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**《话语学》课程论文**

**Respelling in Chinese Typed Texts**

* **The Online Context Provides Different Intentions**

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**Respelling in Chinese Typed Texts**

**--Another Context Provides Various Respelling Forms**

**Abstract**

The assigned material Respelling in Text Messages provides an inspiration in researches on the respelling in Chinese typed languages in the online community. This online context, with its strict language prohibitions, provides various possibilities for new respelling forms which are not covered in the assigned material. Based on the rules materials on three social platforms and a popular respelling word list, this research concludes five new respelling forms in the Chinese online community contexts, which are abbreviation, homonym, metonym, borrowing words, and taking words apart. The research also have a further discussion on the evolution pattern of human language reflected in these respelling forms and the disadvantages of this phenomenon.

*Key Words: Respelling in Chinese, Online Community, Internet Language*

**Introduction**

The article *Respellings in Text Messages* introduces the respelling phenomena in the English spoken area in the text messages. It inspires us that the respelling phenomena also appear in the Chinese social with the similar forms but different intentions and meanings. This article will discuss other forms of respelling in Chinese typed texts which are not covered by the book, and have an analysis in the Chinese culture and the social media rules on the reasons why these respellings are appearing.

**Literature Review**

1. **Respelling in Text Messages**

This research is first inspired by the topic respelling in English text messages. As Caroline Tagg suggests in the chapter *Respellings in Text Messages* of the *Discourse Studies Reader Essential Excerpt*, respelling in text messages is that when an electronic message sent over a cellular network from one cell phone to another by typing words, it often show in shortened form, as “l8t” for “late,” on the phone's numeric keypad. (Caroline, 2013)

Caroline also suggests that the motivations of respelling of English words usually includes to be brevity and gain speed, to make paralinguistic restitution to be playful and fun, or to model the phonological approximation. The spelling rules in typed text messages are called “textism”.

Based on the introductions above, we have a table on the commonly chosen respelling types

We concluded the following several types of choices or intentions of respelling.

The repelling forms suggested in this Chapters can be roughly divided into the following forms:

1. The respelling represents the colloquial contraction:

*<ya>, <ye> or <yer>;*

*<havin> (where the <g> is dropped) or <avin>*

1. Respellings of something show several regional pronunciations:

*<summort>, <sumfing>, <summat> and <summing>*

1. Contrasting forms of eye dialect

*later are <l8r> and <lata>*

*might, <mite> and <myt>.*

1. reducing the number of characters used, depending perhaps on how much they wish to abbreviate:

*<thurs> or <thu>, for example,*

*<pls>, <plse> or <pse>.*

1. The choice between clipping or consonant writing in some examples may depend on texters’ use of predictive texting.

*back, for example, is abbreviated either as <bac> or <bk>;*

*give as <giv> or <gv>;*

*have, as <hav> but also as <hve> and as <av>*

*tomorrow as <tomo> or <tmw>.*

This chapter also suggests several researching methods:

a. In studying the respelling topic, working on a small corpus or a small number of text messages are acceptable. This study mainly requires typical examples of the respelling forms.

b. There are ambiguous respellings with more than one referent, so this study cannot be handled simply by looking at a frequency list but must be checked through sorting concordance lines, and adjusted manually.

c. Study in respellings proved difficult to identify and label. For example, it was difficult to know whether “wk” word form referres to “work” or “week”.

1. **Euphemism and politics**

The respellings in Chinese typed texts have a high similarity with another commonly discussed linguistic – Euphemism. The term “euphemisms” comes from the Greek “eu” (good) and “pheme”(speech or saying) and so it means literally to speak with good words in a pleasant manner or ‘fair speech’. A euphemism as an inoffensive expression that is substituted for one that may be offensive. Euphemism is a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects.

Euphemism in language of politics in mass media especially newspaper is an interesting case to be analyzed in order to evaluate and criticize political discourse. ‘In fact, any political action is prepared, accompanied, controlled and influenced by language’. It means media are part of the cycle of power in politic, what they report, what they report, what they decide to make new worthy becomes influential and their decisions affect the unfolding of events. Pointing out, language is vital to the process of transforming political will into social action. Furthermore, the process of transforming political into social action has close relationship with media especially news texts. The news is in the language – the topic, the controversies, the arguments among sources real and invented.

Thomas et all also stated that “Politics is concerned with power to make decisions, to control resources, to control other people’s behavior and often to control their values”. Politics and language have a close relationship. In other words, “Language is vital to the process of transforming political action and any political action is prepared, accompanied, controlled and influenced by language”.

Furthermore, Lakeoff claims that politics is language and language is politics. Politics is inevitably connected to power (Lakoff, 1990).

1. **Commonly Used Forms of Euphemism in Typed Texts**

Joseph et al. concludes five forms of euphemism as follows (Joseph M. William in Neaman and Silver(1991: 9-10)):

1. **Borrowing words from other languages**

The expression in the original language is considered to be too obscene or explicit. The expression in other languages are rather soft and implicit. Joseph M. Wiliiams says, “…euphemism may be made by borrowing words from other languages the terms that are less freighted with negative associations”..

1. **Metaphorical transfer**

The comparison of things of one the original word that metaphorical transfer is the comparison of things of one order to thing another. The euphemisms chosen are often romanticizing, poeticizing and softening of the original word

1. **Metonymy**

Metonymy is contiguity of senses. It means that there is nearness between these senses. Furthermore, Bloomfield (1973:427) says, “Metonymy is the meanings are near each other in space or time.” From both definitions, we know that metonymy is the nearness of meaning or senses whether in space or time.

1. Special relations
2. Temporal relations

Usually occurs in the mentioning of body and sexual relations.

1. **Widening**

Widening is a process where a word achieves a more general meaning.. “Euphemism may be made by a semantic process called “widening”. When a specific term becomes too painful or vivid, we move up in the ladder abstraction. In this way, “cancer” becomes a growth and a “girdle” becomes a foundation” (Neaman and Silver 1983:10).

1. **Phonetics distortion**

Joseph M. Williams divides eight types of phenetic distortion dealing with the creation of euphemism. They are abbreviation, apocopation, initialing, backforming, reduplication, phonetic distortion, blend word, and diminutive.

Joseph et al. also suggests that the functions of euphemistic expressions are usually as followed:

1. To avoid of using of word that can cause of a panic situation
2. To decrease and inoffensive thing or as tragedy
3. To soften expression and avoid unpleasant subject, insult or humiliate
4. Euphemism is also used to be diplomatic or rhetoric aim
5. To hide the truth and shift public attention of it
6. To deride or criticize by delicate.
7. **Euphemism and Chinese culture**

Euphemism for a word or phrase that is generally agreed upon and accepted by the majority of people over time, such as the euphemism "Passaway,' etc. in English

Euphemism in a broad sense is constructed through various linguistic devices in the language system, the other is euphemism in a broad sense, that is, an expression with euphemistic function constructed temporarily through various linguistic devices in the language system, either phonetic (e.g., light reading, prosody), grammatical (e.g., negation, tense, morphology), or discourse (e.g., chapter, etc.). These euphemisms are generally ad hoc and individual (i.e. with personal characteristics). From the point of view of the social variable and the point of view of the effect of language expression, these two different senses of euphemisms are essentially the same, both reflecting the principle of indirectness in language use. Yet from a point of view in content, the euphemism in Chinese have three major classifications, "sexual euphemism", "death euphemism", "political euphemism". The euphemism, namely respelling in the Chinese social media are also roughly about these three contents.

1. **Emoji in language and Chinese “Abstract Expressions”**

Emoji are popular digital pictograms that can appear in text messages, emails, and on social media platforms. These characters are generally understood as a light-hearted, almost comedic form of communication, but they have a rich and complex socioeconomic history that precedes the range of mobile devices where they commonly appear.

Undeniably, emoji are a common expression in expressing emotions. Yet on the internet in recent years, it is a trend that the emoji are replacing the original words or expressions and forming the sentences.

Some emoji that are available for combinatoric sequences, which means they are able to combine to form larger structures. Ge and Herring (2018) found that Chinese speakers on Sina Weibo used the crossed hands emoji 🙅 as a way of negating one or more following emoji. McCulloch (2015) found that English-speaking Twitter users tended to use the (not technically an emoji) equals sign = or arrows 🔄 ➡️ when asked to express an "is" relationship in emoji. And, as mentioned in the previous subsection and discussed by Steinmetz (2014) and Ge and Herring (2018), a heart or a face emoji can be used to express a stance towards an object, such as ❤️🍕 to convey "I love pizza" or ☹❄ to convey "Snow makes me sad." Emoji related to methods of transportation, such as the train and airplane emoji, are also sometimes used to convey a verb of motion or transportation, such as 🇨🇦🛫🇦🇺 ('flying from Canada to Australia') (Tatman, 2016a, 2018b), although these transportation emoji can be ambiguous or difficult to interpret depending on the word order of the language they are interpreted with reference.

In language, the words that are the most combinatorically useful are also the most common: Function words like ‘the,’ ‘of,’ ‘and,’ ‘is,’ and ‘not’ are the most frequent words in any English corpus, and sequences containing function words are the most common word N-grams across a wide variety of genres. If people are making use of the emoji combinatoric resources available to them, we might expect to see that our potential combinatoric emoji, such as 🙅 or 🚫 for "not," 🔄 or ➡️ for "is," and the representational faces of people (such as man, woman, baby) are among the most common emoji, and that sequences containing functional emoji (such as heart plus an object, or an object with a face) are among the most common emoji and emoji N-grams. This is not what we find in our data. In fact, zero of the potential combinatoric emoji are found in several lists of the 50 most frequently used emoji, and there are zero potential emoji combinatoric sequences in the top 200 emoji bigrams, trigrams, and quadrigrams examined by Medlock and McCulloch (2016).

**Method**

We follow the suggestion given by Respelling in Text Messages, that the respelling study must be carried manually and can be carried on small corpus. Our research covers the rules for language of 3 major social media platform, and 5 major types of respelling phenomena which are commonly seen on the internet.

1. **Language Rules of Social Media Study**

We first collect the language rules of 3 major social platforms, Taobao, Tok-tok, and Sina Blogs, which cover three major types of social media, namely the online store, video platform and blogs community. We concluded that the social media rules into the following three major types.

1. Maxim of Communication Based

According to Paul Grice’s Maxims of Communication, the communication among people should follow the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Most of the online platforms have the rules based on these maxims, conducting their users to be polite and kind to avoid arguments.

1. *The presence in the video of scandalous, abusive and other attacks on others, or the exposure of others' identity information and other violations of privacy. (Tiktok)*
2. *The sellers should truthfully describe the commodity information according to the attributes of the goods sold, and timely maintenance and update to ensure that the commodity information is true, correct and valid; shall not exaggerate, excessive, false promises of commodity effects and extent, etc. (Taobao)*
3. *Prohibit information content that causes physical or mental discomfort, such as gore, horror, cruelty, etc. (Sina Blog)*
4. *Prohibit information content that promotes vulgarity, vulgarity, and vulgar content. (Sina Blog)*
5. Fair Competition Based

In consideration of allowing a fair transaction online environment for the users, many platforms concerning buying and selling performances have the rules on the fair competition among the sellers. For example, Taobao and Tiktok have banned the messages sharing goods from other unsafe platforms. They are also not allowing their users to describe any of their goods with the superlative adjective expression like “the best” or “the most”.

1. *the description of the goods indicates that the accompanying gift, the accompanying gift of goods or services should be expressed in the variety, specifications, quantity and other basic information; (Taobao)*
2. *Videos containing elements of advertising such as product display, introductory oral broadcast of brands/products/prices, etc., or leading to purchase. (Tiktok)*
3. Information Safety and Politics Based

In consideration of the national safety, many platforms do not allow their users to type words relating to the politics or news about public safety.

1. *Prohibit information content that may trigger minors to imitate unsafe behavior and violate social morality, induce bad habits of minors, etc. (Sina Blog)*
2. *The presence of gambling lotteries, feudal superstitions, cult organizations, drugs, controlled knives, assault devices and other items in the video or related renditions. (Tiktok)*
3. **Major Types of Respelling Forms Study**

Based on an online encyclopedia of online subculture, Mengniang Encyclopedia, a list of Chinese respelling words are collected on the following page:

<https://mzh.moegirl.org.cn/zh-hans/%E6%8A%BD%E8%B1%A1%E8%AF%9D>

This word list covers the most current usages of Chinese respelling online. A classification of their word formation is made based on this word list, including abbreviation, homonym, metonym, borrowing words, and taking words apart.

1. **Abbreviation**

Abbreviation in Chinese is often applied by taking the first phonetic spelling character (in Chinese “pinyin”) to form new words.

1. *Replacing “Si” “Siwang” （death） by “S”, the first phonetic spelling character.*
2. *Replacing “Qian” (money) by “Q”.*
3. *Replacing “Zui” (superlative adjective expression) by “Z”.*

These examples correspond well to the language rules above, for all of these expressions are enliven due to their original expressions are banned on several social platforms. “Death” is banned for violating the rule of “not causing mental hurt or disorder to others”, “Money” is banned due to the rule of banning commercial transactions, and superlative adjective expressions are banned because of the rule of authenticity in product descriptions.

1. **Homonym (including Emoji)**

As emoji is a recoverable sign, which means it can be translated into its original language word-for-word, the emoji is used to replace the language characters with the similar semantic meanings or with the same pronunciations, which are banned on social platforms.

1. ⑧*: Chinese character for "no" for it has the same pronunciation as “bu” (“no”).*
2. ⏩*: the meaning of fast forward, with statements such as "*⏩ *to remake (fast forward to suicide)".*
3. 🌸🐔*: It means “huaji” (“funny”) and was generated because this word was once banned in on of the online blog. Coincidentally, in the past, when there was no emoji function, the comment section of IT House also often used this emoji form to indicate funny.*
4. 👴🏻*: a common first-person pronoun in abstract speech, generally meaning "this grandfather", "I am your grandfather", etc. There are many derivative versions.*

There is also an online tool for translation Chinese sentences into language with emoji, <https://chouxiang.ml/> .

1. **Metonymy**

Metonymy is another way to express the information prohibited online. It differs from the Homonym in that the applied expression is the same in semantics instead of in pronunciation with the original expression.

1. *6324: The live room number of one of the online celebrities. This expression was generated because this celebrity was once banned in some blogs.*
2. *May 35th : The expression to describe the June 4th Movement which is prohibited online due to its relation to politics.*
3. **Borrowing words**

Words from other languages can also be borrowed to replace some unwanted expressions.

1. *¿: From Spanish. It is an inverted question mark used in place of a regular question mark in abstract speech. Common usage is to mock the other person or to spout off in a civil manner. It is originally a Spanish symbol that is placed at the beginning of a question (when a regular question mark is still used at the end of the sentence. For example, "¿Qué?" [Spanish: what?]) .*
2. *Remake: It means “zisha”("to commit suicide").*
3. *Five：It means “feiwu”("waste"), sometimes also used as* ⑤*.*
4. *Cha Lemon: In dialect, "cha" means "eat". The phrase "cha lemon" means "I'm jealous", for in Chinese the word “sour” also has the meaning “jealousy” .*
5. **Taking words apart**

Chinese characters can also be taken apart, which has similar meaning with spelling words out in English.

1. *彳亍口巴(Chinese characters “OK” taken apart): When pronounced with a long sound, it means that it is difficult to compromise or agree.*

**Discussion**

Based on the discussion and analysis above, we find out that the respelling phenomena are also popular in Chinese typed language. The rules of online social community provides another intention and meaning for respelling in Chinese language – to avoid conflicting with the language rules, or these expression will be banned. We find out that the human language is alive and growing, that it thrives more energetically when there are prohibitions against it. We also see that the language is rooted in their social environments, as the diversity of these respelling forms are evolving because of their social environments correspondingly.

However, we also see situations that we should worry about. This year a primary school teacher shared a piece of her own experience, that she saw one of her students used the abbreviation “s” for “death” in written composition assignment, seemingly intending to avoid some language rules as what we were always doing online. This story shows that the online language rules have a wider effect on our language usages much more than what the rule designers have originally concepted. Whether these language rules are far too strict or whether the primary education should conduct on children’s uses of language respectively online and in the reality might be our further research topics.

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