ATLANTIS PRESS

Changes from the Internet Language to Emoji*

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Abstract—**The internet language, as a variety of language in the information age, has aroused great interests and attention from the language researchers. The internet language is much different from that in people's daily use whether in Chinese or English. Through the analysis of the internet language coupled with the theory of dialect, the conclusion that the internet language is a social dialect innovated by the young netizens can be got. But with the upgrade of technology, the internet language has been substituted more or less by emoji, so the phenomenon of cyberspeak is decreasing. As a result, it can be expected that normal language would return to where it should be sooner or later.**

Keywords—cyberspeak; the internet language; social dialect; emoji

I. INTRODUCTION

With the prevailing development of the internet worldwide, an information revolution, characterized by the internationalization and the digitalization, is soaking overwhelmingly into people's everyday life.

As a new medium, internet is approaching to people's life, and more and more ordinary people are exposed to the internet. Meanwhile, language — the tool of communication for human beings, is stretching in a new space constructed by the internet. Though it has not been delimited in the linguistic field nor it has formed a stable or perfected system in the present situation, the internet language is obviously far from the traditional language people use every day, upon which, a great impact is indisputably imposed on. The internet language extremely enriches the expressive ability of the communication on the internet, and raises the imagination of the netizens.

Great quantities of the unconventional elements have been mixed in the internet language, which makes internet language different and special. The internet language has its own particular style. It is of great importance to take the linguistic context into consideration when getting nearer to the internet language.

II. THE INTERNET LANGUAGE

A. The Classification of the Internet Language

The internet language is a kind of social language. It refers to the language form that is used for computer-

mediumed communication. Up to now, the internet language has not been strictly classified, but it has broad and narrow sense differentiations. Generally speaking, the internet language can be categorized as three types in its broad sense, [1] (P3)

- the terminology concerning the computer and the internet technology, eg. " mouse, hardware, software, computer virus, log in, online, chatroom, web browser, WAN (Wide Area Network), Fire wall, services sites", etc.

- the special terms correlating with the internet service field, eg. "web site, address, netizen, net partner, netiquette, e-mail, e-business, e-life, information highway", etc.

- the signs and words often used by the netizens in chat rooms and used on BBS, eg. "noob, AFAIC(as far as I am concerned), B4(before), :-) (smiling, expressed by a horizontal smiling face), 美眉(pretty girl), 大虾(the master), 斑竹(page host), 酱紫(like this)", etc.

The internet language in narrow sense just refers to the last one of the types above, which, not constitute the majority of the internet language, yet, is the most effective, expressive, and flexible part of the internet language. The features of language and the cultural phenomena reflected are thereout much worth speculating. It is named as "the cyberspeak" therefrom.

B. The Features of The Cyberspeak

The internet is a new language carrier, which is, compared with the traditional one, faster, and freer. The internet language is for the communication with computer as the medium. Different media makes different features in language. It might be said that it is the internet that activates a new linguistic style — the cyberspeak, which takes on its particular features.

1) Creativity

The most prominent features of the cyberspeak are that it is extremely creative. According to J. K. Chambers, individual characteristics are one of the aspects of social differentiation in language. "Individuals also differ in many other ways, and that these differences can often lead to differences in linguistic behavior". [2] (P68) Internet is just such a world full of individual characteristics. Lack of the supervision of the traditional life, internet provides a freest space for the imagination and the creation of the netizens. Compared with the traditional language, cyberspeak prompts

its users to be more creative. The creativity of cyberspeak is mainly reflected in the vocabulary field.

There are two methods adding new words to the cyberspeak vocabulary. One is to apply the existed words and bestow them with new meanings. The other is to create new words.

eg. 恐龙：refers to the women who are not good-looking

顶：to back up；狂顶：to back up firmly；菜鸟：newbie

B4N: bye for now; noob: short for newbie

2) Economy

Economy is another obvious feature of cyberspeak. When the netizens are online they have to speed up their character input. Therefore the concise expressions become the first choice of the netizens. And these substitutions, in some case, ignore the precise principle of language. That is why there are so many grotesque, unconventional words and expressions in cyberspeak, which, are the by-products of the type speed pursuit.

eg. 酱紫(like this)：这样子(in this way)；表(no)：不要(don't)；PMP: 拍马屁(flatter); MM: 妹妹(pretty girl)

IC: I see; IANA: I am not a; 8147: 不要生气(don't be angry)

Apart from the economical words, the sentences in cyberspeak are usually the short and the simple sentences rather than the long and complexes ones. Those consisting of 2-10words are prevailing on the net, and the use of ellipsis is also universal.

3) Figuration

Limited by the net communication, there comes the barrier of feeling transmission. The lack of gestures, voices, and things like this causes the extra exploration of the keyboard. People begin to take the advantage of the punctuation marks and some other signs on the keyboard to make up the lack. They create a series of signs, vivid, figurative, and humorous. The signs reveal the feelings and the activities of the netizens, and help them to make an imitated face-to-face communicate situation. They are special linguistic components, not only because they have no phonological form, but they are also different from the morphological form. They contain a certain kind of meaning, and add vitality to the dummy net life.

eg. a. face imitation

^-^: smile   *-^: make face   :-(: sad

:-D: laugh loudly; O: shocked   :-): glad

b. sound imitation

hehe: 呵呵(interesting); xixi: 嘻嘻(giggle)

4) Humor

Humor is an important element which makes the cyberspeak appealing and tinged with the warm, fashionable sense. The netizens created a large number of humorous words and expressions to construct a comfortable, light-hearted net atmosphere.

eg. 5555: the imitation of crying; 烘陪鸡：homepage

口水：the articles with no content

大虾：netizens proficient in computers who look like lobsters at the computer desks

5) Illegibility

Cyberspeak is a variety of social language. In it, the conventional expressions are not popular. Yet the expressions mingled with digits, signs, characters, English letters, even thoroughly wrong sentences become the current communication method. This results in the illegibility of the cyberspeak to the "outsiders". "The peculiar slang and jargons of closely knit groups within a community, …, fall under the general heading of style; their use on appropriate occasions by the individuals concerned helps to give the "insiders" an enhanced sense of group unity and to distinguish them from the "outsides", to whom such modes of discourse are unfamiliar and in part unknown." [3] (P50) This point can be seen from the following two extractions.

eg. 1. 泥表酱紫(please don't be like this)；PMP, 小心偶给泥彩色笔(watch out, I will give you a lesson), 8:], 8147, 偶只是纷想让泥开心(I really want u happy)。偶有事(excuse me), ＝＝。

2. mike says to sugarpie: sup? Sweet girl u got m sn plz don't stop chatting wit m I love u. (((((person))))) !!!!!!!!!!!! !!!!!!!!!!!! 1111111111 cn't u go 2 be my m8. ok plx & thx! *s* [4]

If not familiar with the cyberspeak, it is not easy for us newbies to get a clear and whole comprehension of the meaning of the two expressions above. The counterparts of them in the conventional expression are as follows:

- 你不要这样子拍马屁， 小心我给你点儿颜色看，猩猩笑，不要生气，我只是很想让你开心。我有事， 等一等。(Don't flatter. Watch out, I'll give some lesson. (grinning). Don't be that angry. I really want you happy. Excuse me, please wait for a second.)

- mike says to sugarpie: what's up? Sweet girl. You got me sad. Please don't stop chatting with me. I love you (giving her a virtual hug and exclaiming, crying). Can't you go to be my mate, Ok? Please and thanks! Smile.

C. The Word Formation of the Internet Language

American scholar J. B. Pride has pointed out that language, as a social phenomenon, is sure to change at the same pace with the alteration of the social life. The appearance of computer, as well as the following internet technology, is doubtlessly one of the most epoch-making events in the new century. Since it came into being, the people's life has been effected to such an extent that life expression esp., people's emotion is so closely related with computers. There are plenty of evidence to approve this tendency in the language aspect. The computer-mediumed communication helps to develop a kind of special language, totally different from that of before, the cyberspeak, the nuclear of the internet language. Some of the words are

formed traditionally, while a large part carry new elements of neither letter nor character system. The application of digits and punctuation marks violates the limitation of the traditional word-formation and, the grotesque, fantastic effect of the new creation is just the preference of the young netizens to freshness.

In its nature, the cyberspeak is the result of two factors, one is the unorthodox mentality of the netizens and, the other is time limitation of the text input on the keyboard. Therefore, to save time and money, they have to improve the input speed on one hand. On the other, they are crazy for drawing others attention. The immediate sequence of these two factors is that the cyberspeak takes on a face, short, comic, but vivid.

The following words are high frequently seen online, the former two types are conventionally formed and, the latter two are unconventionally formed.

1) Acronyms
Acronyms are the most universal words online.

eg. BBS: bulletin board system or be back soon; NP: no problem

NOYB: none of your business; LOL: laugh out loud

2) Abbreviations
Wat: what sup: what's up; addy: address; newb: newbie

Pro: professional; pic: picture; puter: computer

Thanx, thax, thnz, thx: thanks

3) Punctuation marks
@: at &: and [_]>: a cup of coffee *s*: smile

<@-@>: being drunk (((sb))): give sb a virtual hug

(^@^): a lucky piggy -1-: an offensive emotion

D. Words or Digits with the Same or Similar Sounds
CU: see you R: are plz: please kool, qool: cool u: you

竹叶(banboo leaf): 主页(home page)；稀饭(porrige): 喜欢(like)；偶(o)：我(I)

L8: late; M8: mate; R8: right; W8: wait

4ever: forever; 224: today, tomorrow, forever

2B: to be   2B11!2B: to be, or not to be 11111(one): wow!

9494: 就是就是(yes,yes)；7456：气死我了(i've got very angry)；886：bye bye 喽(~~)

The cyberspeak, as far as the present writer's concerned, should be regarded as the representative of the internet language and, therefore it might be better that the two concepts be clarified. Since the internet language has its branch in narrow sense, the present writer would give the proposal that the cyberspeak could be specially used to name this branch to differentiate from the others. It might be more acceptable that "the internet language" becomes the superordinate of "the cyberspeak".

III.   THE INTERNET LANGUAGE AND DIALECT

The internet language is the reflection of the new age in language. It is, in its nature, a special variety of language, a kind of special dialect. This conclusion could be drawn from the following points.

Firstly, language usually takes either the spoken or written form when in use. Discourses between the netizens can not be carried on in the form of speech, so the internet language does not belong to spoken language. While "written language differs from spoken language is a number of ways. The hesitations, grammatical errors, and interchanges of words, the characteristics of spoken language are largely, or entirely, absent from written language". [5] (P25) According to this description, the internet language can not be included in the category of written language either. Consequently, it might be classified as a special variety of language interfacing between spoken and written language.

Secondly, "dialect refers to varieties1 which are grammatically (and perhaps lexically) as well as phonologically different from other varieties." [2] (P5) The application of punctuation marks and digits develop a unique characteristic of the word-formation of the cyberspeak. This special method of word-formation, in the present writer's opinion, might be named as "supramorphological morphemes". Hence, in the grammatical aspects, the internet language is different from the general language and, the situation is also adaptive for the other two aspects.

R. H. Robins proposes 3 criteria for determining dialect status, among which, "dialect" should be "different but mutually intelligible without special training", "sharing a common writing system and set of written classic." [3](P56) As a result, the cyberspeak can be seen as a series of symbols for net communication innovated by the community of netizens. Though appearing grotesque and illegal, the cyberspeak is accessible to the new comers once they really go into it.

By the criteria of dialect coupled with the definition of dialect, the internet language can therefore be regarded as a dialect.

Further, social factors are concerned in dialect. "Social variation in language is as pervasive and important as regional variation. All dialects are both regional and social. All speakers have a social background as well as a regional location, and in their speech they often identify themselves not only as natives or inhabitants of a particular place but also as members of a particular social class, age group, ethnic background, or other social characteristic." [2] (P45). "Dialect continuum can also be social rather than geographical." [2] (P7). Obviously, the internet language is mostly concerned with social rather than geographical factors. The majority of the users consist of young people no matter what countries they are from. "In the progress of any linguistic (or other) change, it is natural that some element of society should take the lead." [2] (P153). It is clearly that the lead in the process from the emergence to the change of the internet language is taken by the young netizens.

IV. EMOJI

In the past decade, emoji has become prevailing for its more direct and effective expression. Emoji is a series of visual emotional symbols representing facial expressions and some other items frequently appeared in life and people's communication. It was invented by a staff member of a Japanese communication company and since the day it was, it has grown rapidly into popularity. Its popularity is simultaneously increasing with the prevailing of mobile phone. And after it was added to the iOS 5 input method released by Apple, emoji has began to further sweep the world. At present, emoji has been adopted by most modern computer systems compatible with Unicode coding, and is widely used in all kinds of mobile text messages and social networks.

What have subsequently come into being are various pastes with various express functions. They are more pertinent and individual, and even those with high digital techques can edit their own pastes with the help of some Apps for picture modifying, Pastes can be a single one or like emoji a series with the same basic image. Now it is fairly easy for people to get access to the pastes. They can find the pastes in the pastes market on most of the stream social Apps. In some informal social net communities, esp., communities of families or classmates, people often communicate with lots of pastes, and there are sometimes community members compete to show their pastes hoping to win others with vivid and flexible emotion pastes. Owing to their iconic characteristics, pastes are always express in more exaggerated, humorous, or trenchant ways than emoji.

From emoji to pastes, it has to be said this is the result of the developing technology, also the result of people's desire for emotion demonstration through the cool network cable and computers or mobile phones.

V. CONCLUSION

For all the reasons, the internet language is a special kind of social dialect and, its specialty lies in that some of its words and expressions have no phonological form. Whether people would like to accept it or not, it has become a trend that more and more students are affected by it. What it will bring to the general language, the positive or the negative influence, still remains to be seen.

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NOTE

Variety: "a neutral term to apply to any particular kind of language which we wish, for some purpose, to consider as a single entity." [2] (P5)