

A Linguistic Analysis on Cyber Language “I Am Also Drunk”

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Abstract: In the recent years, the cyber language has been very popular in our society. “I Am Also Drunk” (IAAD), one of the most popular cyber expressions in Chinese, has now frequently appeared in many social media. This article is about to analyze the reasons of popularity of IAAD. Firstly, it introduces the social and cultural background of the appearance of cyber language and illustrates the positive impact of society and culture on it. Then, it points out that the brief structure, vivid expression and profound meaning of IAAD prove its popularity from the perspective of syntax and cognitive linguistics.

Keywords: IAAD; Metaphor; Syntax; Memetics

1. Introduction

The relationships between language and society have long been recognized and examined. Evidence for this claim, discrete as it might be, can be conveniently gathered from the works of those great philosophers and grammarians either in the Graeco-Roman tradition or in the Indian history (Harris & Taylor, 1997[1989]; Apte, 1994). On one hand, language, as a useful tool of communication, enables people to get involved in all kinds of social interactions. On the other hand, language is the product of social development. It evolves with the development of productivity. With the development of science and technology, computers are more and more popular. It has been widely used in people’s daily life. And the world ushers in the information age. Subsequently, social media emerge in an endless stream, such as QQ and Micro-blog. They lay the foundation for online communication. It is by this means of communication that the cyber language comes into being and spreads fast. Once a new word and sentence is quoted many times, it will rise to fame immediately and be quoted more

frequently. In one word, social progress stimulates the development of cyber language.

In the meanwhile, as Malinowski claimed that “In its primitive uses, language functions as a link in concerted human activity.....it is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection” (Sampson 1980: 224), language is in itself an essential part of culture. Thus cyber language is closely related to culture. And one culture can exert influence over other cultures and lead to the forming of new words in other languages. For example, the word “Watergate” has been regarded as a synonym of political scandal since the disclosure of notorious Watergate event. It is the winner of the 1996 Words of the Year. Since then, a series of words of this type emerge in an endless stream, such as “Billgate”, “Debategate”, “Cattlegate” and “Ricegate”. And the “gate” in “Watergate” has been generalized to refer to any scandal and borrowed into other cultures, such as British Watergate, French Watergate, Muldergate (South Africa), Korea gate (South Korea), sex picture gate (Photo scandal or in Pinyin *Yanzhaomen*) (China) and so on (Yang Yonglin, 2004: 34-41). Therefore, culture promotes the development of cyber language.

There have been a lot of studies on cyber language from the perspective of linguistics. Many of them, more often than not, focus more on the theoretical level rather than the practical one. Thus, it is meaningful to study the practical application of cyber language. If we know the real reason and scope of application, we can learn the Chinese culture better, thus achieving better communications.

The article is about to illustrate the features of cyber language and analyze the representative IAAD in terms of syntactic structure, syntactic function and cognition in order to figure out the reasons of its development and popularity.

2. A Linguistic Analysis on Cyber Language “I Am Also Drunk”

2.1 The features of cyber language

Considering the expenditure of web surfing and efficiency of communication, the cyber language is characterized by its conciseness and vividness. They are achieved by special vocabulary, unconventional grammar and vernacular expression.

i. Special vocabulary

(1) attach a new meaning to a word

“*bucuo*”--*zhangcheng zheyang bushi nidecuo*

(2) homophones

“*louzhu*”--*louzhu*; “*banzhu*”--*banzhu*

(3) acronym

A. Chinese acronym

“*jiangzi*”--*zheyangzi*; “*biao*” --
buyao

BB--*baobei*; *BT*--*biantai*

“*8147*”--*buyao shengqi*; “*56*”--

wuliao

B. English acronym

BBS--*bulletin board system*

DIY--*do it yourself*

(4) expression

“ :-) ” means smile ; “ :-D ”

means laugh

ii. Unconventional grammar

(5) sentence structure “...*de shuo*”

e.g. “*wo hai zhen youdian shebude de shuo*”

(6) word order

e.g. “*yumen a, wo xianzai*”

iii. Vernacular expression

E.g. 1. Sichuan dialect: “*ni shuode si sazi ma*”

“*si sazi*” means “what”

E.g. 2. H.K. dialect: “*ou juede haikeyi*”

“*ou*” means “I”

2.2 The reasons of the popularity of IAAD

2.2.1 Syntactic analyses on IAAD

Grammatical construction can be used to mean any syntactic construct which is assigned one or more conventional function in a

language , together with whatever is linguistically conventionalized about its contribution to the meaning or use the construct contains(Hu Zhuanglin, 2006: 86). As for the internal syntax of a construction, the terms such as “subject, copula, adverb, and predicative” are usually a description of its “make-up”. IAAD is a simple sentence constructed by the subject “I”, the copula “am”, the adverb “also” and the predicative “dunk”. The integrity and clarity of grammatical construction of IAAD build up the compactness of its form and powerfulness of its meaning.

In terms of the distribution and the relation between its constituents, IAAD is classified into exocentric construction which refers to a group of syntactically related words where no one of the words is functionally equivalent to the group as a whole, that is, there is no definable “Centre” or “Head” inside the group. There is no single word that can substitute all the words in the sentence and summarize the meaning of the whole sentence. In the sentence of IAAD, “I”, “am”, “also” and “drunk” are four constituents none of which can stand for the sentence structure as a whole. For example, lacking in the subject “I” or predicative “drunk”, no one can understand who is drunk or what happens to the subject. The meaning will be incomplete. So each constituent of this sentence cannot be absent owing to its special status and contribution to the whole sentence.

IAAD also deserves attention from the viewpoint of syntactic function. First and foremost, subject plays a vital role in a sentence. The most important function of it is to make clear the direction of a sentence. If the subject of a sentence is indefinite or absent, the whole sentence will be ambiguous, even meaningless. The subject “I” is topic of IAAD. It refers to the agent of this action or expression. And “I”, the first person, points out the center of the message and conveys a kind of feeling more cordial than other person point of view. The application of this person point of view is widely used in people’s daily communications. It expresses

personal opinions or his or her own inner feelings, which seems more intimate to the receivers of the message. Secondly, the copula “am” indicates the specific state, showing the action, process and state of the subject. In this respect, “am” is the supplement of “I”. Thirdly, the adverb “also” plays the role of adverbial in the sentence. It ignites sympathy among people. Lastly, the predicative “drunk” contains a large amount of information. It is usually used to describe the identity, nature, character and status of the subject. There is no denying the fact that “drunk” adds the statement to the subject “I” and embodies the meaning of the whole sentence.

To sum up, IAAD is a simple sentence in terms of syntactic structure and a declarative sentence from the perspective of syntactic function. The simplicity and compactness of it makes the sentence memorable and widespread in the public.

2.2.2 Metaphorical analysis on IAAD

Cognitive linguistics is based on human experiences of the world and the way they perceive and conceptualize the world (Ungerer & Schmid 2001: 255). It holds that construal operations are involved in the interpretation of linguistic expressions. They are conceptualizing processes used in language process by human beings. As an important construal operation, metaphor involves the comparison of two concepts in that one is construed in terms of the other. It's often described in terms of a TARGET DOMAIN and a SOURCE DOMAIN. The target domain is the experience being described by the metaphor and the source domain is the means that we use in order to describe the experience. (Hu Zhuanglin, 2006: 135) the popularity of IAAD is mainly attributed to the application of metaphor. Literally, the word “drunk” means a state where a person becomes faint under the influence of alcohol. Figuratively, it indicates that one feels depressed, helpless and speechless with certain person, event or situation. The application of

metaphor makes the expression of speechlessness of the speakers vivid. And the hearers can easily understand the feelings of the speakers by their perception of being drunk.

2.2.3 Memetic analysis on IAAD

Memetics is a theory of mental content based on an analogy with Darwinian evolution. It is an approach to evolutionary models of cultural information transfer.

Meme is a concept for discussion of evolutionary principles in explaining the spread of ideas and cultural phenomena. It acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme. The meme, analogous to a gene, was conceived as a "unit of culture" (an idea, belief, pattern of behavior, etc.) which is "hosted" in the minds of one or more individuals, and which can reproduce itself, thereby jumping from mind to mind. The meme may undergo changes during the process of dissemination. The reproduction and variation of meme is similar to the heredity and variation.

In general, the development of meme may go through three procedures: reproduction, variation and selection. The popularity of IAAD has also gone through the three procedures.

IAAD derived from the statement of LOTA and was used in a computer game called LOL. At that time, it didn't attract much attention. Later on, it was put in micro-blogs and frequently used by netizens in online communication. With the popularity of IAAD, more and more people are eager to know about it and repeat it through imitation. Therefore, IAAD becomes more prevalent and people begin to use it in their everyday conversations. The process of the popularity of IAAD is similar to the reproduction of genes.

At the same time, with the spread of IAAD, new meanings are added to it owing to the unique personal perceptions and the different situations it is employed in. originally, IAAD

means that one feels discontent with his teammate and helpless with the defeat in a computer game of war. Now it is a euphemistic expression to convey a feeling of speechlessness to irrational behaviors. For example, Lawrence was wearing a bikini. If that is also called pornographic, I will be also drunk. In this respect, the meaning of IAAD is generalized. But it doesn't mean that the original meaning is abandoned. People can select the most suitable meaning according to the situation it is attached to.

3. Conclusions

The emergence and development of cyber language is attributed to the development of society and culture. The spread of Internet is the real basis of the popularity of IAAD. What's more, IAAD is brief in structure, vivid in usage and profound in meaning, and therefore, it meets the psychological needs of the public. Besides, it is worth noting that the popularity of IAAD has abode by the principles of reproduction and variation of memetics. All

these factors make IAAD popular with today's netizens.

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