



Analysis on the Semantics of Word *Trip*

LEI Min^{1,*}

¹Yangtze University College of Arts and Science, Jingzhou 434020, Hubei, China

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The goal of this paper lies in analyzing word semantics by taking the concrete word “trip” for example from a microscopic perspective. During which the methods such as example, classification, generalization and illustration have been effectively employed to support and prove the theory of semantics in linguistics.

Key words: Analysis; Semantics; Word; Trip

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INTRODUCTION

According to Leonard Bloomfield, an influential linguist, Word refers to a free form that does not consist entirely of lesser free forms. Thus, ‘trip’, which admits of no further analysis into meaningful parts, is a word; according to semanticists, a word is a minimal free form of a language that has a given sound and meaning and syntactic function. Semantics is a major branch of linguistics devoted to the study of meaning which can be defined as a reciprocal relation between name and sense.

The object of study in this paper concerns the semantics of word by employing the concrete word “trip” as an instance to illustrate and prove the theory of semantics from a microscopic perspective. During which the methods such as classification, generalization and illustration have been effectively employed to support and prove the theory of semantics in linguistics.

This paper is arranged into five sections: the first section traces the origination of word “trip”; the second one explains its meaning in detail; the third one describes its semantic features; the fourth one analyzes and illustrates the sense relations and semantic field of word “trip”; the last part states the semantic change and transfer of word “trip,” through which the word semantics have been fully explained in the process of analyzing the typical word “trip.”

1. THE SEMANTIC MOTIVATION OF WORD “TRIP”

According to statistics there exists about twenty percent of English vocabulary can be explained in terms of motivation such as the typical word “trip”.

Motivation refers to the basis upon which things and phenomena obtained their names. And it deals with the relationship between name and sense, containing four types such as phonetic motivation, morphological motivation, etymological motivation and the semantic motivation, the most important one upon which word “trip” can be explained. Semantic motivation refers to the motivation based on semantic factors. It is a kind of mental association based on the conceptual meaning of a word. In other words, it is the figurative sense of the word.

The original meaning of *trip* is borrowed from ancient French *trepper* and medieval Dutch *trippen* which mean jump and beat.

2. THE MEANINGS OF WORD “TRIP”

2.1 Grammatical Meaning

Grammatical meaning refers to that part of the meaning of the word which indicates grammatical concept or relationship such as part of speech of words (noun, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs), singular and plural meaning of

nouns, tense of meaning of verbs and their inflectional variants.

Trip has two parts of speech, one is noun another one is verb.

The singular and plural form of *trip* is as **trip** and **trips** respectively.

As far as the tense and their inflectional forms, we can explain them according to dictionary: trips, tripped and tripping, each of them represents the singular form of the simple present tense, the simple past tense and the present progressing tense of verb *trip*.

In terms of case, *trip* is played as trip's in a sentence, for example, we are enjoying the trip's exciting.

2.2 Lexical Meaning

Lexical meaning is the meaning of an isolated word in a dictionary. This component of meaning is identical in all

Chart 1

Original meaning	Part of speech	Denotative meaning(meaning after transfer)
1 jump/beat	Verb	2 move: to move with quick gentle steps
		3 lose balance: to lose your balance after knocking your foot against something when you are walking or to cause (someone) to do this.
		4 switch: to move a switch that operates an electrical systems or to cause (such a system) to start or stop working by moving a switch.
		5 experience: to experience the effects of taking an illegal drug.

	Noun	6 journey: a journey in which some one goes to a place and returns from it and which usually takes a short time or involves traveling a short distance.
		7 mistakes/misjudgments/frustration

From above chart, we can draw a conclusion that when *trip* is as a verb, it contains four denotative meanings such as move, lose balance, switch and experience; while working as a noun, it has two meanings: one is journey; another is mistakes, misjudgments or frustration.

2.2.2 Associative Meaning

Associative meaning is the secondary meaning, a supplement to the denotative meaning. It differs from the denotative meaning in which it is open-ended and indeterminate, influenced by such factors as culture, experience, religion, geographical region, class background, education, etc. Accordingly, we can have three types of associated meanings: connotative, stylistic, and affective meaning.

Connotative meaning, opposite to the denotative meaning, is the intentional meaning which a word suggests or implies. It refers to the overtones or associations. For example, *trip*, denoting a 'short distance journey', is often associated with 'pleasure', 'exciting', 'adventure', 'relaxing', etc. These connotations are not given in the dictionary, but associated with the word in actual context to particular readers or speakers.

Stylistic meaning is that which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use. Word can be divided into three kinds, common words, formal words and informal words, according to the different occasions on which they are used. For example, when

the forms of the word. Lexical meaning and grammatical meaning form the word meaning, Grammatical meaning surfaces only in use, but lexical meaning is constant in all the content words within or without context as it is related to the concept the word conveys. Every word has a different lexical meaning, whereas the grammatical meaning is the same in identical sets of individual forms of different words. Lexical meaning may be subdivided into the two types of meaning, namely denotative meaning and associated meaning.

2.2.1 Denotative Meaning

Denotative meaning is meaning given in the dictionary and forms the core of word meaning. According to *Cambridge international English dictionary*, the denotative meaning of trip can be showed in chart 1,

trip means the illusion caused by taking an illegal drug, it played in colloquialism style; when it means the lever of machine, it acts as a jargon, while it means experience the bad effect of a mind—changing drug, it is used in slang way.

Affective meaning expresses the speakers' attitude towards the person or thing in question. For example, *trip* in sentence "I had an **excited** *trip* during which I broaden my eyes." Involves the affection of pleasure or appreciative; whereas when it occurs in sentence "I suffered an **unlucky** *trip* during which I hurt my legs", it embraces an unhappiness or pejorative emotion. Thus we can conclude that the same word in different context may embrace different affective meaning.

Collocative meaning consists of the associations a word acquires in its collocation. For example, when *trip* is collocated with *it*, which means dance or make a short journeys; when matched with *over*, which means fall over something in one's way, as by catching the foot or make an awkward mistake in something such as words; when followed by *up*, which means make somebody unsteady on the feet or make a mistake or judgment or cause somebody by a deliberate action to make a mistake etc; when *trip* is collocated in *trip the light fantastic* which means dance; in following sentences the above collocative meaning of *trip* have been showed:

*Mind you don't **trip over** these roots; they're difficult to*

see under all these leaves.

Can you read the whole of the news without **tripping over** some of those difficult foreign names?

A root **tripped** Bobby **up** while he was running in the wood, and he fell and hurt his ankle.

Be careful---there may be questions in the paper designated to **trip** you **up**.

3. THE SEMANTIC FEATURES OF WORD “TRIP”

The semantic features are a series of abstract summaries about human experiences, which belongs to metalanguage being employed to describe the semantics of any language. We can show the semantic features of *trip* in following chart:

Chart 2

Trip: Noun	Verb (activity, stumble)
[+ Common]	[+ Dynamic]
[+ Concrete]	[-- Human]
[-- Animate]	[+ Concrete]
[+ Count]	

From above chart, we can draw a clear map in our mind: when *trip* is as a noun, it contains such four semantic features showed in left column of Cart 2: it is employed as a concrete common word which is countable and has no life; while as a verb, it embraces three semantic features mentioned above, namely, it is a active verb which is active in form while passive in meaning.

4. THE SENSE RELATIONS AND SEMANTIC FIELD OF WORD “TRIP”

Semantically, all words are related in one way or another. A word which is related to other words is related to them in sense, hence sense relations.

4.1 Evolvement of Polysemy

The development of word-meaning from monosemy to polysemy follows two courses, traditionally known as radiation and concatenation.

Radiation is a semantic process in which the primary meaning stands at the centre and the secondary meanings proceed out of it in every direction like rays. The meanings are independent of one another, but can all be traced back to the central meaning; whereas concatenation refers to meaning ‘linking together’, is the semantic process in which the meaning of a word moves gradually away from its first sense by successive shifts until, in many cases, there is not a sing of connection between the sense that is finally developed and that which the term had at the beginning.

The process of development of the meanings of *trip* have experienced and mixed both with radiation and

concatenation, we can give a graphic description of the meaning of *trip* below on the basis of chart 1:

From the following chart, we can make a clear comprehension of the mixed processes of the development of the meaning of *trip*, in which radiation and concatenation are combined together: Apart from meaning seven which is concatenated to the central meaning one while associated and connected to meaning three, the other meanings are all radiated in every direction three, from the central meaning one, each of them are independent, nevertheless, can all be traced to the central meaning one.

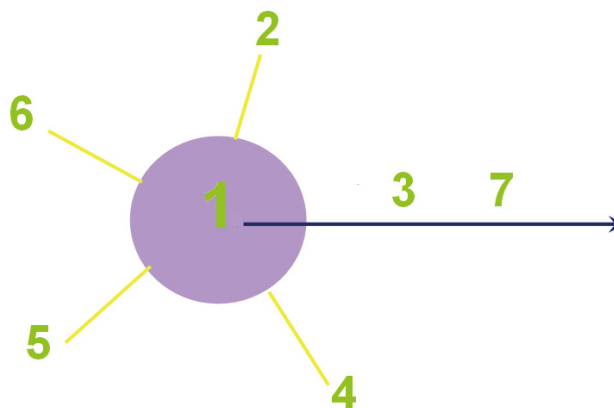


Chart 3

4.2 The Semantic Field (hyponymy) of Word “Trip”

Semantic field, namely hyponymy, is related by the same concept and so are groups of synonyms. It deals with the relationship of semantic inclusion. That is, the meaning of a more specific word is included in that of another more general word. These specific words are known as hyponyms. For instance, showing in bellow chart, a group of words which are synonyms of *trip* form a set of hyponyms of *journey*, the superordinate term above *trip*.

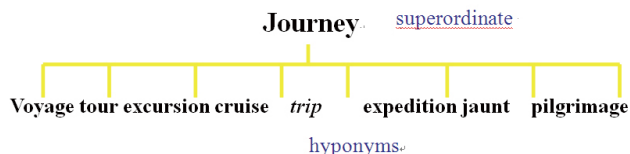


Chart 4

4.3 Homonymy

Homonymy is a term used to refer to two or more words which have the same form or sound but differ in meaning, which are generally defined as words different in meaning but either identical both in sound and spelling or identical only in sound or spelling. According to sound, spelling and meaning, homonyms can be categorized as perfect homonyms, homographs and homophones. *Trip* has two parts of speech, one is noun, another is verb, while both of them have the same form: “t-r-i-p” and the same sound /

trip/, but differ in meaning when they are as different part of speech. Thus two *trip* should be categorized as perfect homonyms.

5. THE SEMANTIC CHANGE AND TRANSFER OF WORD “TRIP”

Changing in word meaning has never ceased since the language came into being and will continue in the future. Word-meaning changes by modes of extension, narrowing, degradation, elevation and transfer.

Semantic transfer means that words which were used to designate one thing but later changed to mean something else have experienced the process of semantic transfer.

After analyzing the meanings of *trip* showing in chart 1, we can conclude that except for the meaning two experienced narrowing of meaning or transfer from abstract to concrete, the other meanings of *trip*, from three to seven, have all experienced the process of semantic transfer in its development.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the typical word *trip* has been selected to

study and prove the theory of word semantics in terms of semantic motivation, meaning, semantic features, semantic field and semantic transfer, etc. During which many methods such as graphic description, illustration, classification and generalization have been effectively employed. As a result, the semantic theory has been fully illustrated and proved in the way of inferring from individual to general, from abstract to concrete and then return to abstract, which may contribute to further study on semantics from other perspectives in linguistics.

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