

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Race is a significant social issue because people sometimes use racial differences as the basis for discrimination. Much of today's racism can be traced to the era of colonialism that began in the 1400s. When European began colonizing Africa and the Americas, the white settlers adopted the idea that they were superior to the other races they encountered and it was their job to "civilize the savages". This false notion became known as "the white man's burden," and was used to justify the Europeans' taking land and enslaving people. In this way, naturally-occurring racial differences became the basis for systems of exploitations and discrimination ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

Racism, as defined in the Wikipedia, is generally defined as actions, practices or beliefs that consider the human species to be divided into races with shared traits, abilities, or qualities, such as personality, intellect, morality, or other cultural behavioral characteristics, and especially the belief that races can be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to others, or that members of different races should be treated differently. As a word, racism is an "*-ism*", a belief that can be described by a word ending in the suffix *-ism*, pertaining to race. The Oxford English Dictionary defines racism as the "belief that all members of each race posses characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to the race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races" and the expression of such prejudice, while The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines it as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of inferiority of a particular racial group, and alternatively that it is also the prejudice based on such a belief. Racism is also the systematic

practice of denying people access to rights, representation, or resources based on racial differences.

The notion of racism is now popular as one of the major issues in today's world society. Everyone around the world must have ever experienced that a few times in their lifetime. But often, they do not really know the meaning or definition of that term. According to Lois Tyson (2006), racism refers to the unequal power relations that grow from the sociopolitical domination of one race by another and that result systematic discriminatory practices (for example, segregation, domination and persecution). Therefore, although anyone can be a racist, in order to be in a position to segregate, dominate and persecute – one has to be in a position of power as a member of the dominant politically group. This practice can only occur when racism becomes institutionalized. Tyson (2006) also said that, institutionalized racism refers to the incorporation of racist policies and practices in the institution by which a society operates. For example, education: federal, state, and local government: the law, both in terms of what is written on the books and how it is implemented by the courts and by police officials. Health care: which can be racially biased in everything from the allocation of research dollar to the location of hospitals to the treatment of individual patients and the corporate world: which often practices racist discrimination to the hiring and promotion despite whatever equal opportunity policies, it officially claims to have.

The idea of racism has been one of the prominent themes in a number of literary works. Of these include Alex Haley's *Malcolm X Autobiography*. Malcolm is an African-American who was raised in a Baptist home. He ran away from home and lived in the "ghettos" (poor neighborhood in large cities). He broke many laws and was eventually arrested. While he was in jail, he began following the Nation of Islam which taught that white man is devil. He fought

against racism and promoted that belief to the entire United States. After a while, he went to Mecca to do a pilgrimage (Hajj). There, he saw people of all different colors gathered worship to the only one god. He also learned that all people are actually the same no matter what their skins are. He went home and told everyone and eventually got assassinated.

Considering the significance of the idea of racism in the autobiography, it is not surprising the reader of this autobiography will find a great number of expressions that are related to the idea of racism. Some of the expressions that can be easily spotted in the autobiography are “This was the snooty-black neighborhood, These Hill Negroes were breaking their backs trying to imitate white people.” These expressions are related with the idea of racism in some particular ways. It will be interesting to identify the kinds of relations between the expressions and the idea of racism, or their semantic relations. This topic seems best analyzed within linguistic disciplines, that is, semantics.

Linguistics has been studied for a long time since 1900. It is one of the scientific field that deals with language. There are many branches of this study. One of them is Semantics. According to Kreidler (1998), semantics is the systematic study of meaning, while linguistics semantics is the study of how languages organize and express meaning. The word ‘semantics’ comes from Greek *sema* (noun) which means ‘sign’ or from a verb *samaino* that means to sign, remark or mean. This term appeared in 1894 for the first time from the American Philological Association. Semantics also deals with meaning of words, structure and types of meaningful relations in language. Therefore, it seems suitable to use the semantic approach to study the meaning relations of the expressions of racism in the autobiography mentioned above.

The focus of this study is to identify the semantic relations of the expressions of racism in Alex Haley’s *Malcolm X Autobiography* (1965). This study will apply the theories of semantic

relations, specifically the notion of lexical relations. According to Finnegan (2004:187) quoted from Wina Wijayanti (2011), lexical semantics relationships, among others, examines word meaning, and it is the study of how the lexicon is organized and how the meaning of lexical items are interrelated, and its principal goal is to build a model for the structure of the lexicon by categorizing the types of relationships between words. Lexical semantics focuses on linguistic meaning. It explains that words or lexicon have meaning that can be analyzed thoroughly and regularly at the lexical items. Lexical semantics, especially semantic field, identifies types of meaning relationship between words that can distinguish one from the others in the lexicon. The component of lexical semantics, according to Kriedler (1981:92-101) and Finnegan (2004:189-184), comprise: hyponymy, synonymy and antonymy. Then according to Finnegan (2004:41-46) parts of speech are classified into words types: nouns, adjective, verbs, pronouns and adverbs.

In doing this research, there are at least three previous studies that have a similar topic but different data analysis and application. First, Menik Ambarwati (2008) studied “Appraisal Analysis of The Warren Buffet Way Second Edition”. She analyzed the biography of Warren Buffet entitled “The Warren Buffet Way Second Edition”. Warren Buffet is the best investors in the United States according to Forbes magazine. She used an appraisal theory to analyze the biography, which includes Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Therefore her study is different from the present study in the theoretical aspects. Second, Hasim (2009) studied “Study of Semantic Mechanism of Humor in The Humor of Margono dan Kawan-Kawan.” He analyzed the recorded humor of the Margono and Friends Show that were available in shops in Probolinggo town. He used semantic mechanism theory; they are phonetic ambiguity, lexical ambiguity and formal semantic that cover illogicality. The recorded data that he used are entitled *Utang Puteran* (Radio Tuning Debt), *Kawin Lagi* (Remarried), *Atapah* (Hermitting), *Penjual*

*Kambing* (Goat Seller), and *Mati Bersama* (Die Together). His study is also different from the present study in the theoretical aspects. Third, Wina Wijayanti (2011) studied “A Study of Semantic Relations of Lexical Items Expressing Positive Advice and Motivation in Mario Teguh Golden Ways Programs at Metro TV.” He analyzed the lexical items that are used to express positive advice and motivation expressions in Mario Teguh Golden Ways Program and also the kinds of lexical relations that are shown in the positive advice and motivation expression in Mario Teguh Golden Ways programs. He used the components of Lexical Items and Lexical Semantics. Those are: Hyponymy, Synonymy and Antonymy. His study is also different from the present study in the object of the study.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

From the background, the research observes the concept of racism are expressed in various ways in Alex Haley’s *Malcolm X Autobiography*. Based on that, the statements of the problem can be formulated as follows:

1. What lexical items are used to express the idea of racism in Alex Haley’s *Malcolm X Autobiography*?
2. What kinds of lexical relations are shown in the expressions of racism in Alex Haley’s *Malcolm X Autobiography*?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the statement above, the objectives of the study in this research are:

1. To describe the lexical items that are used to express the idea of racism in Alex Haley’s *Malcolm X Autobiography*.

2. To classify what kind of lexical relations are shown in racism words in Alex Haley's *Malcolm X Autobiography*.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study describes the racism terms or words that are expressed or mentioned in Alex Haley's *Malcolm X Autobiography*. The theory which is used is semantic relations, consisting of lexical items and lexical relations. The purpose of this research is to find out more about racism terms or words. The thesis writer hopes this research can be beneficial for all language students particularly for those who are interested in doing research in linguistics, that this study provides more information on how general ideas such as racism is creatively expressed throughout a work of literature such as *Malcolm X Autobiography* and how such expressions are cohesively tied to the main theme of racism.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

First of all, the scope of the study is semantic relations of the expressions of racism in Alex Haley's *Malcolm X Autobiography*. It means that the data are collected from the autobiography. The study focuses on the expressions of the concept of racism or words that are related in many ways to the idea of racism. Second, the study applies theories limited to semantic relations, those are lexical items and lexical relations. They are used to analyze expressions of racism and also the relations of hyponymy, synonymy and antonymy that occur between the word *racism* and the expressions.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into several chapters. Chapter I is the introduction of the study, which is the outline of this research and it consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study and the scope and limitation of the study. Chapter II contains the review of related literature that describes the theory semantic relations. Chapter III is the research method of this study that illustrates the ways in getting the data collection and also methods used, including: the research design, the source of the data, and the instrument of the data, the data collection procedure and the data analysis procedure. Chapter IV discusses the analysis and findings. This chapter describes the analysis of *racism* into the types of semantic relations. And the last is chapter V. It is the conclusion which also contains the summary of the overall results of this research.