

A Semantic Network Construction of Word of the Year 2023 Rizz

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Abstract—In December 2023, Oxford English Dictionary selected *rizz* as the *Word of the Year*. This study examines the relationship between conceptual meanings of *rizz* and its source word *charisma* through constructing semantic networks. Based on authentic corpus data from COCA, NOW, and English-language social media platforms, semantic networks are constructed with ROST-CM6. The findings indicate that while *charisma* is broadly used across different contexts to describe intrinsic personal magnetism, often associated with leadership, *rizz* is more narrowly referred to attractiveness from romantic partners. Moreover, this study reveals that the rapid diffusion of *rizz* is attributed to its viral circulation on social media, broadcast by mainstream media, celebrity endorsement, and simplicity. In conclusion, this study demonstrates how semantic network analysis can elucidate the evolving meanings of neologisms and provide insights into the mechanisms underlying their dissemination.

Keywords—charisma, neologism, *rizz*, semantic network, social media

I. INTRODUCTION

In December 2023, *rizz* was selected as the Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year. As a neologism derived from the word *charisma* through clipping, *rizz* was quickly embraced by the online community and has been widely used across various social media. Oxford English Corpus indicates that the frequency of *rizz* reached 280,000 in June, which significantly surpassed other popular terms. Given the widespread attention gained by *rizz*, constructing a semantic network for this neologism is imperative to facilitate a deeper understanding of its conceptual meaning, distinguish it from its source word *Charisma* and investigate the reasons for its popularity.

Semantic network, first proposed by J.R. Quillian in 1969, is a network model designed to simulate and represent the structure of human knowledge and thought, which plays a significant role in semantic analysis, particularly in the semantic analysis of neologisms. Therefore, this paper constructs a semantic network for *charisma* and *rizz* based on corpus data from the COCA, NOW corpora, and various international social media. Informed by the results, differences in conceptual meanings and applicable contexts between these two words are identified. Furthermore, this research also speculates on factors for the rapid dissemination of *rizz* as a neologism.

This study not only proposes semantic network as an effective method for examining internet neologisms, but also makes contributions to the research on factors of rapid spread and evolving directions of words like *rizz* in certain degrees.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. History of Semantic Networks

Semantic network is originated from a network model first proposed by J.R. Quillian in 1968. According to Quillian: "A semantic network is a representation of information in the form of a network of interconnected nodes, where nodes represent concepts and edges represent the relations between those concepts" [1]. The semantic network model proposed by Quillian laid the foundation for subsequent research and development in the field of semantic networks and provided an important reference.

Since the inception of semantic network in the last century, it has continuously evolved and given rise to new theories and applications. Entering the 21st century, semantic networks are frequently employed as a tool to assist in various academic research such as information technology, education, psychology, and finance, which proves it a theoretical model with promising prospects and vitality.

B. Research on Semantic Network

The most fundamental application of semantic network is in linguistics. By constructing the semantic networks of words, researchers can explore various meanings of words, their derivation processes, and the interrelationships among them.

Ma Qiuyue constructed the semantic network of "前".

Through semantic network analysis, Ma proved that spatial imagery is an important tool for human cognition, which is capable of increasing the polysemy of language, enhancing its expressive power, and expanding human cognitive abilities [2].

In addition to the semantic analysis of specific words, some research also applied semantic networks to conducting discourse analysis research.

Davi Alves Oliveira et al. explored indices that quantifies semantic coherence in discourse by constructing semantic network of cliques, which demonstrated effectiveness and credibility of the cohesion indices in analyzing discourses [3].

As a dynamic and flexible graphical model, semantic network possesses high application value, whose related studies are relatively rich.

Liu Junjie and Zhang Lijuan used semantic network theory to establish semantic network of flight fatigue events, which provided a new perspective for analyzing and preventing flight fatigue events. The study pointed out that the fatigue semantic network based on real flight reports has high application value in preventing and investigating flight fatigue accidents, and the semantic network analysis can be

further promoted in other unsafe-events' investigation [4].

George A. Barnett et al. analyzed the content about childhood vaccination on Twitter by constructing semantic networks. The study proved that Twitter has a relatively rich discussions related to vaccines, which provides an effective platform for public health officials and health professionals to collect public opinion and disseminate scientific advice about vaccination [5].

Semantic network could be employed to present abstract and complex content through relatively simple network diagrams. It is not only effective for semantic studies and discourse analysis within linguistic research but also applicable in other fields like security, and public opinion research. In semantic studies, much of the current scholarship has centered on the investigation of traditional vocabulary, while there is less study on the semantic networks of neologisms, especially those internet slangs that have emerged with the development of online social media. Based on authentic linguistic data collected from online corpus and social media platforms, this study aims to construct semantic networks for *charisma* and its derivative *rizz*.

III. SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF CHARISMA

According to the Oxford Word of the Year Report and the Collins English Dictionary's description, it can be found that *rizz* is derived from *charisma* by word formation: Clipping. During this process, language users made the new word *rizz* by clipping the *ris/riz/* from *charisma/kə'rizmə/*, the same formation can be found in words like *refrigerator* and *fridge*.

Since *rizz* and *charisma* are in a derivative relationship, it is legitimate to infer that there is a rich semantic connection between these 2 words. Therefore, it is necessary to construct a semantic network and conduct semantic analysis for the source word *charisma* to support the study on *rizz*.

A. Semantic Network Construction of Charisma

Network structures can be used to demonstrate information [6], which is an ideal model for studying the meanings of words. Through constructing a semantic network for *charisma*, the associations between *charisma* and its high-frequency collocate words could be clearly demonstrated, which is vital in analyzing the conceptual meaning of *charisma*.

Extracting high-frequency collocates of *charisma* and constructing semantic network for it requires substantial linguistic data. In this study, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (hereinafter referred to as COCA) is adopted as the primary source of linguistic data for *charisma*. A total of 1600 authentic linguistic data is sampled in proportion to their distribution across different domains. All data are compiled into a single TXT file for subsequent analysis.

For the construction of semantic network, this study employs ROST Content Mining System, Version 6.0 (ROST-CM6). Developed by Professor Shenyang at Wuhan University, ROST-CM6 is a social computing tool that integrates functions such as Chinese and English word frequency analysis, social network analysis, and semantic network analysis, which is suitable for constructing the semantic network required in this study.

Following this, the cleaned data was imported into the

social network and semantic network analysis tool in ROST-CM6, and the parameters were set as follows: "Only take the top 400 high-frequency words when analyzing documents", "Only take the top 200 high-frequency words when constructing the network", and "Only take the top 200 high-frequency words when constructing the word matrix".

Through calculation, the semantic network diagram for *charisma* is generated as Fig. 1.

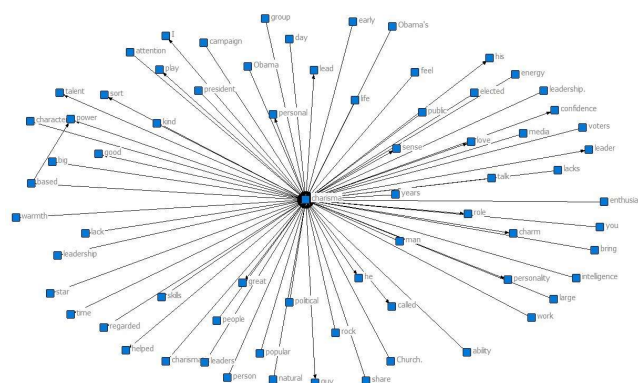


Fig. 1. Semantic network of *charisma*

This semantic network is centered around central node *charisma* and has a radial structure with a certain degree of hierarchy. Nodes such as "personal", "political", "great", "lead", "president" and "public" are located in the inner layer, indicating a closer semantic association with *charisma*. Meanwhile, nodes like "ability", "talent", "guy" and "star" are situated on the periphery, suggesting a weaker connection to *charisma*. In addition, the semantic network structure of *charisma* is relatively simple and has no complex subgroups, which might be attributed to the singular conceptual meaning of *charisma*.

B. Analysis of the Conceptual Meaning of Charisma

The core component of a word's meaning is its conceptual meaning (or original meaning, dictionary definition), which is directly linked to the concept of the referent [7]. To examine the conceptual meaning of *charisma*, definitions were retrieved from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary*, and *Merriam-Webster*. The results are as follows:

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary:

The powerful personal quality that some people have to attract and impress other people.

Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary:

The ability to attract the attention and admiration of others, and to be seen as a leader.

Merriam-Webster:

(1) A personal magic of leadership arousing special popular loyalty or enthusiasm for a public figure (such as a political leader).

(2) A special magnetic charm or appeal.

To summarize, the conceptual meaning of *charisma* is integrated as follow: "The personal quality that someone possess, which can attract others, often refers to the leadership ability". It could be observed that while *charisma* can generally refer to personal charm, it is often used to describe the personal charm particularly belongs to leaders. In the semantic network of *charisma*, it is demonstrated that high-frequency collocates which related to the sense of

“personal charm” include words such as “intelligence”, “confidence”, “kind”, “talent”, and “great”. Sentences containing some of these high-frequency collocates, which are extracted through keyword searches from charisma’s linguistic data are as shown below:

(1) Boys, they seem to lack both genuine intelligence and charisma. That’s all I’m saying.

(2) I am very impressed with his intelligence and his charisma.

(3) He could have cruised through a successful film career on the charisma of his screen presence alone, but he had incredible talent, intelligence and...

(4) House because of his striking looks, confidence, and charisma, which I remarked at the time were even more impressive than his father.

(5) ...built on beauty and class, Tom’s built on charisma and talent. Tripler and Pete were Second-in-Command. They had fallen in love.

Through sentence examples, it can be observed that words such as “intelligence”, “confidence”, and “talent” often form parallel phrases with “charisma”, supplementing and reinforcing the meaning of charisma within discourse.

In addition to the high-frequency collocates that generally denote “personal attractiveness”, the semantic network of charisma includes a greater number of collocates related with “leadership ability”, such as “president”, “elected”, “public”, “voters”, and “leadership”. Examples are as follows:

(1) You don’t want charisma at all in a vice president. But I like the yin and yang.

(2) ...there ever any real-life person who could possibly match the charisma of an on-screen president like that? Are we inevitably going to be disappointed.

(3) And you have to have charisma to get elected president. And there’s a charisma deficit in this group.

(4) Most people think charisma is as vital to leadership as it is to rock stars or TV presenters.

Analysis of these linguistic data on *charisma* indicates that when it occurs in the semantic field of politics, its meaning of “leadership ability” is frequently activated, referring specifically to the personal charm possessed by political leaders.

IV. ANALYSIS OF RIZZ

As a neologism, *rizz* was quickly understood and accepted by a large number of netizens and has been widely spread within a short period. This chapter will study the conceptual meaning of *rizz* and analyze the reasons behind the popularity of this neologism.

A. Semantic Network Construction of Rizz

Since *rizz* is a neologism, COCA corpus does not contain any linguistic data for this word. Therefore, the linguistic data about *rizz* is collected mainly from the News on the Web Corpus (hereinafter referred to as NOW) and several social media platforms including Twitter, Quora, Reddit, and Tumblr.

Following this, the linguistic data about *rizz* is cleaned and imported into the social network and semantic network analysis tool built in ROST-CM6. After computing, the semantic network diagram for *rizz* is generated as Fig. 2.

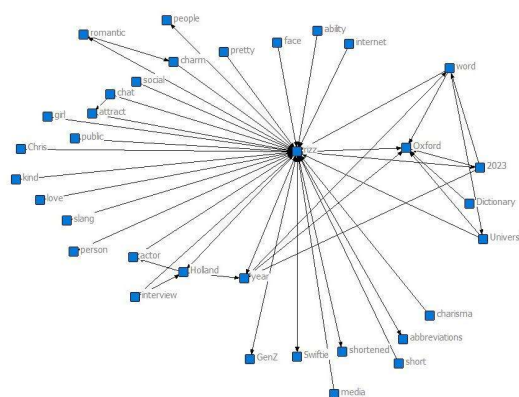


Fig. 2. Semantic network of *rizz*.

There are both differences and similarities between semantic networks of *rizz* and *charisma*. The semantic network of *rizz* contains 2 significant conceptual nodes (Oxford, Holland) that emerge around its central node, forming two subgroups. Moreover, although the overall structure of the *rizz* semantic network also exhibits a radial pattern, its stratification is relatively indistinct. In addition, it has fewer nodes compared with *charisma*. In addition to the limitations on linguistic data collection, the singular meaning and restricted usage contexts of *rizz* also contributes to these phenomena.

B. Analysis of the Conceptual Meaning of Rizz

According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus*, *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the definitions of *rizz* are as follows:

Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus:

To attract someone’s attention and make them like you in a romantic or sexual way, or to try to do this by behaving in a particular way.

Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner’s Dictionary:

Rizz is the ability to attract romantic partners, especially by talking and flirting with them.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

(1) Noun: Romantic appeal or charm.

(2) Verb: To charm or seduce, usually used with up.

Based on these definitions, the conceptual meaning of *rizz* is summarized as “the charm and ability to attract romantic partners”. In addition to its nominal use, *rizz* has also developed a verbal form, frequently occurring with “up”, which means “to charm others in a romantic way”. In the semantic network of *rizz*, several nodes correspond to this conceptual meaning, including “romantic”, “charm”, “pretty”, “attract”, and “face”. Representative examples containing these high-frequency collocates are as follows:

(1) If someone is romantic, that make them rizz-ism’t it.

(2) A person with rizz is confident, charming, and generally successful in romantic endeavors.

In addition, the sentences of *rizz* when being used as verb are:

(1) JOIN me and let me rizz you up.

(2) With the designer wear you can now rizz up every one and be an absolute sigma.

Through comparing the conceptual meanings of these two words, it becomes evident that although both *charisma* and *rizz* refer to “charm”, the semantic scope of *charisma* is

broader, encompassing a person's overall charm in general contexts. Moreover, the high-frequency collocates of *charisma*, such as "intelligence", "confidence", and "kind", indicate that the notion of "charm" associated with *charisma* is more formal and grounded in one's abilities and intrinsic qualities. In contrast, *rizz* tends to collocate with "pretty", "attract", and "face", which are associated with charm conveyed through one's external appearance. Therefore, *rizz* is more narrowly confined to "romantic charm" from romantic partners.

C. Factors Contributing to the Rapid Adoption of Rizz

Rizz was extensively disseminated and adopted by the online linguistic community within few months, which made it a phenomenal internet neologism in 2023. Consequently, in addition to examining the conceptual meaning of this neologism, it is also imperative to analyze the underlying reasons for its popularity.

Internet language is a new language variant that has emerged with the rapid development of internet and popularization of various social media platforms, which characterized by its rapid dissemination [8]. Consequently, *rizz*, as an internet word, inherently benefits from the high communicability of social media platforms. Cheng Runfeng et al. defined the online linguistic community as: "A group of netizens who confirm their connection with each other primarily through the identification, use, and dissemination of certain common internet languages" [9]. After *rizz* was first coined and used by a small group of netizens, others would also try to understand it on Q&A platforms (like Quora), and various social media channels to ensure fluent communication. Consequently, active netizens on major social media platforms undoubtedly played a primary role for promoting the rapid spread of *rizz*.

However, social media platforms are not sufficient to account for its wide diffusion. Analysis of the semantic network for *rizz* suggests that its rapid adoption was also driven by several other key factors:

(1) Promotion through Mainstream Media: News media serves an essential societal function in disseminating information [10]. In the semantic network of *rizz*, the node "Oxford" is surrounded by a cluster of nodes such as "dictionary", "university", "word" and "2023". These nodes correspond to key lexical terms appearing in news headlines, like: "*Rizz* named word of the year 2023 by Oxford University Press" (*BBC News*). Through these mainstream media channels, the neologism, *rizz*, which initially circulated solely within a few social media platforms, has gradually entered the broader public linguistic domain and has been recognized and adopted by an increasing number of language users.

(2) The Celebrity Effect: Saussure once pointed out, "At all times, and in contrast with what might appear to be, language cannot exist without social facts [11]". The semantic network of *rizz* also demonstrates a subgroup centered around the node "Holland". In June 2023, the renowned Hollywood actor Tom Holland mentioned *rizz* during an interview. As an opinion leader within his fan base, Tom Holland exerts considerable influence, making his public statements a significant vector for language dissemination. Following the conscious imitation and

promotion of the term by his fans, the spread and acceptance of *rizz* were further accelerated.

In conclusion, following its coinage, *rizz* was influenced by multiple factors, including dissemination by social media users, promotion through mainstream media, and the celebrity effect, all of which have collectively contributed to its rapid diffusion within a relatively short period. Moreover, as a derivative of *charisma*, *rizz* possesses a relatively transparent meaning and a simple form, aligning with the linguistic principle of economy, which facilitate its acceptance by language users. Accordingly, it is reasonable to speculate that the dissemination of *rizz* will continue, potentially reaching broader linguistic communities and eventually being incorporated into formal lexicons.

V. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Semantic networks, with its intuitive characteristic, serves as an ideal model for studying the meanings of words. In this study, authentic linguistic data from COCA and NOW corpora, as well as major social media platforms, were employed to construct the semantic networks for *charisma* and 2023 Word of the Year, *rizz*, under the help of ROST-CM6. Results show that the semantic network for *charisma* exhibits a radial structure without complex subgroups, while the semantic network for *rizz* features small subgroups centered around nodes of "Oxford" and "Holland".

Through analysis of conceptual meanings, high-frequency collocates, and example sentences about *charisma* and *rizz* combining with their semantic networks, this study revealed following findings: The usage contexts of *charisma* are relatively diverse, frequently co-occurring with words denoting personal capabilities, such as "intelligence", "confidence" and "talent". It appears prominently in political discourse, often collocates with terms like "president", "elected", and "voters", thereby reflecting its connotation of leadership ability. In contrast, *rizz* denotes the romantic charm specifically, with high-frequency collocates including "charm", "pretty", "attract", "face" and so on. Furthermore, as a neologism, *rizz* exhibits a narrower range of usage and is predominantly employed by social media users to compliment others' appearance and express admiration.

In addition, through semantic network analysis, this study further demonstrated that the promotion by social media users and mainstream media, celebrity endorsement from Tom Holland, combined with the linguistic simplicity of *rizz*, played significant roles in enhancing the visibility and adoption of *rizz*. These factors have collectively facilitated its increasing use and comprehension across diverse linguistic communities. Consequently, *rizz* emerged as a prominent neologism in 2023, with the potential to be formally accepted into the formal lexicon in the future.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Xiaozhou Hou supervised and instructed the whole research; Te Qi conducted the research and wrote the paper. All authors had approved the final version.

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