Optimism and Pessimism in Voltaire's Novel "Candide": A Linguistic Analysis

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Shining light where it is dark, optimism is a matter of choice. It spreads its shadows from one time to another. This paper deals with Voltaire's depiction of optimism and pessimism linguistically. It attempts to answer the following questions: 1) what are the linguistic devices used to express optimism and pessimism in the world of "Candide". 2) Do characters of "Candide" have optimistic or pessimistic orientations 3) Is there a contact between these two concepts? It is hypothesized that there are certain linguistic devices used to denote optimism and pessimism in the data under investigation. It is expected that most characters of "Candide" have optimistic orientations. It is also anticipated that there is a positive correlation between optimism and pessimism in Voltaire's Novel "Candide".

1. Introduction

Optimism and pessimism have been "shown to be pervasive and important attributes of human thought and expression "(McConnell et al., 1993:196). Optimism and pessimism, conceptually, indicate differences in expectancies. Optimism means good things will happen, whereas pessimism reflects bad things will happen. In the world of Candide, "optimism and pessimism "are considered as two poles of a continuum. The present study seeks to investigate the linguistic devices used to denote optimism and pessimism in Voltaire's Novel "Candide". It also highlights tendencies of Voltaire's characters in the data selected whom rely on optimistic - pessimistic language usage so as to cope more adaptively with stress.

2. Literature Review

Many researchers have conducted studies on analysing optimism and Pessimism. Scheier and Carver (1992) studied these two concepts psychologically. Davis et al. (2006) dealt with the semantic dimension of optimism and pessimism. Caragea et al. (2018) focused on identifying optimism and pessimism in social media.

The current paper is devoted to analyse the linguistic devices used to express optimism and pessimism in Voltaire's Novel "Candide". It intends to further validate that the language used can have optimistic or pessimistic indications in some selected texts mentioned- above.

3. Optimism and Pessimism: Preliminary Considerations

According to Alsted and Haslund (2020:20), human being has a combination of optimism and pessimism which are "innate personality traits". Bailey (1988), as cited by Chang (2001 :5), states that *optimism* and *pessimism* are parts of human daily life. Radebe (2004:13) describes optimism and pessimism as psychological dimensions. In a broad sense, Norem and Chang (2002:999) emphasize that optimism and pessimism are "umbrella terms that cover several concepts."

Including hope, satisfaction, happiness, depression, Carver et al (2010:880) agree with Norem and Chang (2002) in the idea of encompassing many indications. Hecht (2013:173) affirms that *optimism* and *pessimism* are two contradictory conditions. On the other hand, Mahasneh et al. (2013:72) say that " optimism and pessimism are two separate traits, yet interrelated, meaning that each trait has a relatively independent continuum, combines the different degrees on the one trait". Being dependent on the situation, Carver et al (2010: 881) point out that concepts of optimism and pessimism are subjective issue. Hecht (2013: 174) also states that "it is possible to study optimism and pessimism in an objective, manner…. optimism and pessimism are uniquely and differentially applied in every individual's life."

The issue whether optimism and pessimism are attributed to the same continuum or not has not been resolved yet. Srivastava and Angelo (2009:3) consider that optimism and pessimism as opposite sides of a continuum. Similarly, Lopez and Snyder (2009:137) state that "optimism and pessimism are two ends of a continuum". On the contrary, Rabiega and Cannon (2001:14) regard that the two expressions, namely; optimism and pessimism, do not form the opposite poles of a continuum. Puig-Perez et al. (2015:214) also claim that "it would be advisable to consider optimism and pessimism as two separate dimensions."

Optimism and pessimism have been dealt with by many scholars. Chang et al. (1997: 433), Lopez and Snyder (2009:137) and Hecht (2013:173), To be defined variously, they all agree that optimism is expecting good event(s), while pessimism means anticipating the bad ones. In relation to certain dimensions, Chang (2001: 54) differentiates between optimism and pessimism as follows:

(a) Internal vs. external.
(b) Stable vs. unstable.
(c) Global vs. specific.

4. Optimism and Pessimism from Different Perspectives

Generally speaking, optimism and pessimism cover a wide range of different dimensions, including psychology, society, religion, philosophy and culture. Radebe (2004:13) describes optimism and pessimism "as psychological dimensions." These notions are common in daily life. Lopez and Snyder (2009:308) also suggest that "optimism and pessimism are psychological constructs that are relevant to biological outcomes." In a similar token, Jacobsen et al. (2008:25) assert that despite of all hardship which may face in their lives, men are more optimistic than women. Jacobsen et al. (ibid) add that "males are more optimistic than females over time and across countries."

Socially, there are many social factors which affect optimism and pessimism behaviour. Social variations (such as: family, success, achievement etc.) play vital roles in determining the dominant of one term at the expense of the other. Optimism and pessimism have the capacity in forming one's behaviour (Smith et al., 2013:553). Religiously, Chang (2001:10) states that there is a close connection between religious thoughts and expression of optimism and pessimism".

From the philosophical point of view, optimism and pessimism mean looking at the world either as good place or as bad (New World Encyclopedia, 2015:1). Oettingen and Seligman (1990:218-9) and Gifford et al. (2009: 3) assert that optimism and pessimism may vary across different cultures. Similarly, Carver et al (2010:886) indicate that few people know that "optimism and pessimism differ across cultures."

5. Optimism and Pessimism: Linguistically

Etymologically, optimism is derived from the Latin *optimus* which means (best) and pessimism is borrowed from the Latin *pessimus* which has the meaning of (worst) (New World Encyclopedia, 2015:1). From the linguistic point of view, Davis et al. (2006:13) mention that there are certain words that are associated with optimism and pessimism. "Praise", "satisfaction" and "inspiration" "best", "confident" and "improvement" increase optimism. On the contrary, the words which give rise to pessimism are "bad", "conflict" and "don't". (1) In uncertain times, I usually expect the best (Whalen, 2007:78). In the same token, Kalnbach and Lantz (1997:9), explain that the words *optimistic* and *bright* carry positive indications. (2) I always look on the bright side of things. (3) I am always optimistic about my future.

Atalay (2012:968) also mentions that there are some statements which imply the meaning of optimism such as "*I can…, I will…, I expect it…, I will take time…, I'm sure…, I choose to…, optimistic*".
(4) Overall, *I expect* more good things to happen to me than bad (ibid).

On the other hand, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984:203) reveal that requests are used for showing pessimism politely. (5) I would appreciate it if you left me alone (ibid).

According to Krockel (2007:12), "*repetition*" is used to express pessimism. Palmquist (2016: 346) and Ahern (2012:18) mention that rhetorical question is used to express optimism and pessimism. Pacholczyk et al. (2002:132) assert that negation is used to express optimism and pessimism. Lightman and Zon (2014: 45) remark that "assonance and alliteration" are used to denote pessimism. On the contrary, Molter (2018: 4), states that there are several devices used to express optimism such as "alliteration, assonance and repetition".

Lexically, there are some words which are associated with optimism and pessimism. Ahern (2012:18) figures out that pessimism can be carried out by some negative lexemes such as "tragedy, *pain*, *disappointment*, *suffering*, *gloomy* and *fear*". Similarly, Caragea et al. (2018 :656) numerate a number of words that indicate

optimism such as 'great', 'loved', 'wonderful', 'glad' 'kind', 'thrilled' and 'surprised'. While those that imply pessimism are 'bad', 'worried', 'lost', 'scared', 'terrible', 'disappointed, 'alone' and ' terrified'.

Alwan et al. (2014:51) acknowledge that phonological devices, in English and Arabic languages, inspire a sense of optimism or pessimism. Syntactically, Caragea et al. (2018:655) says that "more past tense verbs occur in the pessimistic category and less future tense verbs in the pessimistic one". This means that future tense is common in optimistic contexts more than pessimistic ones.

Alwan (2019:386) also mentions that dummy pronouns "it and there" are used to indicate pessimism.   In addition, there are other constructions which reflect senses of pessimism. Ayassrah and Alidmat (2017:135) carry out a detailed study to explore pessimism. They conclude that metaphor is a device that indicates pessimism in English poetry.

6. Model of Analysis

Relying on the forgoing discussion, it is worthy to mention that the model adopted to analyze the following selected texts is developed on the basis of other models, such as Davis et al. (2006) who mentions a number of words that denote "optimism and pessimism", and Ahern (2012:18) who remark rhetorical questions as devices that manifest "optimism and pessimism", Atalay (2012) who numerates certain constructions that express optimism and Alwan et al. (2014) whom acknowledge that phonological devices, in English and Arabic languages, inspire a sense of optimism or pessimism, in addition to the observations made by the researcher herself. The eclectic model used for the analysis of the present study demonstrates the linguistic dimension of "optimism and pessimism" in some selected texts of "Candide".
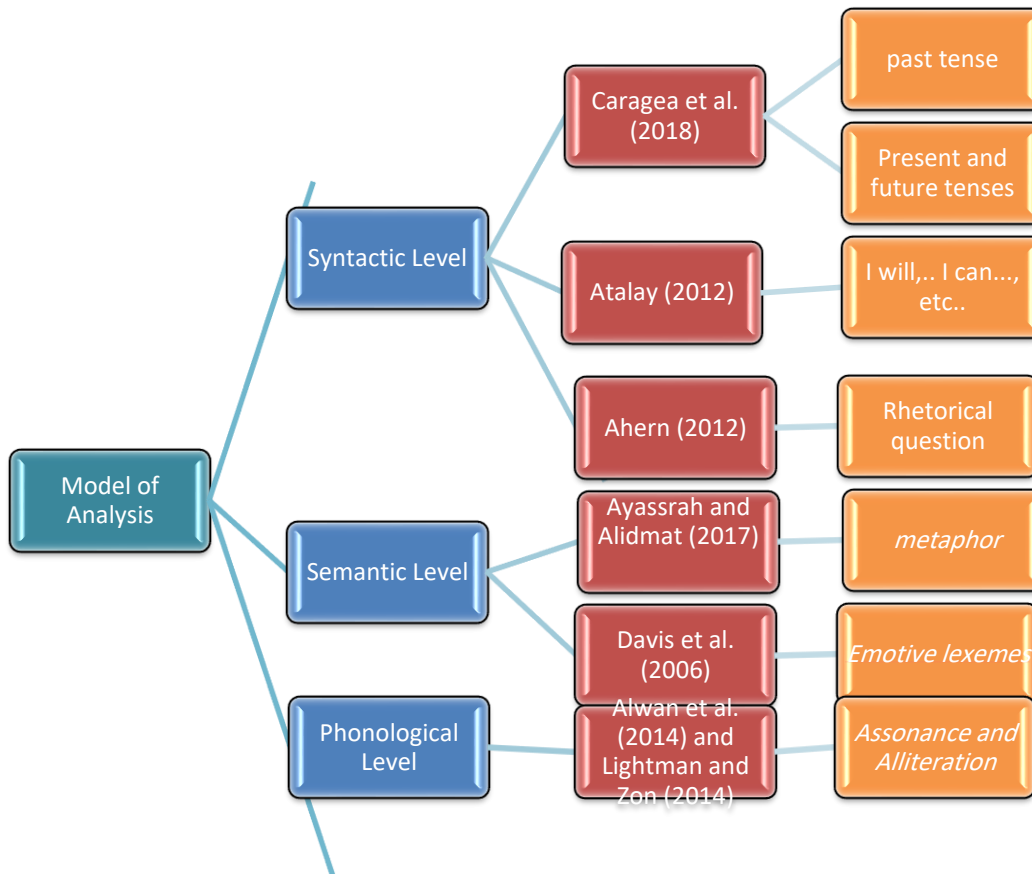

Fig. (1) (The researcher's formulation of data analysis model)

7. Data and Analysis

Text-1-

"I need not tell you how great a hardship it was for a young princess and her mother to be made slaves and carried to Morocco. You may easily imagine what we must have suffered on board a corsair." ("Candide", 1979)

The old woman explains what sufferings she has experienced in the past. In the midst of the unbearable tension, the old woman feels her plight has worsened. Although she comes from a more wealthy family and was socially of higher status than Cunégonde, they were unable to prevent her from meeting a disastrous destiny. The words "*hardship* and *suffered*" mirror the impact of loss and hardship both she and her mother went through.

Pessimistically, Voltaire employs the above– mentioned words along with past tense so as to assert the struggle of one against his unfavorable fate. It is then almost unavoidable to meet pain during the course of life and the past tense clearly reflects the old woman's regret for the loss of her wealth, virginity and overall social status. Aside from losing social status, virginity is the source of womanhood and her strength. Losing it through harassment causes women to be less optimistic than others. This means that there is a contact between sexual status and optimism. The old woman, despite losing her virginity, refuses to be pessimistic about it and powerfully closes off this chapter of history with saying "I will not detain you any longer with such common things; they are hardly worth mentioning." This affirms how optimistic she is. She is powerful enough to lay down the past and move on with power to face life.

Text-2-

"I will marry your sister…... I can desire to behold nothing upon earth but Miss Cunegund. I am going to wait for her at Venice." ("Candide", 1979)

Looking with searching eyes and a longing heart for Miss Cunegund, Candide makes use of utterances, like "*I will…. I can…*" which reflect a flicker of hope and mark of optimistic imprint that he will eventually find his long-lost love. Ignoring the pain of longing to reach his beloved, he never loses hope of finding her once again even when he is told that she and her family were murdered Bulgar army and even when Cunegund accepted to marry the governor of Buenos Aires Don Fernando. He preserves his optimistic outlook of being together with his beloved even when the odds seem to be against him.

These particular statements; namely, "*I will…. I can…*" symbolize his full determination, long patience and endless admiration. In other words, there is no place for pessimism in way of thinking, despite all hardships. He creates hope and is not giving in to the idea of fate and destiny to rule his life.

Text-3-

"Now there can be no mercy for us, we are excommunicated; our last hour is come. But how could you, who are of so mild a temper, despatch a Jew and an Inquisitor in two minutes' time?" ("Candide", 1979)

After the hanging of Pangloss, and all the miseries she went through, Miss Cunegund starts having a serious pessimistic tone. She angrily emphasizes the negligence and the savage world she lives in and reveals that mercy and sympathy appear to have no place in her and the other's lives. People have become selfish and senseless and the factors of a decent human being and its nature have been clearly lost. Using the dummy subject "*there* " in the above-mentioned statement, evokes her inner belief that there is no room for peace in her and her companion's lives and that is the main reason behind her low spirit. This shows her extreme pessimism and her loss of hope.

Text-4-

"O my dear Candide, you must remember Pacquette, that pretty wench, who waited on our noble Baroness; in her arms I tasted the pleasures of Paradise, which produced these Hell torments with which you see me devoured." ("Candide", 1979)

Sexual satire in Candide has been used to communicate Voltaire's opinions on religion and sex. In these lines, Pangloss reveals that he has got an STD from his relationship with Paquette and who got it in turn from a religious Jesuit. Voltaire evidently mingles between two opposite words "pleasures" and "torments", through which he wants to point out to a psychological balance between optimism and pessimism. Things in life may give one temporary pleasures, but they will quickly lead to eternal torments, as Voltaire explains. The concepts of Hell and Heaven used here are also opposite words that Voltaire uses to emphasize this idea. Pangloss's act of rape and the normalization of abusing women may have given him optimistic feelings, but Voltaire and in a satirical manner, attacks women's sexual exploitation by shedding light on this ugly normalization of rape. This deceitful form of optimism is a way to cope with the inevitable miseries that accompany most characters.

Text-5-

"What do I hear? Is it you, my dear master! you I behold in this piteous plight? What dreadful misfortune has befallen you? What has made you leave the most magnificent and delightful of all castles? What has become of Miss Cunegund, the mirror of young ladies, and Nature's masterpiece?" ("Candide", 1979)

Candide asks these rhetorical questions once meeting up with his Master Pangloss. He is shocked when he learns that the person he is confronting is really his old tutor Pangloss after barely recognizing him due to all the physical changes he has gone through. Directing such questions is a way of expressing his pessimism. It expresses how heartbroken he is, seeing his master in such a shape. He wants to know what exactly has happened to his master; what miseries did he meet and what made him leave such a comfortable place such as the castle to be in the state of a beggar. He then notices Miss Cunegund who does not look to be in any better shape. He is astonished with her appearance as she was well-known for her pure beauty and high social status. His surprise reflects how pessimistic he is, shocked that it is possible for somebody to lose everything so suddenly.

Text-6-

"I fell down exhausted with fatigue, and overwhelmed with horror, despair, and hunger." ("Candide", 1979)

Remembering a scene from her horrifying past, the old woman makes use of words such as "*horror*, *despair*, and *hunger*" in order to dramatize her constant pain which has penetrated the deepest of her heart. She wants to influentially narrate the amount of damage she has faced during that period of time. Being in an insufferable situation, she states that she has lost everything, even her virginity. Using these words reflects the high level of pessimism that the old woman bares within her due to the unbearable meanness of that time, where she faced situations of hunger, sexual abuse, slaves, prostitution and more.

The armies are sarcastically characterized as well-disposed, and are then revealed to be inhumanely brutal. It is Voltaire's idea of having the readers that oppression is found all over the world. Even if forces are commanded to wage war and is portrayed as being an optimistic form of action, people should think of it as destruction before considering it as an act of peace.

Text-7-

"All this was indispensably necessary," replied the one-eyed doctor, "for private misfortunes are public benefits; so that the more private misfortunes there are, the greater is the general good." ("Candide", 1979)

Grievance is an unescapable matter that all individuals have to go through during their lifetime. Most characters see only the positive out of everything. Here, the one-eyed doctor is optimistically saying that misfortunes are necessary as others can learn moral lessons from them to avoid misfortunes themselves. He is then completely ignoring the negative side of misfortunes and that they are totally unnecessary in the first place. Voltaire emphasizes this idea through the use of phonological devices; namely, alliteration and assonance, which maintain that "private misfortunes make the general good." Pangloss's use of assonance mirrors the bitterness of the situation, yet, the symphony of alliteration sparkles positivism and solace.

Text-8-

"It was love; love, the comfort of the human species; love, the preserver of the universe; the soul of all sensible beings; love! tender love!" ("Candide", 1979)

In an attempt to stir minds, Pangloss equates love with salvation. The frequent use of the word "*love*" symbolizes his feeling of satisfaction and peace of mind. For him, love is the source of optimism and hope. It is the flame which never dies.

Pangloss utters the word "love" more and more so as to escape the world of suffering. Love is considered as a solution to man's suffering. This advice looks like a comfort in one's life, covering up the agony of sacrifice that life includes.

Text-9-

"Finally, I saw all our Italian women as well as my mother ripped up, chopped, sliced, massacred by the monsters who were competing for them" ("Candide", 1979)

Optimism is contrasted with the darkness of catastrophic destiny of a huge number of women. Here, metaphor emphasizes a long series of unfortunate events. Voltaire, here, compares women to wood as verbs such as "chopped" and "sliced" are more used to describe the cutting of wood, more than discussing the destruction of women. The choice of words is again a sarcastic way that Voltaire uses to protest sexual harassment of women. His protest is a way of criticizing his society as the normalization of harassing women should not be accept at all.

Women are portrayed to be completely passive here as they are not permitted to practice active roles in their own lives or their social life on any occasion.

The reference of men compared to "monster" is another clue that clearly shows Voltaire's objection to the society's principles. Men who harass women should be punished. Practicing vicious acts, Voltaire calls them "monsters" as there is no law that forces them to behave like decent human beings that should respect everyone regardless of gender.

Conclusion

It is concluded that pessimism appears when the author wants to convey his disgust of considering women as sexual objects. In the light of the data selected, Voltaire values optimism over pessimism. Violence, struggle, shedding blood, sex, disease and natural disasters all have been masked using linguistic devices that convey optimism. Concerning gender, it is concluded that male characters are more optimistic than females. This is due to the women's marginalization in the 18th century. Optimistically, most characters aim at continuing their lives regardless of all pains they have faced. It is also found that there is a tendency to use linguistic devices which denote optimism more than pessimism. This can be ascribed to the issues reviewed in "Candide". Ignoring all misfortunes, Voltaire's characters take their positive expectations of the future to be proof in favour of optimism.

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