

Research on the Development of New Words in Contemporary Chinese and Their Meanings

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Abstract—As the society continues to develop, contemporary Chinese vocabularies become increasingly abundant, and many Chinese new words describing a new life and new things and reflecting new ideas and new cognition have emerged. What followed is the study of new words in the field of modern Chinese. Chinese new words are the inevitable outcomes of social development and language development, and also show new changes in human life. This paper proceeds with the definition and structural characteristics of Chinese new words, analyzes sources and meanings of new words in contemporary Chinese on this basis, and studies the development of new words in contemporary Chinese and their meaning by interpreting reasons for the generation of new words in contemporary Chinese and analyzing positive meaning and negative influence of Chinese new words.

Keywords—Chinese new words; characteristics; sources; meaning of words; value

I. INTRODUCTION

As the society continues to develop, contemporary Chinese vocabularies become increasingly abundant, and many Chinese new words describing a new life and new things and reflecting new ideas and new cognition have emerged. What followed is the study of new words in the field of modern Chinese. The research on Chinese new words is based on the definition of new words, but opinions vary on what is a new word. In general, the definition of Chinese new words can be defined from their development and pragmatic functions. It refers to such words in Chinese vocabulary system that have certain changes in form, meaning and sound at a certain time or time period compared with the existing words. These new words are spread within a certain range, so they have social function. [1]

The types of Chinese new words mainly include newly coined words that mainly describe the newly generated things and concepts, new words which come from the popular strong dialects or terminologies, new words created by transliteration, paraphrase and semantic transliteration of foreign words, new words generated from the simplification of modern Chinese, old words with new meaning, etc. The most distinctive structural feature of these Chinese new words is “newness”, which is reflected not only in the new form but also in the new meaning. New words can have either “new form” or “new meaning”, or both “new form” or

“new meaning”. It is worth noting that words can be called “new” words only if they have pragmatic value and social function, and those that are “unconventional and unorthodox” and “eye-catching” cannot be called new words. Chinese new words also are characterized by development and conciseness. The development of Chinese new words is mainly determined by the instability of their meaning. The meaning of new words will change constantly in the process of their popularization and application. For example, the word “face change” can refer to the change in the face shape, as well as the change in decision-making. The conciseness of Chinese new words mainly refers to the succinctness of language expression form, especially the abbreviation and simplification of some words, such as “Guoqi” (state-owned enterprises), “Ditie” (subway) and “Xiaozi” (petty bourgeoisie), “Jiajiao” (tutor) and “X shexian” (X-ray) mentioned above. [2] Chinese new words are the inevitable outcomes of social development and language development, and also show new changes in human life. This paper proceeds with the definition and structural characteristics of Chinese new words, analyzes sources and meanings of new words in contemporary Chinese on this basis, and study the development of new words in contemporary Chinese and their meaning by interpreting reasons for the generation of new words in contemporary Chinese and analyzing positive meaning and negative influence of Chinese new words.

II. SOURCES AND MEANING OF NEW WORDS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE

With the development of the society, new phenomena and new things keep emerging, and Chinese new words are appearing with a wide range of sources. First, new words come from Internet media. In the information age, the network has become an important carrier of people’s life and social contact, and at the same time, the network culture also has a profound impact on people’s way of thinking and communication. In this context, Internet media has become one of the important sources of Chinese new words. For example, words that describe women and men who have a good image and are rich are “Gaofushuai” and “Baifumei” respectively. A word expressing positive or negative sighs and admiration is “kneeling down to you”. A homophonic word “Lihua style” is derived from the name of poetess Zhao Lihua. [3] The abbreviation of high-end, atmosphere and grade is “Gaodashang”. A word that is originated from

online media, now widely used in shopping and other fields, and describes beating an opponent in a very short period of time and snapping up bargains is “seckillling”. A word describing two people communicating and falling in love through the Internet is “cyber love”. Words that describe emerging online media, accompanying communication carriers, and identities are WeChat, microblog, blog article, friend circle, online police, Internet water army, etc.

Second, new words originate from new social phenomena and new social activities. With the rapid development of the society, new things and new concepts are emerging. What follows are new words that describe these new phenomena, new things, new concepts. For example, “reform and opening up”, “the Belt and Road Initiative”, “eight honors and eight disgraces” and other new words are used to describe political activities, ideas and mainstream values. The new words “Super Girls”, “Supper Boy”, “the Voice of China” and “I Can I BB” came from entertainment activities and variety shows. The new words “house slave”, “certificate slave” and “festival slave” means people who are under pressure to buy a house, handle certificates and celebrate holidays. The new words “moonlight clan”, “marry-upon-graduation”, “NEET group”, and “roadrage group” refer to a kind of people’s life state or performance response in a specific situation. The new words “light mature woman”, “empty-nest elderly” and “stay-at-home children” mean a specific group of people. The new words “ticket scalper”, “white collar”, and “maternity matron” are used to describe new occupations and identities with the development of society.

Third, new words are derived from intensive dialects. Some typical dialect words have been integrated into the mandarin vocabulary system under the social background of increasingly frequent regional exchanges. These new words from dialects often have rich meanings and are widely spread and applied because of their unique pragmatic value. For example, Beijing dialect “Darshan Kang” means chatting, but also has the meaning of speaking with fervour and assurance. Northeast dialect “Huyou” means deceit, but it also means to be unreliable or eloquent. Hong Kong dialect “Mo lei tau” refers to the association of seemingly unrelated things, reflecting the irony and absurd style. Guangdong and Fujian dialect “Ao Zaoxing” means to pose, which also vividly reflects the meaning of deliberately striking a pose and expressing a certain state through “Ao” image. [4]

Fourth, new words come from foreign languages. At present, with the development of globalization, there are different degrees of “borrowing” among languages of different nationalities. On the whole, there are many new words from English. For example, “hold” means to be able to control the environment and deal with problems calmly. “HIV” is AIDS virus and is often used to refer to AIDS. “MBA” is the abbreviation of Master of Business Administration. “Paoku” is a transliteration of the word Parkour, which means running fast in the city. Besides, there are also new words from other national languages, such as “Euthanasia” derived from Greek, meaning “happy” death, “compensated dating” from Japanese, meaning that girls make money by dating and even having sex with men, etc.

Fifth, new words are derived from terminology. Some of the terms in the professional fields that have attracted more attention and are closely related to people’s lives have become new words in mandarin after extensive use. In general, the meaning of these new words has not changed much, such as “college entrance examination”, “school choosing”, “postgraduate-entrance examination”, and “failing a test” in the field of education, “free trade”, “duty free”, and “housing price” in the field of economy, “magnetic resonance imaging”, “irritability”, and “Ultrasound B” in the field of medicine, and “head of a state”, “First Lady”, and “ambassador” in the field of diplomacy.

Sixth, new words come from old words with new meaning. These new words have not changed in form and sound, but their meanings have expanded, narrowed or transferred. For example, “Shanzhai” originally means an armed base integrating dwelling and defense established by brigands to occupy a hill to act as a lord. Later, it gradually evolved into a village surrounded by a fence or fence, referring to the mountain village. The new meaning of “Shanzhai” is counterfeit products by imitating and copying other products. [5] Another example is “Xifan”, and originally means “porridge”, but its new meaning is “like”. Moreover, the simplified expressions of modern Chinese have also produced new words, such as “Guoqi” (state-owned enterprises), “Shuodao” (master’s supervisor), “Ditie” (subway), etc. There is also an obvious phenomenon in this kind of new words, that is, the new words produced by the abbreviation of Pinyin, such as “MM” (sister), “SZ” (fool), and other alphabetic writings.

III. REASONS FOR THE GENERATION OF NEW WORDS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE

The first reason for the emergence of new words in contemporary Chinese is the development of society. Under the background of rapid development and change in society, new things and new phenomena constantly appear, and new ideas and concepts emerge in endlessly. Most importantly, people’s lifestyle, knowledge structure, development level and social customs are undergoing major changes. This background of social development has also given rise to the necessity and continuity of Chinese new words. The stable economic and social development, construction of transportation and public facilities, and development of tourism and information technology have directly deepened the communication between people in different regions, and also expanded the space for the acceptance of external information, new things, and convenient interconnection, which stimulates the production of Chinese new words, and provides the feasibility for the wide and rapid spread and application of new words. Especially in the context of the deepening of China’s reform and opening up and the increasingly frequent foreign exchanges, foreign words and even the multicultural transmission of different nationalities have provided an open external environment for the generation of Chinese new words.

From the perspective of Chinese internal language system, the combination relationship of words and rhetoric

way of the Chinese vocabulary system provide a large space for the generation of new words. For example, “Dadi”, which means calling a taxi, can be used to call a motorcycle as “Damodi (calling a motorcycle)”, and “concealing-marriage clan” means the group of people who hidden their marriage, and “flash marriage group” means the group of people who get a quick marriage in a short period. For another example, the original meaning of “dog blood” is the blood of dog, which is a noun. Now, it has been endowed with a new meaning in a adjective form, which describes the quirkiness and exaggeration of the development of the event. From the perspective of social communication and communicative psychology, people intend to use simpler and concise words to express meaning in conversations with the increasingly fast pace of life. “Feidian (SARS)”, “Guozu (National Football Team)” and “Guoqi (state-owned enterprise)” and other simplified words will generate in a large amount. For the young generation, the concise expression does not satisfy their mentality of seeking innovation and change in the social process, so some trendy and personalized new words, such as “Kubile (cool)”, “Wasai” (dear me), “Foxi (Buddha-like)”, “Jinli (koi fish)”, “Gangjing (argumentative person)”, are also widely popular among young people.

IV. THE POSITIVE SIGNIFICANCE AND NEGATIVE EFFECT OF NEW WORDS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE

The number of new words in contemporary Chinese is huge, and it has diverse sources and production method and wide application range, so it inevitably has positive significance and negative effect. First, the new words are concise and practical. People can express their feelings through shorter words or even a single word or a few letters. Especially, some new words can express specific meanings and emotions more accurately and vividly, which can adapt to the fast-paced life and communication in modern society. At the same time, the new words are humorous and implicit. Some new words are not only vivid, but also reflect humorous, relaxed and lively emotions, such as “Jiangzi (like this)”, “Diaosi (loser)” and “Cool”, which can alleviate the pressure of social life to a certain extent and satisfy the pursuit of people, especially the young people to novel vocabulary and means of expressions, which creates a relaxed and active atmosphere, and even avoids friction and contradiction caused by overly straightforward and blunt language in the process of expression.

While recognizing the positive significance of new words, negative effects they have in the development process also must be fully understood. There are no unified regulations on these new words, which will easily lead to confusion in use. For example, some “new words” used within a small range can not be called real new words, such as “7456” which means I am angry expressed by the numbers, which can not be understood by most people; [6] Another example is “Ganmao”, which originally means a common infectious disease of acute upper respiratory infection. However, many people now use it as an expression of interest in something, so it may cause the misunderstanding of word meaning in the actual communication. In addition, with the generation of

new words, some of them popular on the Internet are more vulgar, such as “grass mud horse (fuck you)” and “TMD (tamade)”. These popular “new words” are not conducive to the healthy development of modern Chinese.

V. CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, the generation of new words is of positive significance to people’s life and social interaction and the continuous enrichment and development of Chinese itself. Therefore, people must acknowledge the rationality of the existence of new words, and accept and use new words. Beyond that, people should strengthen judgment on new words, and avoid the use of non-standard “new words” and blind pursuit of “the new” in the using new words to convey ideas or feelings, so as to accelerate the healthy and sustainable development of Chinese new words by “taking the essence and removing the dross”.

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