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Thesis for the Degree of Master of Linguistics

**A Semantic Study of Adjective “light” in
English and its Corresponding Chinese
Word “qing”**



by

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August 2019

**A Semantic Study of Adjective “light” in
English and its Corresponding Chinese Word
“qing” (영어 형용사 “light”와 중국어 대응
표현 “轻 qing”의 의미지도)**

Advisor: Prof. Eunil Kim

By

Hu Ping

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Linguistics
in Department of English Language and Literature

The Graduate School

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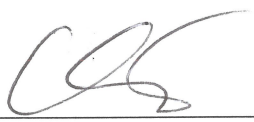
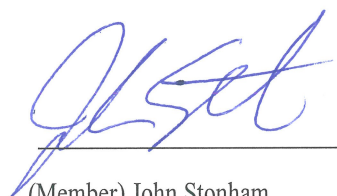
A Semantic Study of Adjective “light” in English and its
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A dissertation

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A Semantic Study of Adjective “light” in English and its
Corresponding Chinese Word “qing”

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the English adjective "light" and its corresponding Chinese word "qing" by using the framework of Lexical Typology suggested in François (2008). In this paper, the totally different semantic meanings of "light" are shown through functional properties and empirical observations and are compared it with the corresponding Chinese words to show differences and similarities of the two language senses.

In English "light " relates to all the senses: modify colors, modify weight,

modify sleep, modify work/exercise, with natural light, gentle, not great, not serve/serious, cheerful. Some of them are shared with the Chinese word "qing": modify weight, modify sleep, modify work/exercise, gentle, not serve/serious. But when the English word "light" means modify color, not great and with natural light we need to translate them into other Chinese words. When the English word "light" means cheerful, it is a special case, as it is similar with "qing ", but we need to add the word "song".



I. Introduction

Lexical polysemy is the most pervasive and the most important semantic phenomenon in English. Therefore, it has been the focus of linguists' research and out of all the content of this semester the topic I am most interested in. Polysemy refers to a word containing two or more meanings, that often relate to each other. Polysemy is the symmetry of a single word, different things that relate to each other.

In the vocabulary study part, we argued that the explicit skills of various different languages were required for comparative research by using François (2008). In this paper, the completely different semantic meanings of "light"¹ are shown through functional properties and empirical observations and are compared with the corresponding Chinese words to show differences and similarities between the two languages senses.

The first part is the senses of the two words that are exactly the same:

(1) a. A light baby.²

1) ¹English word "light" and Chinese word "qing" are presented as present tense in this thesis. It will be changed in the examples.

2) ² Not all nouns are shown as examples in this thesis.

b. Yi ge qing de bao bao.

一个轻的宝宝.

(One) (a) (light) (baby).

(2) a. A light sleep.

b. Shui jiao hen qing.

睡觉很轻.

(sleep) (very) (light)

The second part is the senses of the two words that are completely different with each other:

(3) a. A light lunch.

b. Jian dan de wu can

简单的午餐.

(Simple) (lunch).

(4) a. A bottle of light beer.

b. Yi ping di du pi jiu.

一瓶低度啤酒.

(One) (bottle) (low) (degree) (beer) .

The third part is the senses of the two words that are similar with each other:

(5) a. Light house work.

b. Qing song de jia wu.

轻 松 的 家 务.

(Light) (housework)

Examples (1) and (2) in the first part show that when translating the English word "light" into Chinese, the English word "light" is totally the same with the Chinese word "qing". Examples (3) and (4) in the second part show that when translating the English word "light" into Chinese, the English word "light" is completely different with Chinese word "qing" and needs to be translated to other Chinese words. Example (5) in the third part shows that when translating the English word "light" into Chinese, the English word "light" is similar with the Chinese word "qing". However, we need to add another Chinese character behind "qing", so the English word "light" and the Chinese word "qing" have the same sense but at the same time are different. To see the similarities and differences clearly, I will compare them with each other and show the process in the following part via pictures.

II. Theoretical background

This part of the paper aims to introduce the background using the framework of Lexical Typology suggested in François (2008).

2.1 Polysemy and Lexical Typology

English word “light” is a noun, verb, adjective and adverb at the same time. Apart from adverb, “light” is polysemy as noun, verb and adjective. Lexical polysemy is the most pervasive and the most important semantic phenomenon in English. Therefore, it has been the focus of linguists’ researches. In the content of this semester, what I am most interested is also lexical polysemy.

Polysemy refers to a word that contains two or more than two meanings that often relate to each other. Polysemy is the symmetry of a single word, different things that relate to each other. Generally speaking, these meanings are of the same basic meaning’s transferred meaning, extended meaning and derivative meaning. In the development of social production, people need to reflect the increasingly

complex objective phenomenon. As a result, people have to use the primary word to express other things that are relevant to and make the word's old meanings and new meanings coexist together. Polysemy is often found in those words which are most intimate and commonly used in daily life, with Verbs, adjectives and monosyllabic words being the most common cases. Because of the trait of polysemy, they achieve good effect of expression on analogy, metaphor, borrowing and other rhetorics.

In the vocabulary study part, we argued that the explicit skills of various different languages were required for comparative research by using François (2008).

2.2 Research Procedures and Methods

François (2008) proposes three steps: Classification of the sense, Connecting between the senses and Lexical Typology Drawing.

2.2.1 Classification of the sense

In 2.1, the analysis target of Lexical Typology is not the word but the sense from

François(2008). It explains why the analysis target of Lexical Typology is the sense but not the word by comparing the English adjective “straight” with The Buddha Language corresponding word “droit”. The following picture1 and picture2 show each sense of the English adjective “straight” and the corresponding Buddha Language “droit”.

<Table 1> The sense of English adjective “straight”

	sense	Example
(a)	rectilinear	a straighter line
(b)	honest	a straighter guy
(c)	directly	straighter to the point
(d)	frank	straighter talking
(e)	classical	a straighter play
(f)	heterosexual	gay or straight
(g)	undiluted	straight whisky
(h)	immediately	straight away

< Table 2> The sense of The Buddha Language adjective “droit”

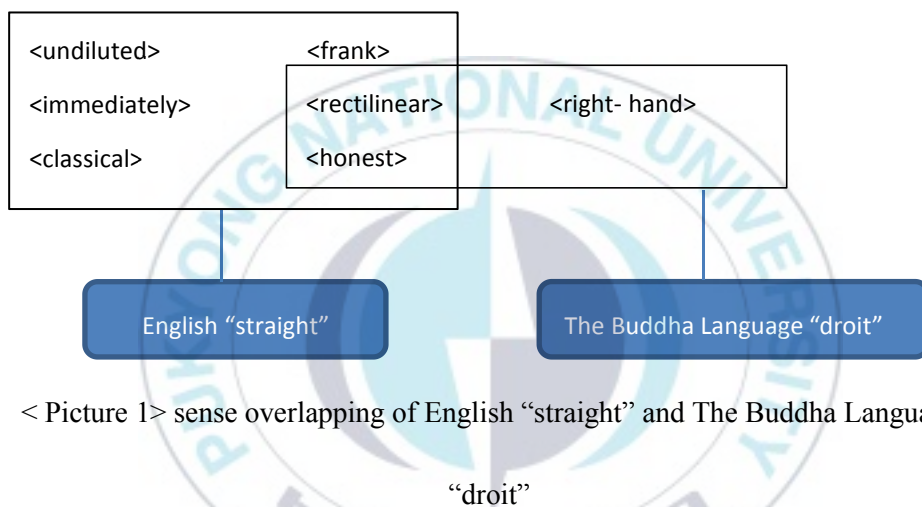
	sense	Example
(a)	rectilinear	un trait droit
(b)	honest	un type au but
(c)	directly	aller droit au bu
(d)	right-hand	le côté droit

The senses of adjective English words <rectilinear>³, <honest>, <directly>, <frank>, <classical>, <heterosexual>, <undiluted> and <immediately> are shown in picture1, and the senses of adjective Buddha Language words <rectilinear>, <honest>, <directly> and <right-hand> are shown in picture2. By putting the two pictures together, we can easily see the very fine distinctions between them.

But, like the sense from monosemist approach, the sense of “straight” and the sense of “droit” are so similar with each other that their similarities and differences cannot be found. However, it is easy to find the similarities and differences between the two words when comparing them with each other. Both of them

³ “b” show Chinese characters and Pinyin. The last line shows each Chinese word directly translated into English one-to-one.

include the sense of <rectilinear>, <honest> and <directly>. Besides those, “straight” has the sense of <frank>, <classical>, <heterosexual>, <undiluted> and <immediately>, while “droit” has the sense of right-hand. A summary of this can be seen in the following <chart 1>.



The similarities and differences between the two words can be easily seen by dividing them by sense. Various words can be compared to study their similarities and differences like “straight” and “droit”.

But when we distinguish different senses of one word, the different senses presented from every dictionary are unable to be distinguished by Lexical

Typology. Senses happened due to people who use English but usually cannot discern all the different senses of one word accurately. Researchers rely on their intuition when they need to find the different senses of words. At first, if there are some deficiencies of the sense in some form, researchers define them with empirical observations. François(2008) thinks Lexical Typology sense itself is not important, but the co-lexicalization that comes from the individual word – combination of the sense of words is important.

François(2008) compares sense to Biology, similar concept is it is made up of smaller units of atoms than molecules. When target of Lexical Typology is sense itself, the similarities and differences of different words can be seen clearly.

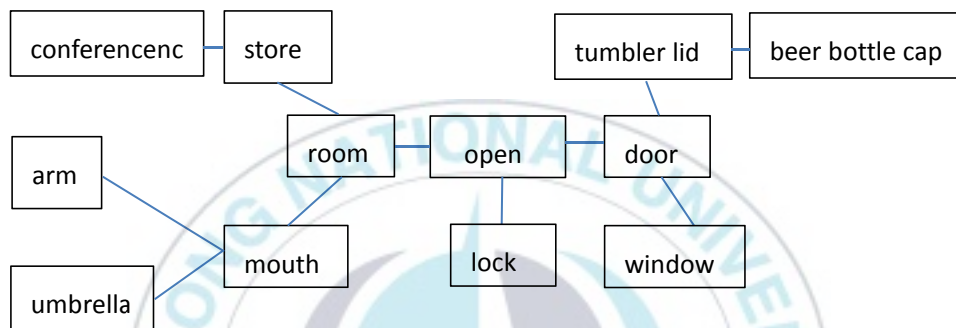
2.2.2 Connecting between the sense

The first step is looking at the various semantic relevancies of senses, followed by connecting them by using a polysemous network. At this time, we put close words together in a group to see their semantic connection. The degree of similarity between different senses is criterion of judgement. It is ontological character and empirical data in various languages that are derivative of senses. To

explain connections between senses, I quote the example from Eunil Kim in the following part.

The objects of the verb “open” are “store, room, mouth, lock, door, conference, umbrella, arm, hand, window, tumbler lid, beer bottle cap”. It is difficult to master semantic senses arranged this way, but each senses’ ontological character can be seen clearly. The Subject of conduct becomes a new group – the sense of {room} is “space itself”, the sense of {door} is a closing device. First, when observing the sense of {room} “space itself”, <store>, and <mouse> as semantic senses are included. <conference> is abstract but in another kind of way --people can go in and out, it is similar with <store>. In terms of body parts, <hand> and <mouth> are similar with each other from the point of view of the hand being able to form an interior space, <hand> and <mouth> are more similar to each other compared to <arm>. <arm> and <umbrella>’s other senses don’t include interior space, in terms of extensibility, it’s similar with <hand>. Next, the semantic sense of {door} is shown as a closing device, and both <tumbler lid> and <beer bottle cap>’s sense being liquid container. <tumbler lid> and <beer bottle cap> are more similar between each other compared to <window>, which compared to <beer bottle cap>, since the opening behavior is repeatedly used, is more similar with <door>. After

choosing functional characteristics, senses are put into groups and senses which are related to each other are connected. We can see the degree of similarity between them in the following chart.



< Picture 2> basic connecting between the sense of functional characteristics

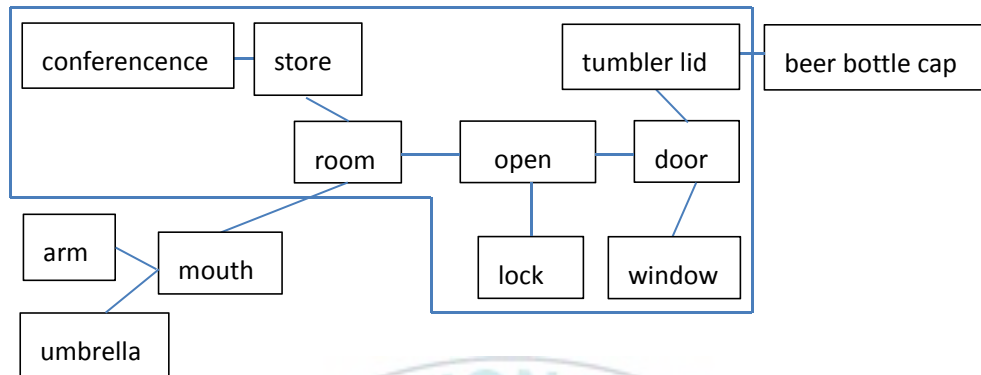
Like classification of the sense in the first step, when defining the connection of senses, we will rely on our own intuitive judgment. We need to choose ontological characteristics. Researchers need to verify analysis of language development. In the third step, I will show Lexical Typology of François (2008)'s lexical semantic map.

2.2.3 Lexical semantic map

By François(2008), Grammar Typology Haspelmath(2003) can help framework and Lexical Typology study to be used flexibly. Haspelmath(2003) and lexical semantic map will be shown in the following section.

Lexical semantic map is a kind of geometrical representation of functions in “conceptual/semantic space” which are linked by connecting lines and create a network as a result. A lexical semantic map is formed by etic grid and emic categorization. First, choose the etic grid and functional characteristics, then distinguish the speaker’s senses by intuition and demonstration. Classify senses which have semantic connection into groups, and classify similar senses which have semantic connection into a sense net. <chart 2> shown in 2.2.2 is not in complete form but an example of etic grid. Emic categorization and <chart 2> are the same etic-grid of the vocabulary of individual languages above, an indication of the distinction between co-lexicalization senses and which are not co-lexicalization senses. The following <chart 3> shows the co-lexicalization’s senses represented by shaded curves, it is an example of emic categorization of the Korean word “open”. This means that <chart 3> shown in 2.2.3 is not in complete form but an example of the etic-grid and Emic categorization above it. Then it can

be shown by a Lexical semantic map.



<Picture 3> open's vocabulary semantic study part

So far, in François(2008)'s Lexical Typology, we analyze senses, divide similar semantic senses into group and show how to find the connection between senses. We recognized Lexical semantic map. However, it often happens that the same word presents a different number of senses in different dictionaries. The reason for this is that because of the way a words' senses are analyzed it is not easy to reach a mutually agreed conclusions between different researchers. So in lexical typology, sense itself is not the important part, the important part are the similarities and differences between senses. Senses in this paper are compared using François(2008) to define and analyze the concept of smaller semantic units than words. At the

position of lexical typology, it suggests that even with a theoretical view of the language, it is possible to compare common differences between languages by explicitly listing a number of meanings that constitute the meaning of a single word. The research object of this paper is the comparison between the adjective “light” in English and the corresponding word “qing” in Chinese which will be shown in the following part.



III. Semantic study of “light” and “qing”

In 3.1 light’s etic grid will be shown and in 3.2 the semantic study of “light” and “qing” as well as the emic categorization of “light” and “qing” will be shown. In the last part of III, the similarities and differences will be shown in 3.3 and 3.4.

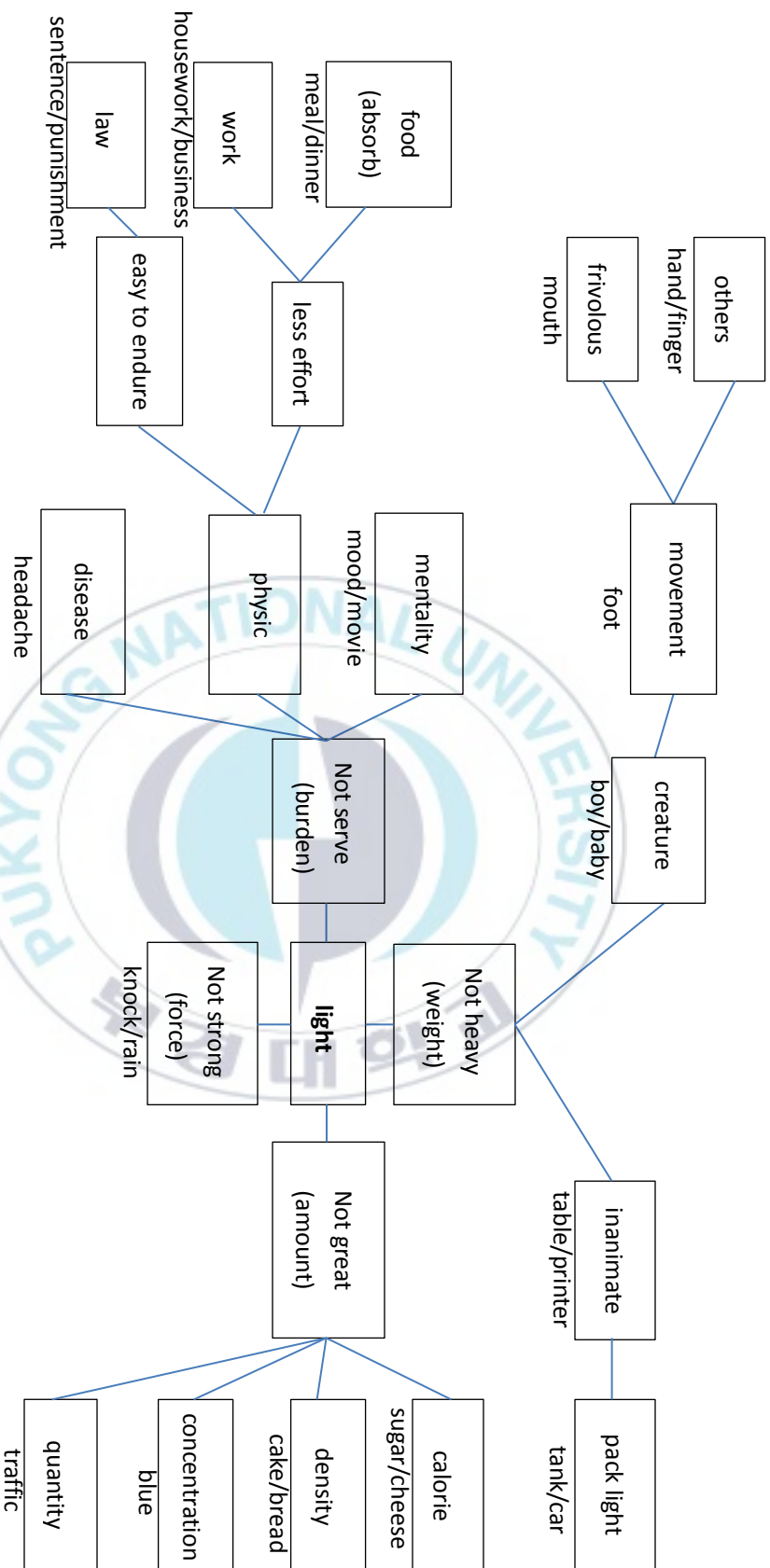
3.1 Etic grid of “Light”

At first I studied the adjective “light” in English dictionary and Chinese dictionary. Then I chose the 4 main senses of “light” as {not heavy}⁴, {not severe}, {not difficult}, {not great}. Nouns that can be modified by “light” and “qing” will also be shown in the paper. Nouns that can be modified by “light” and “qing”, basic classification of senses and similar semantic senses will be shown in <chart4> ⁵etic grid.

⁴ This paper classifies all the senses as 4 categories. They will be shown as { }.

⁵ “We get up when it get light” is not dealt with in this thesis.

< Picture 4> Light's etic grid



4 kind of main semantic senses of “light” as {not heavy}, {not severe}, {not difficult}, {not great} will be shown in the following part.

3.1.1 {not heavy}: not weighting too much

When I divide the object of weight into creatures and inanimate object, inanimate object indicates the degree of general heaviness. Like <table>, <chair>, <printer>, etc. both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. The term that represents the weight of inanimate objects for “light-loaded” like <boat>, <car>, <tank>, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. The term that represents creatures, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. When represent a person’s weight like <boy>, <baby>, <people>, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. The weight of a person is more extended in weight, which can affect the movement of weight, its meanings are also the same aspects between English and Chinese. For example, the words from parts of the body like <hand> and <finger>. Both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. But for words from

parts of the body like <mouth>, only the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized.

3.1.2 {not severe}: not that serious or burden

This part represents the degree of lightness as {not serious}. {not serious} it represents a psychological state. The impact on the target is light. It can express: psychological burden is small, physical burden is light (less effort), physical burden is light (target not only can be achieved but also can be achieved easily). I wrote the central senses of {not serve} as: mentality, physic and disease. It is used when wanting to express small psychological burden and light physical burden (less effort). Each of them will be introduced in detail.

The first object will be started by mentality. No mental burden, like <heart>, <temper>, <mood> as well as <footstep>, <voice>, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. And when it expresses “no mental burden”, it can express pleasantness or happiness from <movie>, <music>, <book>. After <movie>, <music>, <book>, pleasantness or happiness of actors will be expanded when it expresses senses like <footstep> and <voice>.

The second object will be started by a physical action. Physically, “less effort” means it is easy to deal with some objects. Those objects can be <work>, <housework>, <business>. In the diet, it can be thought as the digestive power of food. When those objects were <work> or <housework> or <business>, when problems or difficulties happened, it can be connected with little effort without the need to go through a lot of trouble. Both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. In the diet, when it was thought as the digestive power of food, when it expresses that food like <breakfast>, <dinner>, <fruit> can be digested and implemented easily, the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” are different. The English word “light” can be co-lexicalized but not the Chinese word “qing”. When talking about physical phenomenon, which can be endured easily like <punishment>, <sentence>, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized here.

The last object will be started by disease. Diseases like <cancer>, <headache>, the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized but not the English word “light”. So the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” are different here.

3.1.3 {not strong}: not using much force

Both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” connect with force when they mean {not strong}. For example, with <knock> it means not using too much force on the door. In the case of <rain> and <wind>, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can also be co-lexicalized.

3.1.4 {not great}: not much in amount

In this part, senses of English word “light” and Chinese word “qing” mean not much in amount will be divided in detail as concentration, calorie, quantity and density. When it modifies some objects such as <wine>, <beer>, both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized. When it modifies some objects such as <colors>, <lunch>, <traffic>, then the English word “light” can be co-lexicalized but not the Chinese word “qing”

3.2 Semantic study of “light” and “qing”

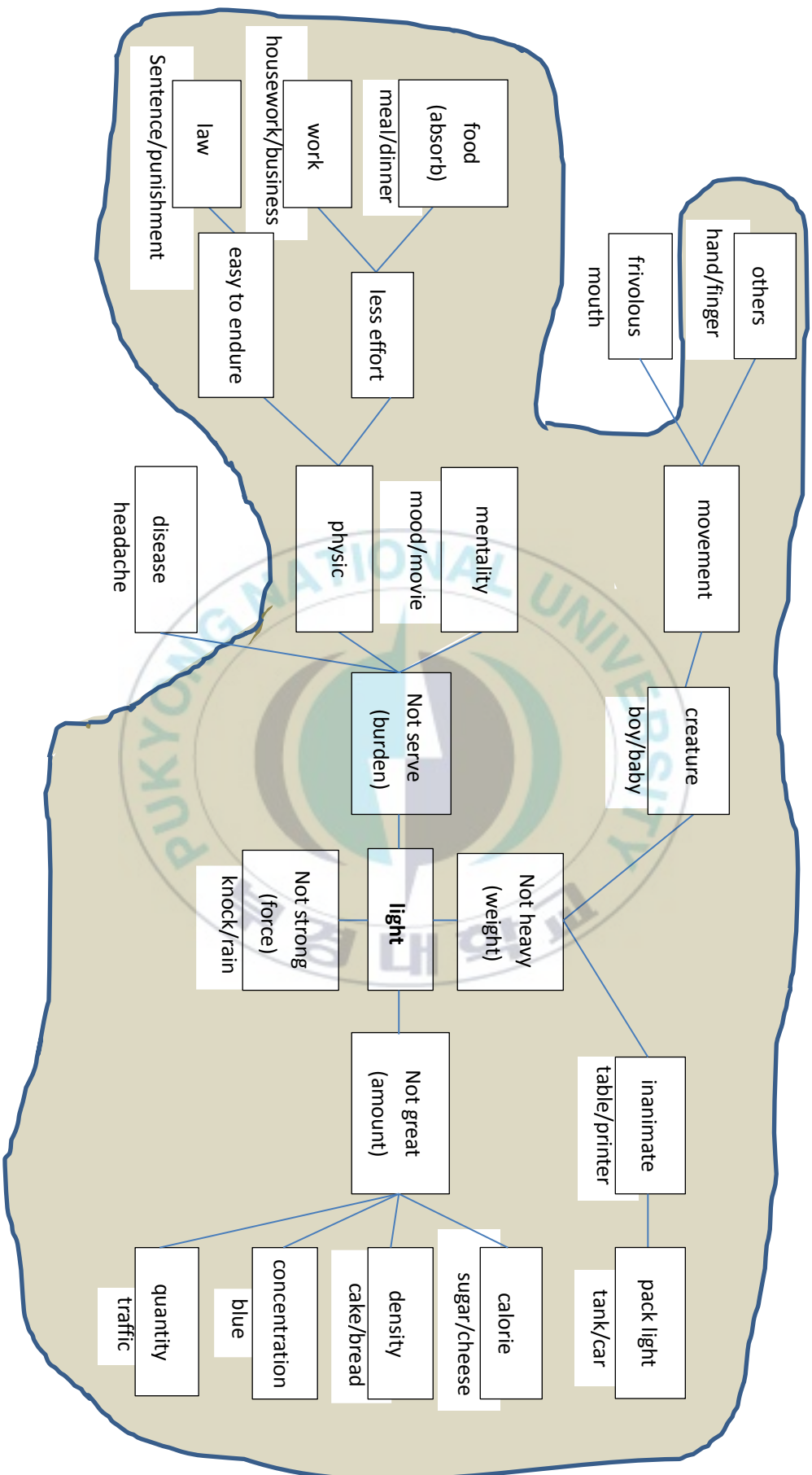
So far, the etic grid of “light” and lexical semantic map that comes from the

co-lexicalization of “qing” will be shown in <chart 5>⁶ and <chart 6>.

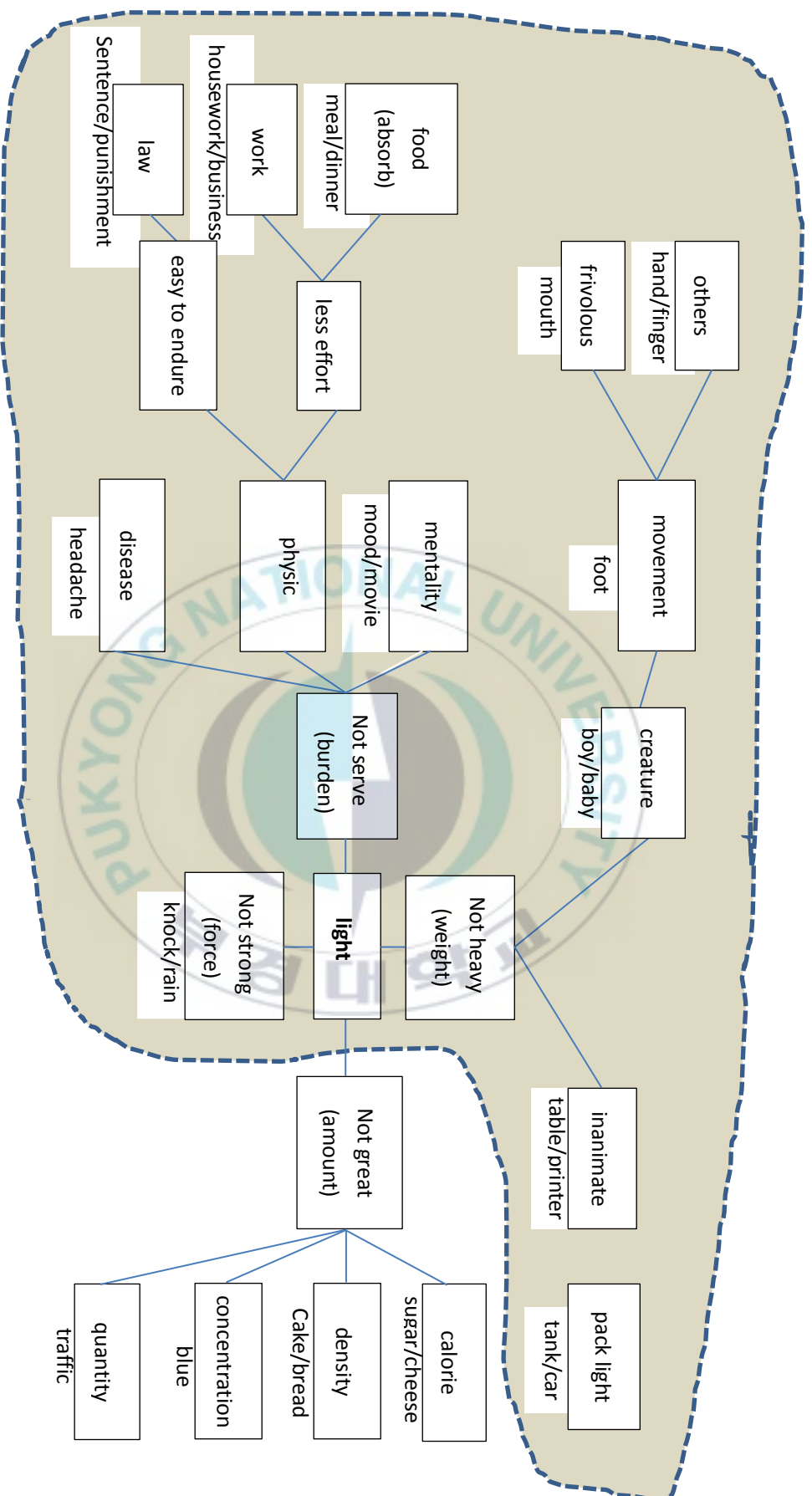


⁶ “light tongue” can be co-lexicalization in English.

< Picture 5> Lexical semantic map of “light”



< Picture 6> Lexical semantic map of “qing”



“light” and “qing” in < picture 5> and < picture 6> are the things that come from the Lexical semantic map. The solid line part is the co-lexicalization of “light”, and the dotted line part is the co-lexicalization of qing. Each part of the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” which can be co-lexicalized will be shown inside the shaded areas. We can see that each co-lexicalization senses are different from < picture 5> and < picture 6>’s semantic maps. Both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized when they connect with {not heavy} and {not strong}. When they connect with {not serious} and {not much}, part of the senses of the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized.

In 3.2.1, the emic categorization’s semantic study of “light” and “qing” will be shown. As well as two words’ similarities and differences in senses.

3.2.1 Emic categorization of “light” and “qing”

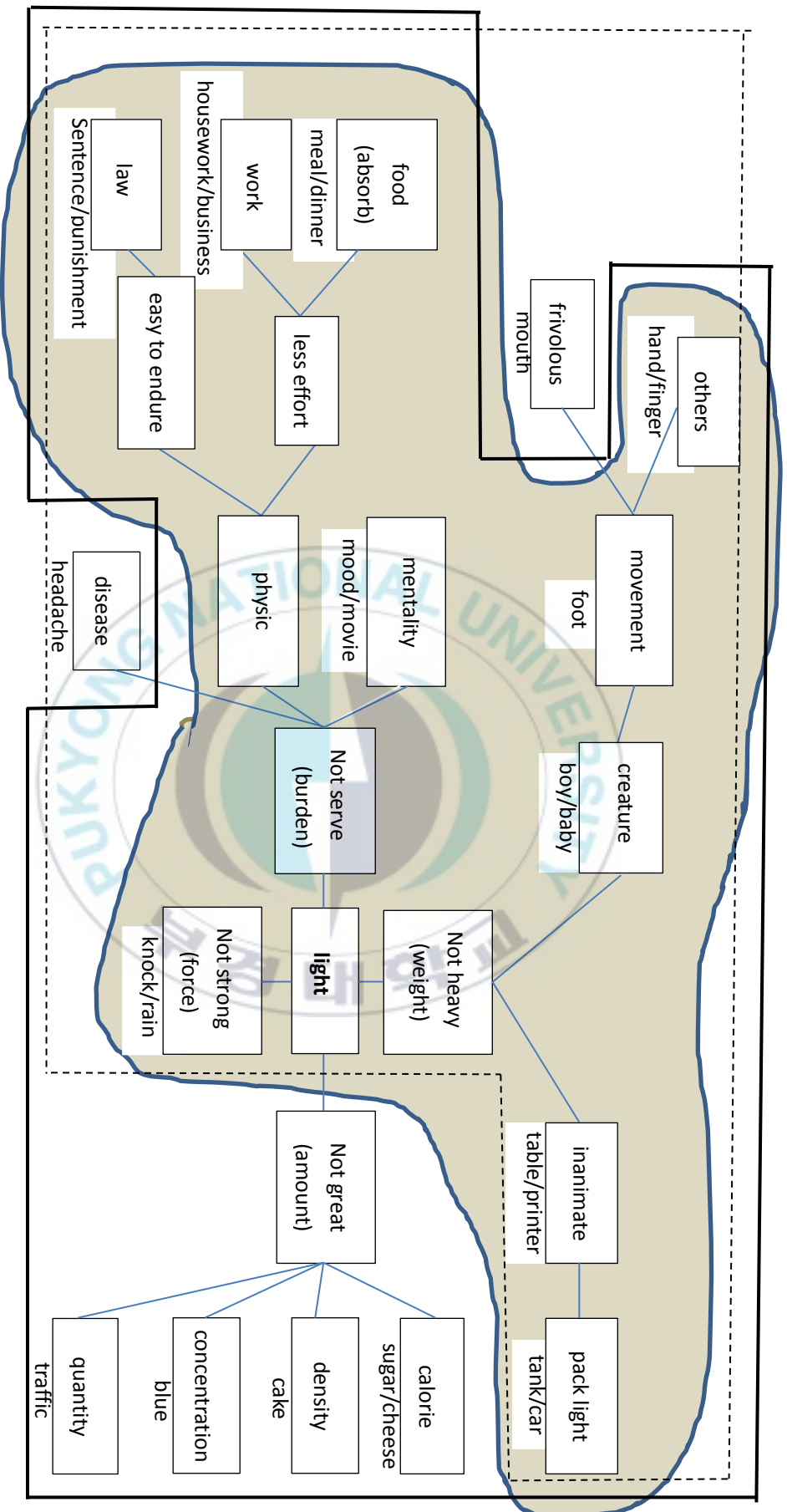
The part that both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized in the lexical semantic map will be shown in <picture 7>. In < picture 7>, the part that both the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing”

can be co-lexicalized will be shown in shaded areas.

Differences of senses and similarities of senses will be shown as examples in 3.3 and 3.4.



< Picture 7> Semantic map for Emic categorization of “light” and “qing”



3.3 Similarity of senses

When translating the English word “light” into Chinese, the English word “light” is exactly the same with the Chinese word “qing”.

Not heavy (weight):

It means: easy to lift or move, not weighting too much.

- (6) a. Take a light bag to go shopping.
b. Dai yi ge qing de bao qu gou wu.
带 一 个 轻 的 包 去 购 物.
(Carry) (one) (a) (light) (bag) (go) (buy) (thing).

Not strong (force):

It means: not using too much force, delicate.

- (7) a. I feel a light tap on my shoulder.
b. Wo gan jue you ren zai wo de jian bang.
我 感 觉 有 人 在 我 的 肩 膀.
(I) (felt) (have) (people) (at) (my) (shoulder) .
shang qing qing de pai le yi xia.
上 轻 轻 地 拍 了 一 下.
(up) (lightly) (pat) (one) (down).

Not severe (burden):

It means: don't pay much

- (8) a. He just got a light sentence.

b. Ta zhi de dao le hen qing de pan chu.
他 只 得 到 了 很 轻 的 判 处.
He only (got) very (light) (judge).

(6), (7) and (8) are three examples of the similarity of senses in the English word “light” and the Chinese word “qing”. They are classified to 4 major categories as {not heavy}, {not strong}, {not severe} and {not strong}. All these are presented in some pictures in this paper, every kind included in some small classifications. (6), (7) and (8) are examples of one of the major categories.

3.4 Differences of senses

As seen in the contents of 3.4 when translating the English word “light” into Chinese the English word “light” is different from the Chinese word “qing”. “light” needs to be translated to other words in Chinese. From 3.4 we can conclude two things. The first is that only the English word “light” can be co-lexicalized as {not much} but not Chinese word “qing”.

Not great (amount):

It means: not much in amount.

(9) Calorie a. She only eats light cheese.

b. Ta zhi chi ka lu li di de nai lao.
她 只 吃 卡路里 低 的 奶 酪.
She only eat calorie (low) (cheese).

(10) Density a. He likes light bread.
b. Ta xi huan peng song de mian bao.
他 喜 欢 蓬 松 的 面 包.
He (like) (fluffy) (bread).

(11) Concentration a. She has a pair of light blue eyes.
b. Ta you yi shuang dan lan se de yan jing.
她 有 一 双 淡 蓝 色 的 眼 睛.
(She) (has) (one) (double) (light) (blue) (eye).

(12) Quantity a. I like street with light traffic.
b. Wo xi huan che liang shao de jie dao.
我 喜 欢 车 辆 少 的 街 道.
(I) (like) (vehicle) (little) (street) .

{not much} are classified to calorie, density, concentration and quantity. (9), (10), (11) and (12) are examples of them. Here when translating the English word “light” into Chinese, the English word “light” is totally different with the Chinese word “qing”. “light” needs to be translated to other words in Chinese as “b” in (9), “b” in (10), “b” in (11) and “b” in (12). If we translate the English word “light”

directly into “qing” here, the resulting sentence will have incorrect meaning and sense. So only the English word “light” can be co-lexicalized as {not much} but not the Chinese word “qing”.

The second conclusion is that only the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized as {not heavy}, like frivolous, and {not severe} like disease.

- (13) Disease a. He has a slight headache.
 b. Ta you qing wei de tou teng.
 他有 轻微 的 头 疼.
 He has (slight) head painful.

- (14) Frivolous a. He is frivolous.
 b. 他的 嘴 很 轻 浮.
 Ta de zui hen qing fu.
 (His) mouth very light float.

(13) and (14) are the only two classifications in which the English word “light” cannot be co-lexicalized. Because of the different expressions in different languages, if we want to express the sense above in English, we need to use other words. “a” in (13) and “a” in (14) are the right expressions in English. So only the Chinese word “qing” can be co-lexicalized as {not much} but not the English word

“light” here.



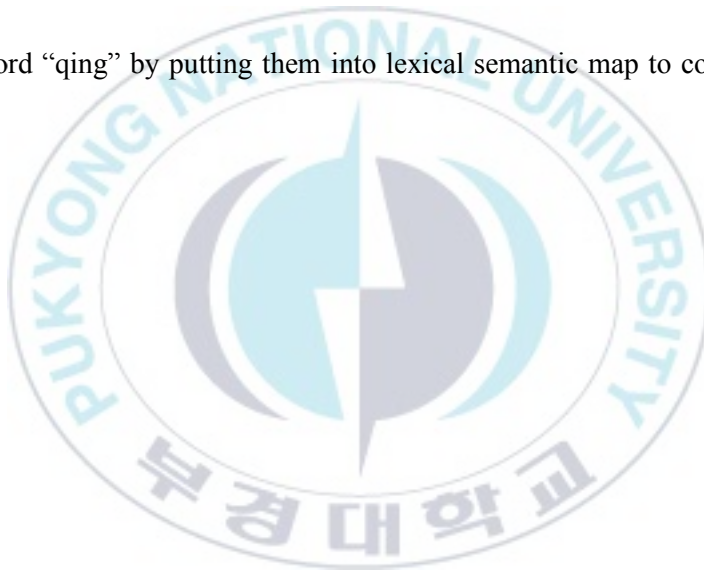
IV. Conclusion

This paper has two main parts: Theoretical background, which includes Polysemy and Lexical Typology, Research Procedures and Methods of Lexical Typology, and Semantic study of “light” and “qing”, which includes Light etic grid, Semantic study of “light” and “qing”, Emic categorization of “light” and “qing”, Similarity of senses, Differences of senses and the similarities of senses.

The content of this paper analyzes the English adjective "light" and its corresponding Chinese word "qing" by using the framework of Lexical Typology suggested in François (2008). In this paper, we showed the completely different semantic meanings of "light" based on functional properties as well as empirical observations and we compared them with corresponding Chinese words, showing the difference and similarities of the two language's senses.

In English "light" is related to all the senses: modify colors, modify weight, modify sleep, modify work/exercise, with natural light, gentle, not great, not serve/serious, cheerful. Some of them are the same as the Chinese word "qing"s like: modify weight, modify sleep, modify work/exercise, gentle, not serve/serious.

But when the English word "light" means modify color, not great and with natural light we need to translate them into other Chinese words. When the English word "light " means cheerful, it is a special case. Although it is similar with "qing ", we need to add another word, "song". This paper classifies all the meanings as 4 kinds: not serve, not great, not heavy and not strong. It shows the similarity of senses and the differences of senses of the English adjective "light" and its corresponding Chinese word “qing” by putting them into lexical semantic map to compare them clearly.



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The logo of Pukyong National University is a circular emblem. It features a stylized blue and grey design in the center, resembling a compass or a stylized letter 'P'. The words "PUKYONG NATIONAL UNIVERSITY" are written in a circular path around the center. Below the English text, the Korean text "북영대학교" is also visible.

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