

Research on the Features of Ancient Word Meaning in Chinese Dialect

—Taking the Features of Word Meaning in Gan Dialect as an Example

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Abstract—The Chinese dialect is rich in words and diverse in characteristics. According to a survey, the author has collected a lot of Chinese dialect words as the first-hand data, which are applied to reveal the semantic diversity of Chinese dialect, and then it can demonstrate the view that different object and different characters can form a cognitive image of people. Then, the research can draw the following conclusions that the similarities and differences of cognitive image show the diversity of semantic features in the language or dialect, which not only reflects the multi-dimensions of cognitive images, but also the development of people's cognitive image. This thesis begins with ancient words in Chinese dialects—living language "fossil". It can't be denied that researching on the linguistics theory from the perspective of cognitive philosophy is a study in a unique way.

Keywords—Chinese Gan dialect; Word formation; Cognitive image; Semantic feature

Each kind of thing or phenomenon has its characteristics which can form people's cognitive image to the word -- the meaning of the word. People's different value orientation in things or phenomenon can constitute different cognitive images. Therefore, the complexity of things or phenomena leads to the diversity of word formation, the cognitive image and the meaning of the word.

I. THE MEANING OF A WORD CAN HIGHLIGHT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THING OR PHENOMENON

There are many characteristics in various things or phenomena, such as nature, state, pattern, function, texture, size, shape, and so on. Then, the reflection of the word meanings on things or phenomena are based on one or several characteristics as the symbols, which not only express the content of the meaning, but also show the motivation of the word formation. For example, in Gan dialect, "Baoya" refers to "the uneven teeth protruding outside the lip", and the word and its meaning are connected according to the morphological feature. "Xianzhou" refers to "tools produced by bamboo which are used for brushing pot, bowl and the cup", and its two features texture (bamboo) and function (brushing) are regarded as the motivation of word meaning. For another example,

"Gou", Ganpo area is near rivers and lakes. When the flood was coming, people around Ganpo area usually used Gou to catch fishes and shrimps around the river. Before 1970s, fishing with Gou is considered to be the maximum pleasure for rural peasant children. Therefore, people still miss and like Gou. The explanation of "Gou" in Shuo Wen Jie Zi is "a bamboo tool used for fishing". [1] Duan Yucai notes, "Gou is made by bamboo strips. When the fish in, it can't leave." [2] Guangyun, "Gou, is also called Yugou, used for fishing." [3] Modern Chinese Dictionary gives the definition that, "Gou is a fishing tool made of bamboo. If the fish goes in, it can not get out." [4] The interpretations in the ancient and modern books are similar. The ancient books in terms of texture and function reveal the word meaning; while people in the Ganpo area get the clear explanation, and the interpretation in Gan dialect is much more complicated, "Gou is a fishing tool made by bamboo strips. The tool likes a bottle with big mouth and small neck, when the fish come in, it is hard to get out." The description shows not only the features of texture, function, but also the size, shape, etc. Another example is "Kou". That is a mechanical piece of a loom, and most families still used it in the countryside around Ganpo area until the mid of the twentieth century. Seen from the influences of ancient literature, the scope of ancient and modern referents is basically the same. Guangyun reveals, it is the fabric tool [3]. With all the proved materials, from the source of Zhuziyulei in Song Dynasty, and also the literatures in Qing Dynasty literature, they mentioned, in Song Dynasty, Kou is made of Cheng from six to fifteen. Cheng is forty Chi, and two Lv is a Chi, so eighty Lv is a Cheng. But people in Gan dialect area have a much clearer cognition of "Kou", its meaning is more detailed and accurate, "one part of the fabric machine, in the shape of rectangular, with bamboo strips for teeth, the tooth arrangement is like a comb, and warp threads go through Kou teeth to determine the warp density and keep the longitude." The explanation not only mentions the shape, texture, but also the working principle, operation method and so on, prominent the nature of its unique characteristics. Thus, the different choices of the characteristics of the things can form the diversity of the cognitive or semantic features.

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II. THE WORD MEANING CONTAINS A STRONG SENSE OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATION

There are different historical cultures in different regions. And the unique historical and cultural customs of thousands of years constitute the features of the word meaning to reflect the historical and cultural contents in Gan dialect.

For example, in Gan dialect area, "Shenti" is known as "Wenshen", and the connotation of "Wenshen" refers to local historical and cultural customs. From Shang and Zhou Dynasty to Spring and Autumn and the Warring States period, Gan (Jiangxi Province) belongs to the nationality of "Ganyue", and lies around the verge of the river shore, so the people in Gan are affected by Yue with tattoo and haircut. They are good at boating, so they often dive to avoid the damage of "dragon in the water". A variety of pictures or patterns are painted or carved on their bodies in many colors. Yingshao in Han Dynasty notes, "often in the water, so the hair is cut, and take the tattoo in the body like the dragon, so avoid harm." Kong Yingda in Tang Dynasty notes, "people in Yue usually cut their hair and take the tattoo to avoid the harm of dragon." Maybe, the "tattoo" is a fashionable body decoration or a symbol of totem. This is the motivation of the word meaning of "tattoo", which truly illustrates the cultural customs of working around the water of ancient Ganyue people in Gan and Po. The word meaning of "Kaimian" is also in the way like that. Before the 1960s, there is a custom to do the facial refresher for the girls who are ready for marry in Gan. In the tradition, the girls never do the facial refresher before being married. When they get married, the facial expert should do the facial refresher for them, like changing the hair style, shaving, which is called "Kaimian" or "Kailian". In the tradition of Gan, it is popular for people in Gan to adopt young girls as the daughter-in-law, who is called "Tongyangxi". In this way, people can save a big sum of money for the bride-price when the son gets married. What's more, it is important for them to cultivate a close relationship which is similar to the "father and daughter" or "mother and daughter" just as "flesh and blood". Thus, when the adopter grows old, they can rely on the adoptees. In Gan dialect, they often describe "the first night of the son and Tongyangxi" as "Yuanfang". Again, "Lan" is a kind of "Ganlan style" housing construction in ancient Yue. People live in it, and the livestock live in the bottom of the house. This living form is popular in the Yangtze River Basin and its southern area. According to archaeological discoveries, the Neolithic pottery house in Ganpo area belongs to this kind of Ganlan style architecture. People also discovered the "Ganlan" architectural relics in the spring and Autumn period of Western Zhou Dynasty in the camp in Zhangshu and water rock cliff in Guixi. There are still many kinds of "Lan" today in Ganpo area, which is no longer the kind of human and animal lodging house, and only refers to "domestic dwellings." "Ladder" is also like this, it originally refers to the long ladder for climbing wall in ancient war. Now there is no ladder used in the war, while the ladder is widely used in the general housing. Therefore, people in Gan dialect area today also take the "Tizi" as the "ladder". People in Chongren, Nanchang, Xiajiang, and some places such as Yingtan i, now take the movable Tizi as "ladder".

Therefore, it shows that the rich culture and customs are one of the formation motivations of the word meaning in Gan dialect.

III. THE RELATION BETWEEN WORD MEANING AND ITS MOTIVATION IS BASED ON THE MEDIUM OF RHETORIC

For some words, it is hard to find their meaning motivation from the word meaning. In this case, the meaning and its motivation can be connected by the rhetoric, so the rhetoric has become a bridge connecting them. The motivation of those word meanings are recessive, but with a very good effect for the expression. For example, in the Gan dialect, people who master the medical knowledge and live by curing the sickness are regarded as "Langzhong", and that is doctor. "Langzhong" originally refers to "the senior officials in central government", who is in charge of important affairs of the central from the Warring States period to the Qing Dynasty. It seems that there is no link between the word meaning and the motivation. Why are they can be connected? The reason is that the function of a Langzhong is like a doctor who knows everything of a human, therefore, the doctor is also known as "Langzhong". This is the art to metonymy, and the unrelated word meaning and motivation can be skillfully connected together. As shown in another example, in Gan dialect, most of people call "beams" on the portal "Menlong". Why not calling "Menmei"? Because the beam frame in the portal is like a dragon. "Dragon" is a miraculous thing, which can drive out evil spirits and welcome good lucks, already being the national mascot. The use of metaphor can make the integration of the two, and also shows the people's worship to the dragon, which is with a strong regional culture. The expression of "Shuise" in Jiangxi dialect also changes like this. Its original meaning is "water color", and later refers to "the color of women's face". For example, a woman's face was rosy, healthy-looking, so people called "Shuise is very good"; otherwise, "Shuise is bad", such as the anonymous *Qingmeng Tuo* in Qing Dynasty refers, "the woman is of great color". In Jiangxi dialect areas like Lichuan, Wannian, Yiyang and Ji'an, Xiajiang and other places, people often praise the ruddy, young, healthy girl "good Shuise". This kind of rhetoric cognitive image contains the artistic conception of the poem, which gives people a sense of beauty and exudes a cultural atmosphere of life.

IV. THE WORD MEANINGS ORIGINATE FROM THE ALLUSIONS OR STORIES

The content of an allusion can be the motivation of word meaning and word formation. Seen from the literal level, it is difficult to find out the meaning and its motivation, because there are a lot of semantic gaps in the words, which need to fill in from the stories or legends. It causes the word meaning with the recessive characteristic. For example, in Gan dialect area, "Si (dead)" is regarded as "Baidou", which is rooted in the story of Zhuge Liang in Wuzhangyuan. It is said that, when Zhuge Liang was ill during the northern expedition in Wuzhangyuan, he found he was dying, so he offered sacrifices to the Rang star, praying to the long life. Later, soldiers from Wei attacked Zhu Gelang's troop, and the sacrifices are destroyed. The pray failed and Zhuge Liang also died at last. It is also shown in the relationship between man and woman. A

person who is jealous is called "Chicu" in Gan dialect. According to the allusion, during the years round Tang Zhenguan, the nation was powerful and people are rich, leading in a happy life. Many high-ranking officials preferred to buy field and new houses, and married some concubines. Only Weizheng still live with his old wife in the old house. One day, Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty gave an order to Weizheng that he should marry a combine for his wife was old and sick. Weizheng refused to do it, and it was not allowed by his wife. So, Emperor Taizong was angry and gave the wine with poison to his wife. After finishing drinking, his wife did not die but felt very sour. In fact, Emperor Taizong did not give her wine with poison but with vinegar, as the metaphor to satirize the "jealous" of his wife. Since then, "Chicu" refers to "jealous". The story itself is the motivation for the formation of the word. Other examples in Gan dialect like "Dongsi", "Bulangbuxiu", "Lvmao" "Jieshou", "Goutuizi" all belong to this category.

V. THE WORD MEANING IS SHOWN IN AN INDIRECT AND OBSCURE WAY

Sometimes, people are reluctant to describe the things or phenomena in a direct way, so they give the related expressions in an indirect and obscure ways. The characteristics of this kind of word meanings are euphemistic with an implication, and people can only comprehend the implication by careful consideration. For example, in Gan dialect area, people usually called "Shetou (tongue)" of the livestock as "Zhaocai (lucky)", and its implication means that people would not "Sheben (loss money)" (for "Sheben" sounds like "Shetou" in Chinese), and attract the treasure to the family (Zhaocai)". As it is shown in the following example, people do not want to call "Guancai (coffin)" to express the meaning of wood box for the dead, so call it "Shouqi (wooden box for long life)". Thus, "Shouqi" has become an euphemistic call of "Guancai" since ancient times. In addition to the source of the literature documents, other works show the word "Shouqi", such as The Eleventh Day after the Dead of Li Shi in Chizhou by Du Mu, Tang Dynasty, "New order by the emperor is just issued, and just the time Li Shi's shouqi is finished." In the seventy-five chapter of Journey to the West, "selling the white horse to buy a shouqi (coffin) for the master." By using "Shou", it reflects people's desire for a long life. Going to the toilet is called as "chugong", which is a set of sign to show the absent of the examinee in the imperial examination of Yuan Dynasty. If the examinee wants to go to the toilet, he must firstly bring the sign, the word "Chugong" was given the meaning of "go to the toilet". In the nineteen chapter of Golden Lotus, it said, "Ximen Qing chugong behind the east house." "Dongsi" is also in this case. "Dongsi" originally refers to the general title of the government in the east capital Luoyang in the Tang Dynasty. Bai Juyi in Tang Dynasty wrote the verses in his poem "order coming from Dongsi". Later, "Dongsi" is known as the "toilet". For example, Zhangxie scholar in Song Dynasty wrote, "we are served to take medicine in the morning and to go to Dongsi in the evening." In Jiangxi dialect area, it is often considered as the "toilet", such as in Nancheng, Nanfeng, Congren, Jinxian, Jinxi, Jianning in Fujian, Xiushui, Lianhua, Yongxin, Pingxiang, Wannian, Yugan, Yichun, Wanzai, Qingjiang. Fenyi and so on, whether the scholars or the men who were illiterate, are all

saying like this. Why exists this reference? After Tang and Song Dynasties, many scholars and merchants gathered together in those places, so the reference has a close relationship with this social background.

In Gan dialect, there are many words like this, such as the "Guoshen (dead)", "Xianggong (maggot)" and so on.

VI. CONCLUSION

As everyone knows, things or phenomena in the world are complex and diverse. Therefore, it is difficult to illustrate all the word meanings and motivations one by one. In fact, there are many other ways without speaking of, such as generalization of synonymous morpheme, or partial meaning of the morpheme, and several morphemes are integrated into new meanings and others, which need to do further investigation.

A word is a symbol, which can represent all kinds of things or phenomena, whether it is the objective or subjective by imagination; and the word meaning is the active reflection of a variety of things or phenomena in the human brain, and also a reproduction on the nature of the nuclear meaning of a variety of things or phenomena. The meaning of a word shows the feature of a thing or phenomenon, not the concept, so it is often able to reveal the original meaning of a word. "The original meaning of a word is the motivation for the word formation, which is redefined. Because of its generalization and abstraction, it is also called 'semantic features'; from the process and principle of the cognition, people call it 'image'." [4] and "image refers to the understanding on the characteristics of things". Different understandings on the same feature can be different word meanings. The understanding on the characteristics of things can be regarded as the image in cognition, the basis for naming, and the elements implied in the word, and that is the original meaning of the word." [5]

In a word, from the perspective of the word meaning of the Gan dialect in Chinese, the multi-dimensional nature of the cognitive image gives various illustrations on the word meanings and the motivations for the formation, which shows the complexity of people's cognition, and also reflects the development of people's cognitive image.

In this paper, the author only makes a tentative research on the motivation of the word formation in Gan dialect--on the original meaning of the word from the view of "semantic features".

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