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ДЕКАТЕГОРИЗАЦИЯ ТЕОРИЯСЫ ЖАНА КЫТАЙ ТИЛИ ИНТЕРНЕТ ЭВФЕМИЗМДЕРИ ЖӨНҮНДӨ ТАЛДОО
ТЕОРИЯ ДЕКАТЕГОРИЗАЦИИ И КИТАЙСКИЕ СЕТЕВЫЕ ЭВФЕМИЗМЫ
DECATEGORIZATION THEORY AND CHINESE NETWORK EUPHEMISM

Кыскача мүнөздөмө: Декатегоризация болсо ой жүгүртүүнүн новатордук ыкмасы жана когнитивдик механизми, ал салттуу манидеги категориялоо менен бирге толук болгон категориялоо процессин түздү.Лингвистикалык вариациянын бир түрү катары Кытай тили тармагынын интернет эвфемизмдери адам категорияланган когнитивдик процесстер менен тыгыз байланышта, жана алардын мутациялык феномени категорияланбаган теориянын көз карашы менен түшүндүрүлүшү мүмкүн.Кытай тили тармагынын интернет эвфемизмдеринин пайда болушуна мотивацияны ички жана тышкы факторлордон түшүндүрүүгө болот, ал эми негизги мотивация адам түшүнүгүнүн жана иш жүзүндөгү байланыштын зарылдыгы болуп саналат.

Аннотация: Декатегоризация является важным способом инновационного мышления и когнитивным механизмом, который вместе с традиционным смыслом категоризации представляет собой полный процесс категоризации. Как своего рода лингвистическая вариация, китайские сетевые эвфемизмы тесно связаны с когнитивными процессами

категоризации человека, и их мутационное явление может быть объяснено с точки зрения теории декатегоризации. Мотивация появления китайских сетевых эвфемизмов может быть объяснена как внутренними, так и внешними причинами, а фундаментальной мотивацией является потребность человека в понимании и общении.

Abstract: Decategorization is an important way of thinking innovation and cognitive mechanism, and together with traditional categorization, it constitutes a complete categorization process. As a kind of linguistic variation, Chinese network euphemism is closely related to the cognitive process of human categorization, and its variation can be explained from the perspective of decategorization theory. The motivation of Chinese network euphemism can be explained from both internal and external causes, and the fundamental motivation is the needs of human cognition and practical communication.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, the Internet has been widely used around the world. It has played an increasingly important role in people's daily life and has become an important tool for people to communicate. China was officially connected to the Internet in 1994. With the rapid development of network technology in recent years, the number of Chinese netizens has also grown rapidly.According to the latest "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China", as of June 2022, the number of Internet users in China was 1.051 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 74.4%[1]. This has created favorable conditions for the development of Chinese language in the virtual network space. Since the emergence of Chinese network language in the 1990s, it has grown stronger with the development of the Internet. Now it has already become a unique speech system and a hot research topic in the field of linguistics.

The rapid development of the Internet is like a double-edged sword. It not only brings convenience of communication, but also brings problems of Internet language violence and others. In order to maintain a good environment for Internet communication, the Chinese government has adopted a number of measures. After years of governance, the uncivilized language behavior in cyberspace has been greatly reduced, as evidenced by the emergence of many online euphemisms. Chinese network euphemism is a euphemistic communicative form of expression used by Chinese netizen in cyberspace in recent years. It has various modes, such as text, symbol, sound, image and others, and develops and updates quickly. This is worthy of academic attention and in-depth research.

In recent years, our research team has always been paying attention to this topic. We have extensively collected corpus from various channels and self-built a corpora containing more than 1600 corpus, trying to analyze this linguistic phenomenon from different perspectives. Chinese network euphemism is essentially a kind of language variation closely related to the cognitive process of human categorization. This variation phenomenon can be explained from the perspective of decategorization theory.

One. Overviews of Decategorization Theory

Categorization is a basic cognitive way for human to understand the world. It is "a high-level cognitive activity for human to classify everything in the world, and only on this basis can human have the ability to form concepts and generate the meaning of language symbols"[2]. The categorization theory is one of the most basic theories in cognitive linguistics, which has experienced three main stages: the classical categorization theory, the family resemblance categorization theory and the prototype categorization theory. Eleanor Rosch and George Lakoff have made great achievements in the research of prototype categorization theory. They found that the boundaries of categories are fuzzy, the status of members in categories is different, and the relationship between core members is asymmetric. The prototype categorization theory has a strong explanatory power in dealing with the synchronic lexical and construction polysemies. However, as a model that is a bit static, it needs to be improved in terms of language dynamic research. The theory of decategoryization is produced to make up for this deficiency.

Hopper Paul and Sandra Thompson first proposed the concept of decategorization, believing that it is a means of the generalization of word meaning and the transformation of grammatical function, and mainly used to explain the dynamic characteristics of word category attributes[3]. John Taylor also briefly analyzes the decategorization of nouns and verbs in his book[4]. In China, Liu Zhengguang and Liu Runqing first used decategorization theory to explain the phenomenon of intransitive verbs with noun phrases (Vi+NP)[5]. In 2006, Liu Zhengguang made a systematic study on the theory of decategorization in his monograph. He defined the decategorization as the category members gradually lose their categorical characteristics in the level of language research under certain conditions; while in terms of cognitive methods, he considered that decategorization is a creative way of thinking and a cognitive process. Thus, the position of the theory of decategorization develops from a grammatical means or principle to a cognitive principle which is same important as categorization[6]. Therefore, Decategorization is the improvement and development of the traditional categorization theory. They are just like two sides of a coin, and together form an organic whole and a complete categorization process[7]. The complete process of categorization is shown in the following figure (the dotted line indicates that the categorization process can be a cyclic process):

Categorization

（non-categorial）categorization → decategorization → recategorization→
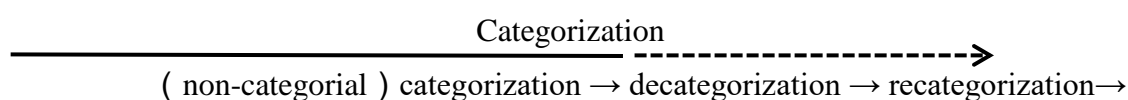
Figure 1. The Dynamic Mechanism of Categorization (Based on Liu Zhengguang, 2018)

After the emergence of decategorization theory, scholars first applied it to explain the unconventional uses of nouns and verbs, such as "adverb + noun", "VO_1+O_2" structures and others. As a cognitive mechanism, decategorization theory has been more widely applied in recent years. Zhou Yanmei used this theory to study new words in Chinese (in 2011)[8], and Wu Li and Xu Dan analyzed the overlapping words in Heilongjiang dialect from the perspective of this theory (in 2021)[9]. In addition, decategorization theory also has practical significance in language teaching, dictionary compilation and others. It mainly focuses on unconventional language facts and the dynamic operation mechanism of categories. This research orientation conforms to the study of language variation in the current network era. Chinese network euphemisms also contain a large

number of decategorization phenomena, and this needs to be studied from the perspective of decategorization theory to reveal the cognitive mechanism and motivation behind them.

Two. Analysis on Decategorization Phenomenons of Chinese Network Euphemism

Decategorization is not only a manifestation of human cognitive process, but also an important driving force for language changes. Its function is to break the original equilibrium state and establish new relationships and connections between language symbols and objective things. There is a close connection between language and cognition. With the continuous enrichment and deepening of human cognition, the conceptual system and cognitive system will constantly produce new contents, and the language system also needs to produce new ways and means to express these contents. Chinese network euphemism is not a copy of traditional euphemism on the Internet, but a form of expression with euphemism function created by netizens. Their attribute transformation from non-euphemism category to euphemism category is actually a process of breaking the original balance, experiencing the breakthrough of decategorization, and finally realizing the recategorization. We can analyze and study the phenomena of decategorization in Chinese network euphemism from two main aspects: external form and internal function.

(One). Formal Level

A. Relexicalization

Human cognition begins with categorization, and the conceptual system is organized according to categories. People fix the results of categorization and conceptualization into word expressions to form lexicalization in the general sense. Many Chinese online euphemisms come from old words or expressions without euphemistic meaning. Netizen, by renovating and reusing, made them undergo the process of decategorization, lose their original meaning and usage, and become the new members of the category of euphemisms. When these new words are widely accepted and used by netizen, they also complete the process of relexicalization.

Relexicalization is the main form of decategorization variation of network language, which refers to the process of maintaining the original concept meaning unchanged, but constructing different "signifiers" in various ways, so as to establish new expressions. In phonetics, netizen often use phonetically similar word to express word without euphemistic meaning. For example, people originally use "Yali"(压力pressure) to mean "the burden people bear", and the two have formed an established correlation. Due to the actual needs of network communication, netizen use the phonetic approximation of "Yali" (鸭梨a kind of pear) to disintegrate the original correlation, re-categorize the original conceptual meaning, and then relexicalize it into the euphemistic word which means pressure. There are many similar examples.

In semantics, metaphor and metonymy are two important cognitive methods for humans to understand the world, and they are important working mechanisms of decategorization. Metaphor is a mapping from a familiar, easy-to-understand source domain to a less familiar, hard-to-understand target domain. There is a certain similarity between the source domain and the target domain, which forms the cognitive basis of metaphor. Many network euphemisms are formed by means of conceptual metaphor. For example, "pure water"(纯净水) refers to "posts without substance in the forum", and "dinosaur"(恐龙) refers to "female netizen with poor personal image". Their euphemisms are different from their literal meanings. Metonymy is the psychological activation of a related conceptual entity by a prominent conceptual entity within the same cognitive domain. For example, using the human body part "mouth"(嘴) to refer to the movement "kiss" can avoid awkward communication. Internet users have also used roundabout expressions to re-categorize the

original words, such as "Shaiyueliang"(晒月亮), which does not literally mean "letting the moonlight shine on you", but euphemistically means "dating". The means of semantic ascension refers to the use of positive or neutral words to express bad things, which is also an important means to form the network euphemism. For example, "the best"(极品) is not literally "the best thing", but a euphemism for "the properties of things are very bad or someone is very annoying".

B. Excessive Lexicalization

The phenomenon of excessive lexicalization mainly refers to the use of excessive words in online euphemisms to express a concept, such as the overlapping of "Cu"(醋vinegar) in "Chicu" (吃醋jealousy) to produce a new word "Chicucu"(吃醋醋jealousy), and the overlapping of "Qian"(钱 money) to produce the euphemism "Qianqian"(钱钱money). Similar to "Benben"(笨笨stupid), "Jiaojiao"(觉觉sleep) and others. As this kind of words are like those spoken by children, similar to "children-oriented language", the hearing people will feel the words are very cute, and not easy to be stimulated or angry at the speaker, so it has a strong euphemism. Overlapped form and non-overlapped form both express the same concept, but after the overlapped it has experienced decategorization. The overlapped form seems unnecessary on the surface, but it has a euphemistic meaning.

Another sign of excessive lexicalization is that people have used a euphemism for a certain concept, but as time goes on, other words are created. For example, at first people use "Xiaobai"(小白green hand) to euphemistically express "computer technology level is not high". With the increase of the frequency of use, "Xiaobai" experienced decategorization, and its euphemism is gradually lost. Then people create new words "Cainiao"(菜鸟rookie, stupid bird), and it has experienced the similar process, gradually replaced by "Caige"(菜鸽rookie, meat pigeon), "Caige"(菜哥rookie, stupid elder brother) and others. This shows that language is a dynamic entity, and the process of categorization and decategorization is repeated.

C. Anti-Lexicalization

Different from traditional Chinese euphemisms, there are a large number of modal examples such as numbers, letters, emojis, pictures and others in Chinese network euphemisms, which is a kind of anti-lexicalization phenomenon. Conventional lexicalization is the process of finding and establishing the appropriate expression form for a certain semantic function, that is, the pairing process of signifier and signified. Language symbols (mainly Chinese characters here) are the combination of form and semantic function, loaded with corresponding information. However, these language symbols do not have euphemistic meaning in the network communication environment, so after re-categorization, people use modal expression forms such as numbers, letters and others to express the same concept with euphemistic meaning. In Chinese culture, "death" is a word that people try to avoid both online and offline, resulting in a large number of euphemisms. For example, netizen have replaced the Chinese character "death" with the number modal (4), the letter modals (S and GG, etc.), the emojis X-(and 8-#, the we-chat emoji skull and others. They all have euphemistic meanings.

It can be seen from the above that the phenomena of relexicalization, excessive lexicalization and anti-lexicalization in Chinese network euphemisms are the final results and external manifestations of decategorization, and these phenomena also reflect the innovation and vitality of network language to a certain extent.

（**Two). Functional Level**

Categorization is to find similarities among differences, which is a cognitive process from the specific to the general, while decategorization is a process from the general to the specific, which is a process of cognition and language innovation. In the network communication environment, Chinese network euphemisms often develop new functions and usages. "When language entities acquire new functions, a certain degree of decategorization must occur"[10]. This can be investigated from two main aspects of lexical and syntactic variation.

A. Lexical Variation

Many words have been transferred in the lexical category in network communication. For example, "water"(水) is originally a noun, but it is used as an adjective to describe some of the attributes of things that are relatively poor, meaning "silly, stupid, bad", such as "water paste (水帖 posts without value and content)", "you really water (你真水your level is really poor)"; "water" is sometimes used as a verb, as in "to water a post"(水一个帖子) means to make a post in response . In addition, "manager"(经理) is originally a job title, which belongs to the noun, but in online communication is used as a verb, which is short for "often ignore people"(经常不理人) .

Onomatopoetic word can also change the category of speech. Netizen use onomatopoetic word to metonymy the action of making the sound. For example, "Bo"(啵boo) is the sound of kissing, which is used to euphemistically indicate the act of kissing. "Papa"(啪啪slapping) refers to sexual activity between a man and a woman, and "Wuwu"(呜呜whining) and "Yingying"(嘤嘤 mewling) both refer to crying.

B. Syntactic Variation

There are also many examples of re-categorization by breaking the original established correlation at the syntactic level and making members lose their categorical features, among which the most typical example is the sentence structure of "被XX"(be+past participle). In this sentence pattern, a transitive and disposal of transitive verb is behind the word "Bei"(被be) , such as "be criticized"(被批评) and others. But in the network language, category of this sentence pattern appeared the variation of decategorization, and a noun, a adjective and an intransitive verb all can be behind "be", such as be membered(被会员) , be happied(被幸福) , be suicided(被自杀) , etc. It presents the variation of semantic function from acting on one's own to acting on other's own, and from act-by-oneself to act-by-other. This new sentence structure seems to be irregular, but due to the extensive use of netizens, it has completed the variation of decategorization, and can euphemistically reflect people's negative criticism of some popular social events.

In daily life, such non-standard collocation as "adverb + noun" is also very popular in the Internet context, such as "one should not be too CNN"(做人不能太CNN), netizen use this phrase to imply hypocrisy and distortion of facts. The noun in this structure changes from the traditional referential meaning to the declarative meaning of bad behavior. In this way, it has descriptive semantic feature and changes in the categorical attribute.

In addition, netizens also borrow some syntactic means from foreign languages to express euphemism. They graft the grammatical form marks of foreign languages into the structure of Chinese, which is actually a kind of grammatical decategorization. For example, the Korean "습니다" is used behind verbs, adjectives, etc., to explain or describe a specific action or state. In Chinese network language, its phonetic approximation is "Simida"(思密达). It has been used by netizens as a modal particle or suffix, but the meaning of the sentence with it is often the opposite of the original one. For example, "I look up to you simida"(我敬仰你思密达) really means "I despise

you". "Simida"(思密达) is usually placed at the end of a sentence to indicate a euphemistic negative. Another example, the end of an adjective with "est" makes a superlative in English . It is used after the Chinese adjective "sad"(难过) to form the mixed grammatical form "难过est", which can euphemistically express the meaning of being sad to the extreme.

The above analysis shows that there are a large number of decategorization variation phenomena in the network euphemism at both the form and function levels. These expressions are restricted or considered "irregular" in daily language, but due to the subjective role of netizens, they become more and more common in the network context, and their acceptance is getting higher and higher.

Three. Analysis on Producing Motivation of Chinese Network Euphemism

Language variation is produced under the action of decategorization. The fundamental motivation for people to destroy language convention and create new forms of expression is the need of cognition and practical communication. To be specific, we can make explanations from both internal and external causes.

(One). External Causes

Jef Verscheren, a Belgian pragmatist, believes that the process of language use is a process of continuous language selection by users at different levels of consciousness based on internal and external reasons. The use of euphemism by Chinese netizen has a certain relationship with the country's governance of cyberspace. With many Internet forums blocking sensitive and indecent words, netizen have created new words to mean the same concept. For example, the swear-word "Tamade"(他妈的shit or damn it) is restricted, the Internet users use the letter "TMD"(Chinese phonetic acronym,shit or damn it) to indicate it, and then they are restricted, so they create "Tamiaode" (他喵的shit or damn it) with certain humorous meaning. These words have certain euphemism at the beginning, but with the increase of the frequency of use, they go through the process of decategorization, and euphemism gradually loses. Network administrators will list them as restricted words, and netizen will create other forms of expression. This process will repeat many times.

（Two). Internal Causes

In addition to passively accepting or using network euphemism, netizen will also choose to use it actively. The main reason why people use euphemism is to avoid taboos and reduce stimulation, so that the listener can accept it easily and thus produce positive communication effects. For example, "death"(死) is not a restricted word on the website, but netizen create a large number of alternative expression forms in order to euphemism communication needs, so as to weaken its negative meaning. This objectively reflects the increasing harmony of cyberspace and the increasing quality of netizen. The Internet community mainly consists of young people, who like to pursue novelty and are good at creatively using new forms of expression, such as numbers, letters, emojis, pictures and others. Many forms of expression are humorous, and this is also an important means to dispel the offensive meaning. In today's "pan-entertainment" era, entertainment demand has been magnified unprecedented in the society, and has become a universal attitude of people. The decategorization variations of many network expressions have a certain teasing and bantering effect, which makes the use of these expressions seem like a "language carnival".

Conclusion

The linguistic symbol system is the result of the categorization mechanism, and the categorization is a dynamic process. With the in-depth development of people's cognitive activities, the human cognitive and conceptual systems will constantly produce new contents, and the original category structure needs to be adjusted accordingly to express these new contents. Decategorization theory is not a reaction to traditional categorization theory, but enrichment and development, both belong to one organism, forming a complete categorization process of dynamic and static combination. As a kind of language variation, Chinese network euphemism has a history of only about 30 years, and the development and evolution speed is very fast, so we need to study from the perspective of synchronic and diachronic combination. Many network euphemisms have experienced the process of decategorization from the non-euphemistic category state to the euphemistic category state and then lose some features of the original category to process decategorizaiton again. Decategorization provides the premise and condition for the development of human cognition and the innovation of language, so as to meet people's practical communication needs.

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