

فصلنامه تحقیقات جدید علوم انسانی

Human Sciences Research Journal

دوره چهارم، شماره ۲۸، تابستان ۱۳۹۹، صص ۲۶۳-۲۷۶
New Period 4, No 28, 2020, P 263-276

شماره شاپا (۲۴۷۶-۷۰۱۸) ISSN (2476-7018)

A Semantic Analysis of Hyponymy in Mansfield's The Little Girl

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to investigate the semantic category of hyponymy with the aim of discovering and highlighting the most and least dominant category types in Mansfield's short story, The Little Girl. The findings of the research have found that the most dominant type is body and its parts which occurred 14 times, while least types were transportation and drink, which occurred only 2 times in the data under investigation. The results of the research can enhance and empower instructors and learners of English to learn and use new sets of vocabulary words, which will add more understanding to the language of literary texts too.

Keywords: Hyponymy; Inclusion; Entailment; Meronymy; The Little Girl.



1. Introduction

1.1 The hypothesis of the study

Hyponymy in English is a rich area, which signals lexical relations between sentences. The study hypothesizes that hyponymy comprises a significant part of English short stories, Mansfield's *The Little Girl* is an example.

1.2 The aim of the study

The study aims at investigating and exploring the most and least dominant types of hyponyms in the short story, *The Little Girl*, with the aim of showing the ways they occur and recur in the short story.

1.3 Methodology

The type of this research is descriptive and qualitative in nature. The object of the research is *The Little Girl*, a short story written by Catherine Mansfield.

1.4 Data Collection

The data are composed of words and phrases that pertain to a certain category of group words. To this aim, the short story has been investigated thoroughly in order to identify the words and/or phrases pertaining to specific type(s) of hyponymy.

1.5 Data Analysis Method

In order to fully analyze the data in the short story, *The Little Girl*, the researcher has classified and tabulated each word group category. The total number of the columns in the table has been calculated in order to get the number of the more and least dominant category of hyponymy in the data under investigation.

2. Hyponymy: An Overview

Hyponymy is a semantic category which refers to the lexical relations that occur between words (Hearst, 1992, pp. 539-41; Bussmann, 1996, p. 57). It is a word or phrase whose meaning is entailed within that of another word, and its hyponym or hypernym is known as a superordinate (Eco, 1986, p.51; Goatly, 2012, p.95; Kroeger, 2018, p.113). Hyponyms and hypernyms often share a type-of relationship, for instance, the hypernyms, sparrow, hawk and owl are all hyponyms of bird, where the word bird itself is a hyponym of animal. In other words, hyponymy holds between a more specific or subordinate lexeme and a more general or superordinate lexeme, as represented by such pairs: as "dog" and "animal", where the noun "dog" is the hyponym of animal (Lyons: 1996, p. 125). In this regard, Lyons state that hyponyms are representative of sense relations that hold between words or lexemes are often viewed within the category of entailment. "Hyponymy



is frequently discussed by logicians in terms of class inclusion" (Lyons, 2009, p. 291).

Carnap (1965 cited in Lyons: 1996, p. 126) proposes that hyponyms are best investigated within what logicians call "meaning postulates". As an example, the word "bachelor" and "unmarried" are two postulates depending on their analytic meaning (p.127). Griffiths (2006, p. 46) asserts that hyponymy "is important for describing nouns, but it also figures in the description of verbs and, to a lesser extent, adjectives". Similarly, Dixon (2005, p. 127) postulates that the words "murder" and "assassinate" are hyponyms of the verb kill and he gives an example of the way hyponyms is viewed. As he puts it: "House is a hyponym of the superordinate building, but building is, in turn, a hyponym of the superordinate structure; and, in its turn, structure is a hyponym of the superordinate thing" (p. 48).

3. Previous Studies

This section investigates the most relevant studies conducted on hyponymy as far as the researcher is aware of; the Internet is the main means behind such awareness. Anyway, the studies/research conducted on hyponymy seem to be few as far as the World Wide Web is concerned. These studies will be dealt with according to the date they were conducted.

Elhaj & Gawi (2015) conducted a case study on synonymy and hyponymy at Ta'if University with the aim of improving and developing EFL Saudi university students. The researchers have hypothesized that EFL Saudi university students can better learn English vocabulary and lexical items through synonymy and hyponymy, as they "facilitate the process of learning through recalling the sense relations" that occur between these pairs of words (p. 5).

Al-Shemmery & Alshemmery (2017) conducted a study on the difficulties pertaining to the comprehension and production of hyponyms confronted by Iraqi learners of English at the department of English, University of Babylon. Their study reached the conclusion that hyponymy is an important category in EFL where Iraqi students face serious problems in acquiring and using them competently due to a variety of factors such as mother tongue interference and linguistic knowledge.

The most relevant work to this research goes for two researchers, namely, Elaumbanua & Sihombing (2015) from the University of Prima, Indonesia, where they have investigated Mansfield's short story, *The Voyage*. In this study, the researchers, conducted a qualitative research on the data and have found out that there are certain types of hyponymy that are more dominant than the others. Parts of the body were the most salient hyponym, while the least salient ones were sex, bird, fruit, drink and occupation. The significance of Elaumbanua & Sihombing work lies in the way they classify hyponymy according to their types. However, they did not tackle all other



types exclusively, as they missed some "forms" that can be subsumed within other types and/or categories. This study is an attempt to bridge this gap.

4. Hyponymy, Inclusion and Entailment

Trask and Stockwell (2007, pp. 255-6) stresses that meanings of words may be related in a number of ways. Similarly, Radford et al (2009, p. 172) state that the relationship between lexical word and expressions can be viewed from the concepts of entailment and inclusion-hyponym is an example. They argue that x is a lion entails that x is an animal. This semantic relationship of hyponymy, sometimes referred to as meaning inclusion'. Similarly, we can say that an owl is a hyponym of bird and a lizard a hyponym of reptile and so on.

Moreover, Radford et al argue that the words, animal, reptile and bird are superordinates of lion, snake and sparrow respectively. To clarify this point, they contend that "an X is a kind/type of Y". So, a lion is a kind/type of animal, a snake is a kind/type of reptile, a sparrow is a kind/type of a bird and so forth (see Lyons, 1996 for more information). Hurford, Heasley & Smith (2007, pp. 110-11) exemplifies this relationship in a diagram where the sense of the word animal is included in the sense of the word cow:

animal----- sense of animal
sense of cow ----- bovine
female

The diagram above depicts the list of sense components contained in the noun animal.

5. Hyponymy and Meronymy

Hyponymy and meronymy in semantic studies refer to two concepts that are part of sense relations that hold between lexical items (Riemer, 2016, p. 260). Although they share similar characteristics, they differ in certain contexts. The main difference between hyponymy and meronymy is that hyponyms exemplifies the notion of it is a kind of, while meronymy stands for it is a part of. In other words, hyponymy is associated with the relationship that exists between words denoting the same kind/type or sort, while meronyms embodies the part-whole relationship (Griffiths, 2006, p. 58). Put simply, a bear is a kind of animal, but not a part of it; a foot has a toe, and a toe is a part of hand. The following section is a practical application of hyponymy in the short story, The Little Girl.

6. Hyponymy in The Little Girl

The following is a practical application of hyponymy types in the short story. There are 116 quoted example sentences, which contain underlined words/phrases of hyponymy types.



Type of Hyponymy: Family

The type of the hyponymy of family is exemplified by the words father, mother, grandmother, grannie and grandma, as in the following example sentences:

- 1- "He gave her a perfunctory kiss, to which she responded with "Good-bye, father".
- 2- "One day, mother became ill, and she and grandmother drove into town".
- 3- "I often have nightmare, and then grannie takes me into her bed".
- 4- "Grandma, Grandma! She woke shivering".

2-Type of Hyponymy: Transportation

In the below examples, the words buggy and carriage represent means of transportation, which indicate a coherent flow of the two homonymous words in the story.

- 5- "She heard the noise of the buggy".
- 6- "She and grandmother drove into town in a closed carriage".

3-Type of hyponymy: House and its Parts

The examples mentioned below are components of a large category, namely, a house, which form two hyponyms of the same referent. Notably, house and its parts is the second dominant category type in the story. The examples below explain the use of this category type.

- 7- "Rooms were ransacked".
- 8- "She heard his loud voice in the hall".
- 9- "Bring my tea in the smoking-room".
- 10- On Sunday afternoons grandmother sent her down to the drawing-room.
- 11- "Come straight down to the dining-room".
- 12- "She wandered into mother's bedroom to look for scraps".
- 13- "Have they taken it into the kitchen again?"

4-Type of Hyponymy: Clothing

As the examples mentioned below demonstrate, the hyponymy type of clothing is represented by words like, boots, slippers, socks, handkerchiefs, pocket, sleeve, shawl, coat, pyjama, jacket, hanky and bedclothes, as in:

- 14- "You can come down and take off father' boots".
- 15- "Bring my slippers".
- 16- "You just go to sleep, child," said Alice, pulling off her socks and whacking them against the bedrail".
- 17- "And try to put your handkerchiefs in your pocket, not up your sleeve".
- 18- "The grandmother had wrapped her in a shawl".
- 19- "Here's a clean hanky, darling, with some of my lavender water on it".
- 20- "Two little girls hanging on to his coat tails".
- 21- "She crept close to him, snuggled her head under his arm, held tightly to his pyjama jacket".



22- "Here's a clean hanky, darling, with some of my lavender water on it".

23- "She screamed, cowering down under the bedclothes".

5. Type of Hyponymy: Time

The words morning, afternoons, evening, daytime, night, and the dark all belong to parts of the day, i.e. the hyponymy category of time. They recur in the story in the following sentences:

24- "You'll forget all about it in the morning".

25- "On Sunday afternoons grandmother sent her down to the drawing-room".

26. "Little girl saw them playing "tag" in the evening".

27- "That was all right in the daytime".

28- "That night there was a hue and cry over the house".

29- "I can't stay in the dark".

6. Type of Hyponymy: Building

When it comes to the category type of building, it is indicated by the word forms nursery, house and church, as shown by the three examples below:

30- "Finally mother came into the nursery".

31- "The little girl was left alone in the house with Alice".

32- "On Sundays she sat in the same pew with him in church".

7. Type of Hyponymy: Body and its parts

The category of body and its parts is the most dominant type of hyponymy in the story. It is indicated by the words hand(s), eyes, neck, mouth, face, feet, back, legs, head, heart, shoulders and cheeks, palm and arm(s). Interestingly, some of these words can form a hyponymy by themselves. In other words, the words eyes, cheeks and mouth can relate to the hyponymy of face or head. Similarly, hand, arm, shoulder, neck can form a hyponymy type of the category-joints, and so forth. Below are some example sentences:

33- "Your hands jog like an old lady's".

34. "His eyes narrowed to a slit"

35- "He was so big—his hands and his neck, especially his mouth when he yawned".

36. "But the little girl always found mother reading The Sketch on his face. his feet propped on one of the best sofa pillows".

37. "And she was dragged down to where father was pacing to and fro, hands behind his back".

38- "Here, rub your feet against my legs and get them warm".

39- "My head's on your heart".

40- "The father with the baby Mac on his shoulders".

41- "A red colour flew into her cheeks".

42- "Down came the ruler on her little, pink palms".

43- "He blew out the candle, bent down and caught up the child in his arms".



8- Type of Hyponymy: Colour

Colour as a hyponymy type is depicted by the words blue, red, brown and yellow, as in the following examples:

- 44- "He made little notes during the sermon with the stump of a blue pencil on the back of an envelope".
45- "A red colour flew into her cheeks".
46- "Grandmother sent her down to the drawing-room dressed in 'brown velvet', to have a nice talk with father and mother".
47- "She should make him a pincushion for a present out of a beautiful piece of yellow silk".

9- Type of Hyponymy: Age

The hyponymy type of age is represented by the words grannie, child, old, baby and little. The example sentences below demonstrate their use in the story:

- 48- "I often have nightmares, and then grannie takes me into her bed."
49- The child cuddled close to her soft body".
50- "But the same old nightmare came".
51- "The father with the baby Mac on his shoulders".
52- "Two little girls hanging on to his coat tails, ran round and round the flower beds, shaking with laughter".

10- Type of Hyponymy: Five Senses

The words that are related to the five senses in the story are indicated by the forms, see, looked, watched, hear, listen, touch, and feeling. The examples listed below depict their occurrences in the story.

- 53- "She woke shivering, to see father beside her bed".
54- "By that time he had his spectacles on and looked at her over them in a way that was terrifying to the little girl".
55- "She, perched on the piano-stool, gravely watched him until he woke".
56- "My head's on your heart; I can hear it going"
57- "I tried to explain to father, but he was too upset to listen to-night".
58- "You must be taught once and for all not to touch what does not belong to you".

11- Type of Hyponymy: Occupation

Occupation as a hyponymy type in *The Little Girl* is represented by the word forms doctor, servants, clergymen and butcher, as demonstrated by the following examples:

- 59- "You d-d-don't know? If you stutter like that mother will have to take you to the doctor".
60- "Rooms were ransacked-servants questioned".
61- "He said his prayers so loudly she was certain God heard him above the clergyman".



62-"The butcher with a knife and a rope who grew nearer and nearer".

12- Type of Hyponymy: Sex-Male

The hyponymy category of sex in the story is represented by male and female types. The words that relate to male category are father, clergymen, and boys, as in:

63-"I d-d-don't know, father".

64-"He said his prayers so loudly she was certain God heard him above the clergyman.

65- "Once she saw the boys turn the hose on him".

13-Sex-Female:

As noted in the above discussion, the category of female is indicated by the words girl, grandmother, and grandma, as shown by the sentences below:

66- "The little girl was left alone in the house with Alice".

67- "Mother! Go and see if my paper's are out there".

68- "The grandmother was out in the garden".

69- "Grandma, Grandma! She woke shivering, to see father beside her bed, a candle in his hand".

70- "Your hands jog like an old lady's".

14 –Type of Hyponymy: Furniture

The words chair, bed, stool, table, couch and sofa form a hyponymy of the category of type furniture. The examples mentioned below embody their occurrences in the data.

71-"Hours later, when the grandmother had wrapped her in a shawl and rocked her in the rocking-chair the child cuddled close to her soft body".

72- "A newspaper was on the bed".

73- "She, perched on the piano-stool, gravely watched him until he woke and stretched, and asked the time-then looked at her".

74- "Here, Kass, carry my teacup back to the table—carefully".

75- "Father stretched out on the couch".

76-"His feet propped on one of the best sofa pillows".

77- "On Sundays she sat in the same pew with him in church".

15-Type of Hyponymy: Paper

Paper as a type of hyponymy is depicted by the words newspaper, paper and sheets of paper, as in the following examples:

78-"A newspaper was on the bed".

79-"He pitched the paper on the floor".

80-"On the bed table she discovered a great many sheets of fine paper".



16- Type of Hyponymy: Appearance

Appearance in *The Little Girl* is indicated by adjectives such as good, funny, beautiful, fine nice; clean and soft which form a type of hyponymy in the story, as explained by following sentences:

81-"Well, Kass, get a move on and pull off these boots and take them outside. Been a good girl to-day?"

82- "A funny feeling came over her."

83-"She had torn up all his beautiful writing".

84-"He discovered a great many sheets of fine paper".

85-"He was harder than the grandmother, but it was a nice hardness".

86- "Here's a clean hanky, darling".

87- "The child cuddled close to her soft body".

17-Type of Hyponymy: Size

The hyponymy time of size can be found in the words tiny, big, little, great, giant and long. All of these words are adjectives forming a consistent set of the category type of size. The following sentences exemplify this point.

88-"On the bed table she discovered a great many sheets of fine paper, gathered them up, shredded them into tiny pieces".

89."He was so big".

90-"Down came the ruler on her little, pink palms".

91- "Father's great speech for the Harbour Board had been lost".

92- "Thinking about him alone in the nursery was like thinking about a giant".

93-"And oh, the glad sense of relief when she heard the noise of the buggy growing fainter and fainter down the long road!"

18-Type of Hyponymy: Voice

The examples mentioned below comprises underlined words that pertain to voice in the story. These words are noise, hue and cry, as in:

94-"She heard the noise of the buggy growing fainter and fainter down the long road".

95-"That night there was a hue and cry over the house".

19- Type of Hyponymy: Sleep

The below examples include words that pertain to the hyponymy type of sleep. These words are bedroom, bed table, bed, sleep, bedrail, nightmare and dream. All of these words form a clear set of hyponymy type of sleep in the short story.

96-"She screamed, cowering down under the bedclothes".

97-"Go to sleep, pet".

98-"What'll I do if I have nightmare?"

99-"What's the matter?" asked father. Another dream!".



20- Type of Hyponymy: Drink

Drink as a hyponymy type is indicated by the two words, tea and water as in the following examples:

100-"Bring my tea into the smoking-room."

101-"Here's a clean hanky, darling, with some of my lavender water on it".

21-Type of Hyponymy: Distance

Distance refers to the extent of space between two places or objects. The words nearer, close, beside and next reflect this point, as in the following examples:

102- "Here's a clean hanky".

103- "Mother, go and see if my paper's are out there".

104- "The butcher with a knife and a rope who grew nearer and nearer".

105- "The child cuddled close to her soft body".

106- "She woke shivering, to see father beside her bed".

107- "The Macdonalds lived in the next-door house".

108-"She heard the noise of the buggy...down the long road".

7. Discussion

The study has showed that there 21 types of hyponyms prevailing over the short story. To give a brief view of the analyzed data, and have some discussion pertaining to the number of occurrences of the hyponymy types/categories, the table below sums up the types of hyponymy and the number of their occurrences in the short story.



Table 1. The List of Hyponymy Types and its Words in The Little Girl

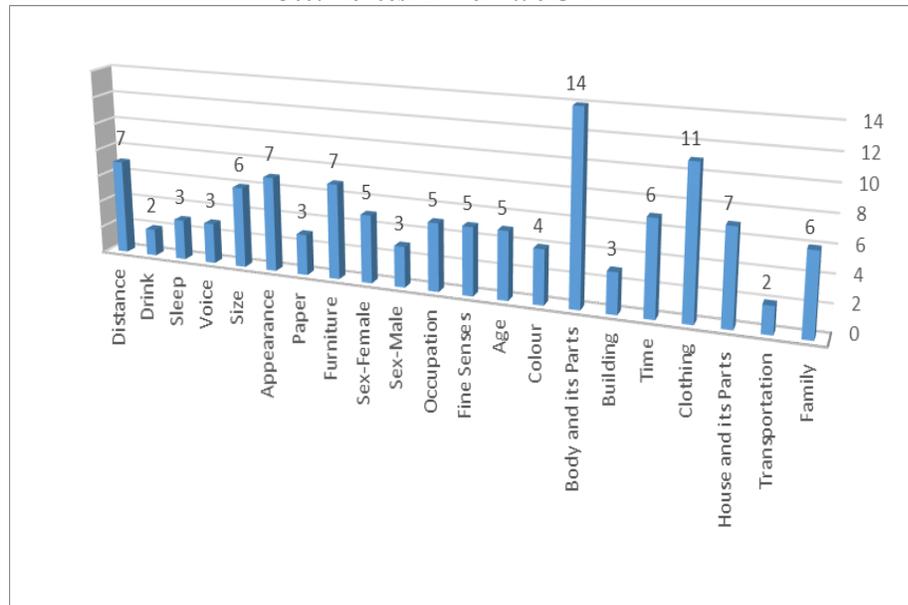
| N0. | Category of Hyponymy | Word | Total |
|-----|----------------------|---|-------|
| 1 | Family | Father; mother; grandmother; grannie; grandma; daughter | 6 |
| 2 | Transportation | Buggy; carriage | 2 |
| 3 | House and its parts | Hall; room; smoking-room; drawing-room; dining-room; bedroom; kitchen | 7 |
| 4 | Clothing | Boots; slippers; socks; pocket; sleeve; shawl; coat; pyjamas; jacket; handkerchiefs; bedclothes | 11 |
| 5 | Time | Morning; afternoon; evening; daytime; night; the dark | 6 |
| 6 | Building | Nursery ; house; church | 3 |
| 7 | Body and its Parts | Hand; eyes; neck; mouth; face; feet; back; legs; head; heart; shoulders; cheeks; palm; arm | 14 |
| 8 | Colour | Blue; red; brown; yellow | 4 |
| 9 | Age | Grannie; child; old; baby; little | 5 |
| 10 | Five Senses | Look; watch; hear; listen; touch | 5 |
| 11 | Occupation | Doctor; servants; clergyman; butcher | 4 |
| 12 | Sex-Male | Father; boy; clergymen | 3 |
| 13 | Sex- Female | Girl; mother; grandmother; grandma; lady | 5 |
| 14 | Furniture | Chair; bed; stool; table; couch; sofa; pew | 7 |
| 15 | Paper | newspaper; paper; sheets | 3 |
| 16 | Appearance | Good; funny; beautiful; fine; nice; clean; soft | 7 |
| 17 | Size | Tiny; big; little; great; giant; long | 6 |
| 18 | Voice | Noise; hue; cry | 3 |
| 19 | Sleep | Sleep; nightmare; dream | 3 |
| 20 | Drink | Tea; water | 2 |
| 21 | Distance | Here; there; nearer; close; beside; next; long | 7 |

The above table shows the types of hyponymy category and the number of their occurrences in the story. As can be seen, the category of family occurred 6 times, the category of transportation occurred two times, the category of house and its parts occurred 7 times, the category of clothing occurred 11 times, the category of time occurred 6 times, the category of building occurred 3 times, the category of body and its parts occurred 14 times, the category of colour occurred 4 times, the category of age occurred 5 times, the category of five senses occurred 5 times, the category of occupation occurred 4 times, the category of sex-male occurred 2 times, the category of sex-female occurred 5 times, the category of furniture occurred 7 times, the category of paper occurred 3 times, the category of appearance occurred 7 times, the category of size occurred 6 times, the category of voice occurred 3 times, the category of sleep occurred 3 times, the category of drink occurred 2 times, and the category of distance occurred 7 times.



For full description of the types of hyponymy that occur in The Little Girl, the following figure depicts and demonstrates the most dominant type and the least one(s).

Figure (1) Hyponymy Category Types and Their Occurrences in The Little Girl



As can be seen from the above figure, the most dominant category type was house and its parts, which occurred 14 times, while the least dominant types were transportation, and drink, which occurred just two times in the investigated data.

8. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Studies

8.1. Conclusions

The current study has shown that hyponymy in The Little Girl centres around 21 types. The most dominant one was body and its parts, which occurred 14 times, while least types were transportation and drink, which occurred only 2 times in the data under investigation. This testifies that hyponymy is an important semantic category which is prevailing throughout the short story, The Little Girl. These types of hyponymy can be a useful tool for enhancing the learners' process of learning the vocabulary of English as a foreign language.



8.2. Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher would like to offer the following suggestions and/or recommendations:

1. Another study on hyponymy can be conducted on similar literary works in order to show new related set(s) of words that help discover sense relations.
2. ELT instructors can make use of hyponymy to enhance the learning of new vocabulary, i.e. vocabulary enrichment for their learners.



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