a scarlet letter—the very semblance of that worn by Hester Prynne—imprinted in the flesh."

The unhappy minister is finally seen as a sinner by people when he has revealed the scarlet letter that is engraved on his chest. Unhappiness in this situation concludes Dimmesdale's pain throughout his sinful experience with Hester Prynne. The two share the same pain as they share the same token of shame bore on the same part of body to demonstrate unhappiness.

Text-17-

"In all her miserable experience, there was nothing else so awful and so loathsome as this sense. It perplexed, as well as shocked her."

Hester's pain takes another shape that is misery since her shame lasts for so long that she cannot cope with her community. Pain cannot be considered as a transient state; it lasts for a long time. This is what Hester feels toward herself, her daughter, her husband, and her fellow sinner.

**Text-18-**

"And He is merciful! He hath proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions.

Delivering a sermon, Dimmesdale's last words shed much light God's mercy. He is merciful and His mercy includes even sinners regardless of being saturated in their defects. Dimmesdale believes that in spite of his pain and afflictions, he must not forget God. As a response to his reckless sin, he feels deep inside that God might have a purpose for his suffering.

**Text-19-**

"Struggling up out of a fathomless depth of remorse and woe\_\_ ye , that have loved me! \_\_ye , that have deemed me holy."

Dimmesdale's woe, pain, and sadness are immeasurable; he is in a state of spiritual pain. Nevertheless, he confesses his sin, at the same time; he defends Hester for what she has done for him during his spiritual illness.

**Text-20-**

"Momentous to thine own, ill whose charge hers is. Exhort her to confess the truth."

Illness is the main cause of pain and it is divided into two types: physical and spiritual. Hawthorne's concern in this novel is the spiritual illness that his main characters suffer from. Hester's spiritual illness makes her stronger while it weakens her fellow sinner. However, both confessed the truth at last.

**Text-21-**

"She possessed affections, too , though hitherto acrid and disagreeable , as are the richest flavors of unripe fruit".

The author describes Pearl's complex character as having painful affections due to her mother's sin. She represents not only sin but also the vital spirit and passion that engendered that sin.

**Text-22-**

"By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast by sending yonder dark"

The burning torture is Dimesdale's reminder of his guilt. He deals with this guilt through tormenting himself physically and spiritually. He actually bears this torture upon his breast as an engraved scarlet letter and in his soul as well.

**Text-23-**

‘Ah, that was sad!’ answered the mother. ‘But she will love thee dearly, and thou her. She is not far off. I will call her. Pearl! Pearl!’

Increasingly, Dimmesdale's pain has become so severe, to the extent that he is bleeding from the depth. His pain of guilt has made him gradually destroyed. Regardless of her own pain, Hester shares Dimmesdale's pain. She feels sympathy towards him. The duality of his character and the dilemma of his inside struggle have made his pain ongoing.

2.2 Statistical Distribution of Words of Pain in *The Scarlet Letter* can be summarized as follows

The Frequency of Words of Pain in *The Scarlet Letter*

Words of Pain	Frequency
Sad	40
Pain	36
Fear	32
Misery	31
Sorrow	30
Suffer	27
Burn	23
Torture	22
Fire	4
Affliction	4
Woe	4
Grief	3
Discomfort	3
Anxiety	2
Hurt	1
Isolation	1
Depression	1
Total	264

## Conclusions

1-Employing various words, pain can be considered as a motive for people. Put simply, the present novel, namely; *The Scarlet Letter*, formulates the sense of pain in a new desirable description. Instead of being unfavourable feeling, pain strengthens people and makes them able to confront life complexity.

2- In spite of being intangible experience and hard to be conveyed, it is inferred that *The Scarlet Letter* is a worthily example of expressing the feeling of pain linguistically.

- 3- Words of pain encompass other negative emotions like fear, shame and sadness.
- 4- Metaphorically, words of pain are widely common in this novel. This can be attributed to the following reasons: firstly to eliminate boredom. Secondly, to attract the reader's attention. Thirdly, to visualize the physical and psychological experience of pain. Fourthly, to give the opportunity for the reader to interact with the incidents and sympathetically be affected.
- 5- Words of pain can be either implicit such as: *isolated*, *control* and *fire*, or explicit such as: *pain* and *suffering*,
- 6- Some words of pain, such as: *fear* and *anxiety*, can be noticed on one's face. Others, such as: *Ah* and *unpleasant* lie in one's speech or behaviour.
- 7- Words of pain are considered as a compensation for one's agony. In other words, they are used to illustrate the sense of pain which is enthroned in people's hearts.
- 8 –Avoiding reducing the audience's entertainment and dealing with the experience of pain that echoes in one's senses more seriously, some words, such as: isolation, depression and hurt, have low frequency.
- 9 - In this particular novel, some words, for example: pain and sad, are employed extensively rather than others. This can lead to the conclusion that these words are more able to evoke the sighing of pain than others.
- 10- Possessing the same frequency, the words: fire, affliction and woe give an impression that they can be put under the same umbrella (i.e. sadness which is compatible with pain).
- 11- Pain is not only a transient state; it may last for a long time.
- 12 - It is also inferred that undergoing social isolation, shame and guilt are the most salient reasons behind such an excessive use of words of pain in Hawthorne's Novel *The Scarlet Letter*.
- 13- Being varies from one person to another; words of pain have been made use of differently.
- 14-The theme is the cornerstone which pinpoints the use of the words required.
- 15- Shuffled in misery, it is noticed that men, in this novel, live in constant pain. Despite of using words of pain, their pains are ongoing.
16. Women employ words of pain skillfully. For them, the use of words of pain softens the atmosphere of tension.\

17- By uttering some words of pain, it is concluded that women, in this novel, share other's pain (i.e. comforting other's pain).

18- Beside the physical causes of pain, it has religious, psychological and social impulses.

19- Some words of pain, such as: *ill*, *no comfort* and *control*, have a general meaning of feeling pain (i.e. being unwell).

20- Even though they are different in their indications, words of pain are mutually related.

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- <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pain>.>