The Comparative Analysis of the Morphological Features of English and Chinese Neologisms From the View of Lexicology

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Abstract

The development and popularization of Internet have generated a new variety of language—neologism, which received a wide publicity in modern linguistics. This thesis focuses on the morphological features of English and Chinese neologism from the perspective of lexicology. It discusses the features by employing a lot of examples from English and Chinese in five aspects: shortening, affixation, compounding, blending and conversion. Meanwhile, special mention is given to some differences and similarities found in English and Chinese neologisms. English and Chinese share those five patterns to form new words but Chinese has its own characteristics for the fact that it belongs to a different linguistic system from English. Lacking in the knowledge of the morphological features of neologisms, communication on line will result in failure. Therefore, this paper aims at revealing their distinctive features and getting netizens to communicate better. The comparative analysis can also throw light on the cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Englsih-speaking netizens.

Key words: Neologisms; Chinese and English; Morphological features; Lexicology

INTRODUCTION

As Crystal (2001) says "any attempt to characterize the language of the Internet, whether as a whole or with reference to one of its constituent situations, immediately runs up against the transience of the technology", language seems to be in a permanent state of transition. With the development of society and internet technology, an abundance of new words or phrases occur online, which are labeled "neologism". Neologism can be defined as "a newly-created word, or expression, or a new meaning for an existing word". Neologisms are often accepted as parts of the already existing vocabulary. Language learners should not only learn the words that have already existed in the language, but also know the productive processes by which new entries enter the vocabulary so that they can understand the new terms. Therefore, teachers of language should acquaint students with the rules of word formation which native speakers intuitively apply to form new terms. The knowledge of the patterns involved in word formation will help students to increase their vocabulary permanently (Tian, 2005). This paper researches on five patterns of word formation in English and Chinese neologisms, aiming at enriching teaching and learning resources and enhancing the communication between netizens.

1. SHORTENING

This paper focuses on two kinds of shortening: clipping and acronymy.

Clipping is the formation of new words by deleting a part of the original and using what remains instead. In English neologism, clipping is also an important way of word formation, because people prefer to write and speak in an easier way to follow the fast tempo of new life style. There are four types of clipping in English neologism:

(a) Back clipping: The deletion occurs at the end of the word．It is the most common type of clipping,

for example, app(application), info(information), com(commercial), edu(educational), gov(governmental), mil(military), net(network organization), nick(nickname).

(b) Front clipping: the deletion occurs at the beginning of the word. page(webpage), site(website), U(you), Ur(your).

(c) Middle clipping: the deletion occurs at the middle of the word. ft(faint), bt(between), bc(because), pls(please), R(are), jk(just kidding).

(d) clipping often alters spelling: thanx(thanks), X(kiss), microphone(mike).

Another kind of shortening is acronymy. Acronymy is the process of forming new words by joining the initial letters of composite names of social and political organizations or phrases used as technical terms (Zhang, 2015). Individual words can be reduced to two or three letters: PLS(please), TX(thanks). But on the whole, acronyms of phrases constitute a large proportion. More examples are as follows: JOMO(fear of missing out), FOMO(fear of missing out) BQ(Beauty Quotient), MOOC(Massive Open Online Course). In English neologism, acronyms are no longer restricted to words or short phrases, but can be sentence-length, for example, GTG (Go to go), WDYS(What did you say?), CIO(check it out!). The great number of acronyms in English netspeak shows that the creation of acronyms follows a principle of economy.

In Chinese neologism, some acronyms are created on the basis of Chinese pinyin: MM(meimei, younger sisters or beauties), JJ(jiejie, elder sisiters), GG(gege, elder brothers), DD(didi, younger brothers), HC(huachi, anthomaniac), FQ(fenqing, angry youth), BD(bendan, fool), BH(biaohan, swift and fierce), FB(fubai, corruption), PMP (paimapi, toady). In cyber world, the simplification of language is a trend, and foreign letters are very popular among Chinese netizens for their relative easier input way and novel expression.

It is worth mentioning that Chinese is a language with little morphological changes, therefore, in Chinese shortening, the extracted element is not affixes or roots but the dominant characters. For example, "一国两制" (one country, two systems) is short for "一个国家, 两种制度". Similar examples are "两学一做" (studies on the theoretical and practical issues of party building) and "一带一路" (the silk road economic belt and the 21st-Century maritime silk road; one belt and one road). Chinese netizens create a lot of neologisms by shortening some long expressions in this way. The examples are listed as follows: "不明觉厉": 虽然不明白你在说什么, 但是听起来感觉很厉害的样子 (I don't quite get it, but I think you are really terrific); "累觉不爱": 很累, 感觉自己不会再爱了(too tired to love); "喜大普奔": 喜闻乐见、大快人心、普天同庆、奔走相告 (something is so exhilarating that everyone is celebrating and spreading it to the rest of the world); "十动然拒": 十分感动, 然后拒绝了他 (Being deeply moved, but still reject a person);

"我伙呆": 我和我的小伙伴惊呆了 (I and my friends are all shocked); "何弃疗": 为何放弃治疗 (Why do you give up the treatment). "然并卵": 然而并没有什么卵用 (However, it doesn't make any difference); "城会玩": 你们城里人真会玩 (You city folk really know how to live it up); "活久见": 活的越久, 见识越广 (Live longer, see more. This saying can be used to express surprise at seeing something unexpected or an explanation for why unexpected things happen);

Chinese netizens' motivation of creating those expressions is to display novelty and save the effort to type. At the same time, this kind of utterances will add humor and satire to daily communication. In a word, both Chinese and English adopt shortening to create new expressions, and the convenience brought by shortening is on the basis of sacrificing meanings of them, that is to say: Shortening might result in the confusion of understanding. But compared with English, Chinese shortening has it own characteristics for its different linguistic system from English.

2. AFFIXATION

Human beings tend to find out the shared model in different things and put them in series, so that it is easier to operate. They create infinite expressions with finite word formation rules via their luxuriant imagination and creativity. This point is very obvious in the emergency of affixes and the amount of word groups derived from them. The morphemes which bear the tendency of affixation participates in word formation by the mechanism of analogy and get frequent use; on the other hand, the frequency of use accelerates the process of affixation, which further propels the generation of words in a certain group. For example, English neologisms: *e-book*(e+book), *e-mail*(e+mail), *e-shop*(e+shop); *fandom*(fan+dom): A term used to refer to a subculture composed of fans characterized by a feeling of empathy and camaraderie with others who share a common interest; *errorist*(error+ist): It refers to someone who repeatedly makes mistakes and \allows error to persist without trying to fix it; *womanizer*(woman+izer): Guy who makes zillions of women think he is in love with them and that he is the best guy in the universe but never know he is making many other women think that too; *cyberwidow*(cyber+widow): the name of a wife who is ignored by her husband because of online gaming; *micr oexpression*(micro+expression): It is a brief, involuntary facial expression shown on the face of humans according to emotions experienced; *regifting*(re+gifting): the act of taking a gift received from a friend and giving it to another friend as if you had actually purchased it for them; fattism: The discrimination against fat people based on their weight; *lookism*(look+ism): a newer word for discrimination or predjudice against people based on their physical appearance and gender expectations;

nomophonbia(no-mobile-phone+phobia): It is a proposed name for the phobia of being out of cellular phone contact.

Different from English, Chinese language is analytical and combination is the main way of word formation. Derivate is very infrequent. As in different linguistic family, affixation is not very productive in Chinese language, but there are some characters which are used very frequently and very productive when collocating with other elements can function as affixes (Ouyang & Zhang, 2014). For example, "吧" in "氧吧", "茶吧", "话吧". Different from English affixes, Chinese affixes are sometimes called *quasi affixes*, which are different from the traditional affixes. They can be attached to words or phrases to form new words but are not completely affixes because they can also be used independently. In today's cyber communications, to rich expression, Chinese netizens use some free roots as quasi affixes. For example, "控" in "手机控", "包包控", "正太控"; "女" in "干物女", "森女", "肉食女"; "体" in "甄嬛体", "元芳体", "咆哮体"; "奴" in "卡奴", "房奴", "车奴" and so on.

3. COMPOUNDING

In English grammar, compounding, also called composition is the process of combining two words (free morphemes) to create a new word (commonly a noun, verb, or adjective). Compounds are written sometimes as one word (sunglasses), sometimes as two hyphenated words (life-threatening), and sometimes as two separate words (football stadium). Compounding, with the advantages of being able to carry more complicated and diversified meanings, has become the most productive type of word-formation nowadays (Wang, 2014). There are a lot of English neologisms formed by this way. *Clickbait*(click+bait): an exciting headline on a boring article; *techneck*(tech+neck): Muscular stiffness and pain, even headache, caused by the extended periods of looking down at one's handheld personal technology devices, such as iPads and cellphones; *side-eye*(side+eye): A sidelong glance expressing disapproval or contempt; *friendscaping*(friend+scaping): The act of trimming ones friends lists in various social media sites; *ROM brain*(ROM+brain): It refers to a person who refuses to accept input and ideas from other people; *saltdaddy*(salt+daddy): An older man who has a relationship with a younger female but doesn't have anything to offer her. The opposite is *sugardaddy*, which refers to a man who provides money or other favors in exchange for sexual relations; *dish envy*(dish+envy): sudden, intense longing and regret derived from watching a particularly appetizing dish being delivered to a nearby table, and realizing that one has made an inferior menu selection; *underhappy*(under+happy): It refers to an in-between state between being happy and unhappy; *easy like*(easy+like): a Facebook friend that gives their "likes" almost indiscriminately; *fangirl/fanboy*(fan+girl/boy):

a passionate fan of various elements of geek culture; *chiptease*(chip+tease): it describe this situation that when you buy a bag of chips thinking that it will be full of chips but when you open the bag it's barely full.

Compounding is also very productive in the formation of Chinese neologism. The meaning of some compounds are transparent, which means that we can infer the meaning from the separate elements of the compound. For example, "比心" (finger heart): pull your thumb over to the index finger and make those fingers look like a heart. We can guess the meaning of it if we know the meaning of "比" (to gesticulate) and "心" (heart). More examples are listed as follows: "心塞" (feel stifled and uncomfortable); "网红" (an Internet celebrity) is someone who has become famous by means of the Internet; "A4腰" (A4 waist) is characterized by a tiny midriff that can be fully covered by a vertical sheet of A4 paper; "颜值" (face score) is used to assess the looks of other people, both men and women. A high face score means that someone is good-looking while a low face score means that someone is on the uglier side."供给侧" (reform of the supply front): supply-front economics promotes growth by investing in capital, and by lowering barriers on the production of goods and services; "高冷" (cold and elegant); "脑残" (brainless). In English neologism, *fangirl/fanboy, easy like* and *techneck* belong to this category.

There are some compounds with opaque meaning, which means that we can not easily infer the meaning from the components. For example, "吃瓜群众" (gawker/onlooker) not refers to the melon-eating group but the ordinary netizens who don't know much about the truth; "壁咚" (kabe-don) it is not the word describing the sound of slapping against a wall, but refers to the scene that a man forces a woman against a wall with one hand, leaving the woman nowhere to go; "吃土" (eat dirt): It means that consumers spend too much on Singles Day shopping to have any money left for food; as a result, they can only "eat dirt", which is free. It is an exaggerating expression and the word "剁手" (hands-chopping) has the similar usage, it means to chop one's hands off after buying too much online. The meaning of those words can not be inferred from their component elements. English neologism *chiptease, saltdaddy* and *dish envy* belong to this type.

4. BLENDING

Blending is the formation of new words by combining parts of two words or a word plus a part of another word or vice versa. For example, *beefburger* is the blending of *beef* and *hamburger*, meaning sandwich consisting of a fried cake of minced beef served on a bun.

There are large amount of English neologisms belonging to this type. Examples: *pawdicure*(paw+pedicure): trimming a dog or cats nails; *mansplain*(man+explain): to explain something to someone, characteristically by a man to woman, in a manner regarded as condescending

or patronizing; *brunch*(breakfast+lunch): it is a combination of breakfast and lunch eaten usually during the late morning to early afternoon, generally served from 11am up to 3pm; *PowerPointlessness*(PowerPoint+pointlessness): it is coined by Barb Jenkins around 2000, referring to the senseless use flashy transitions, graphics and sound effects while making a slide presentation that is lacking in thought, meaning and value; *harassenger*(harass+passenger): It is a passenger who is constantly judging your driving skills. He/she constantly cautions you to keep a safe distance from the car in front of you, checks that you're obeying the speed limit, and is always quick to point out your navigational errors; *selfish*(selfish+cell): An individual who talks on his or her cell phone even when doing so is rude or inconsiderate of other people; *nonversation*(nonsence+conversation): A completely worthless conversation, wherein nothing is illuminated, explained or otherwise elaborated upon; *bromeo*(brother+romeo): a nickname for a close friend, usually males; *frenemy*(friend+enemy): It is an oxymoron of "friend" and "enemy" that refers to a person who combines the characteristics of a friend and an enemy; *adorkable*(adorable+dork): both dorky and adorable; *gayriage*(gay+marriage): A simple word to obviously describe gay marriages. It is a compromise between two people of the same gender; *mompetition*(mom+competition): The one-up rivalry that moms play making their child seem better, smarter, and more advanced than yours. English blends originally occurred as humorous coinage, but with the emergence of new things and concepts, blending has become one of the important word-formation. Though many of them have been accepted by the public, they are still considered by serous-minded people to be slang and informal (Wang, 2014).

Some scholars hold that blending widely exists in English while seldom found in Chinese. However, with the development of cyber communication, there are many new words occurring in Chinese chatrooms, BBS or news, such as "高富帅" (the male who is tall, rich and handsome), "白骨精" (the female who is a white collar, backbone and elite), "矮矬穷" (the male who is short, ugly and poor), "白富美" (the female who is fair, rich and beautiful), "黑长直" (the female with black, long and straight hair), "傻白甜" (stupid white sweet, it is used to describe a girl who is innocent, fair-skinned and sweet in appearance) and so on.

Those neologisms are different from Chinese compounds because their formation involves clipping, and they can not be simply classified into abbreviation too as they involve the combination of different morphemes. We can categorize them as blends. (Jiang & Bai, 2014). For example, "高富帅" is formed by clipping the morpheme "高", "富", "帅" from the word "高大", "富有", "帅气" and then combine the three morphemes together.

5. CONVERSION

In linguistics, conversion, also called zero derivation, functional shift, is a kind of word formation involving the creation of a word (of a new word class) from an existing word (of a different word class) without any change in form. For example, *Up* and *down* are often used as prepositions, but in the sentence: *Life is full of ups and downs*, they are nouns, suggesting happiness and sorrows or success and failure in life. There are many examples in English neologism, for instance, *Hench* is a family name but it can also function as an adjective to describe someone as big, strong or muscular. *Friend* is a noun and in cyber communication it can be converted to a verb as in the word *friending*, which refers to the act of requesting someone to be your friend on social networking sites or social community sites in which they can accept or reject you. If they accept, you can look at their page, but if they reject, you cannot see their page. A *showroom* is a large space used to display products or show entertainment. With the development of the e-business, *showrooming* occurs, which means the practice of examining merchandise in a traditional brick and mortar retail store or other offline setting, and then buying it online, sometimes at a lower price. It is worth mentioning that when proper names are commonized, many of them have lost their original identity, i. e. the initial letter may not be capitalized as already shown; they can be converted to other word classes (Zhang, 2015). The word *gaga* is an example. It originally refers to the American pop star Lady Gaga, who is famous for her weir makeup and crazy behaviors. This word now is commonized and can be used as an adjective describing that someone is weird and crazy or "to be infatuated with somebody". For example "She's absolutely gaga for the lead singer".

Conversion also frequently appears in Chinese neologism. Some examples are listed as follows: noun to adjective: Chinese word "山寨" has the meaning of "fortified mountain village or copycat", it is a noun, but in "这个品牌太山寨" it functions as adjective, which has the similar meaning with *fake*. "萝莉" refers to lovely little girl and "正太" is adorable little boy. They can also function as adjective to describe the feature of cuteness. Noun to verb: "百度" (noun) is the name of a famous online search engine, but now the utterance "百度一下，你就知道" means "you will find the answer if you search on Baidu engine". Chinese character "雷" means "the sudden loud noise that comes from the sky especially during a storm", but in the expression "你雷到我了", it signifies "to shock or astonish somebody". "人肉" is a noun with the meaning of "human flesh", but in the phrase "人肉搜索", it suggests "to search a person on the Internet or cyber manhunt someone". In the utterance "收到通知就私我", "私" stands for "私信", meaning a private message, and in this expression it is a verb meaning "to give someone a private message instead of sending it in the public".

"宅" in"考研生特色, 宅出未来" refers to the action of staying home and hardly going out. Adjective to verb: "给力" means "awesome", but in "文化产业发展, 需要政府给力" it means "to make something awesome". "黑" suggests to blacken somebody's name in the sentence "此明星被网民黑了".

CONCLUSION

New-coined words and phrases are the outcome of the development of culture, science, technology and economy. New titles and symbols are needed to describe new inventions, concepts and prevailing phenomena. Neologism comes into being in this background. Through these analyses, a clear picture of morphological features of English and Chinese neologism used in Internet communication is provided. English and Chinese share the pattern of shortening, affixation, compounding, blending and conversion to form new words. The success or failure of new words is not entirely random. Whether or not a neologism continues as part of the language depends on many factors, such as frequency of use, diversity of users and situations, endurance of the concept and so on. Some factors evidently make for success, while others may hinder it. As the cyber culture is evolving, new words and expressions used online keep changing so rapidly that this study deals with only a small fraction of English and Chinese neologisms and confines to the morphological features. Further observation and in-depth research are still expected in the future.

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