The Generation Study About Netspeak Semantic Vagueness

DONG Jinyu[a],*

[a]Associate professor. School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Petroleum University, Daqing, China.
Research area: Linguistics and business English teaching.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

To study a linguistic phenomenon, you need to know its generation mechanism first. The formation of language and discourse is a really complicated process. It is not only a process to code speech in a multi-angle and multi-level way, but also a result of speakers' special psychological effect. So it plays an important effect to study the generation of netspeak semantic vagueness. There are both similarities and differences between the generative mechanism of netspeak semantic vagueness and the entitative language. The distinctive and vital factor in generative mechanism of netspeak semantic vagueness is netspeak's variability which is endowed in the course of its evolving and configurating, not only because it is generated through language mutation, but the metamorphosis pervades each level of netspeak, including lexical, grammar, semantic and so on.

Keywords: Netspeak; Semantic vagueness; Generative

1. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SEMANTIC VAGUENESS IN NATURAL LANGUAGE

There is a big difference in the definition of "semantic vagueness" between academia. Someone considers the meaning which is not clear as semantic vagueness. For example, Zhu Daqiu think the uncertain (one word could have several possible meanings), unclear (the field of the word's meaning is not clear and the concept extends vaguely), ambiguous (the sentence has its potential meanings), non-concrete (use vague words to express specific meanings) expressions of language are all belong to vague words. Therefore, it's necessary to clarify vague words, ambiguous words and general words, which are easy to be mixed, in order to explicit the definition of semantic vagueness and study scope. The following are scholars'' definitions to vague words, general words and hedges. Vague words are confined to those which have clear connotations but ambiguous extensions. For example, "young, old, new, big, small, summer, winter, up, down…"these words' connotations are explicit but the extension meanings are uncertain. Some words to show color and time like red, green, night, morning and other descriptive adjectives like good, pretty, smart, beautiful, they belong to different degrees. They are called vagueness-bearer ambiguous words because of the vagueness of the concepts themselves. Ambiguous words belong to one branch of semantic vagueness, which means one entry can be understood in more than one way due to polysemy and homonymy. As the word "mouse" can refer to rat and it can also be expressed as a devise that is connected to a computer. Degree can be used to express level or as a title given by a university. Credit can be used to express reputation or score. Grass can be expressed as a kind of substance or it can also means "gay". The two meanings of this type of ambiguous words belong to the same class, while another type not only has a lot of meanings, but these meanings respectively belong to different word classes. For instance, "fire " can not only means flames produced by things that are burning, but also means someone dismiss you from your job. Thunder can not only refer to a natural phenomenon, but also means an embarrassing situation. This kind of ambiguous

words is called syntactic category ambiguous word. In some scholar's opinion, there are three factors leading to ambiguous words: language, the meaning of a word and grammar. For example, "dingjin" can be earnest money or subscription just because of the same pronunciation. While the sentence "Wo zai xia mian" can be understood as the location where I stay or the behavior that "I am cooking noodles". These different meanings are caused by grammar. Ambiguous words are not the same as vague words because they are not the uncertain meaning of themselves; therefore, they can be eliminated by language means. There are some methods to differentiate language ambiguity: a) context differentiation; b) changing the sentence pattern; c) adding new words; d) changing words; e) exchanging words orders.

2. "DOUBLE LANGUAGE" PHENOMENON IN INTERNET COMMUNICATION

Using netspeak and entitative language at the same time is a "double phenomenon" in modern society. Netspeak is one of the social variations of entitative language and it is still changing and developing. According to Ferguson's theory, "double phenomenon" has three major features: a) A kind of language used in the same community of two distinct variant forms. One is considered to be the high level variation forms (H variation form), while the other is the low level (L variation form). b) Each variation has its different functions and they complement each other. c) In daily conversations nobody uses the high level one. The language in the era of network is extremely similar to the "double phenomenon" defined by Ferguson. Traditional virtual language and net-speak language used in the same community at the same time are language ontology and variation form. Traditional virtual language is the language ontology and net-speak language is one of the social varieties of virtual language. These two have obviously different functions , influence and complement each other, what differs them is that people always use the low level language variation in netspeak, while in daily life, people often use high level language-traditional virtual language. Therefore, the study of netspeak semantic vagueness not only needs to concern about its similarities with natural ambiguous words, but also consider their diversities. And the differences between them produced during the process which netspeak evolves from ontology entitative language to social varieties.

2.1 Variablity Characteristics of Netspeak

Network language variability first manifest to be the internal imbalance of network language and some language units and structure rules' variation caused by external factors. Especially in virtual network communication space, context factors such as topics, communicative purposes, communicators, communication backgrounds all varied , thus formed a new environment

in which network communication differs from daily communication. This is also the unique mechanism network language semantic vagueness generates. What caused the variation of netspeak first is the netizens' need of change, innovation and the divergence strategy to create or introduce a new form. For example, the "netizen" in network language (composed of net and citizen) stands for internet users; "1337" represents elites. In Chinese network language, people always use "beiju" to represent "tragedy","naikan"stands for "have patience to watch ", "shenma" represent what……

These new words usually have existed in virtual language. The words are given new meanings because of the nitizens' special need of change and innovation. And then it is caused by the need of network language internal structure system function's organization adjustment. Sometimes it is necessary to add new components because of the expression need.

For example, new concepts appear in the original system, but there are no proper forms for them, therefore, new words come into being. Like "surf, cyber culture, netish"… these words which always appear in forum describe new concepts they do not have before.

Most of these new words just live for a few moments and then disappear. Some are accepted by people and become parts of language elements. But only a few will have great effect on the whole language system and then arouse the evolution of it. More and more frequent and convenient communication and rapid flow of migration play a vital role to the variation of netspeak. Every dialect people speak or the use of language variants (such as network language) and communities (language ontology) are one of the subsystems. In specific network communication, netizens' divergence strategy is also characterized by pronunciation, words, grammar, abnormal collocation and code, discourse pattern, style, fields, etc. The following eight kinds of forms are the most important.

2.2 Lexical Deviation

Creating new words is the basic means for network language divergence strategy. These new words possess the semantic vagueness because of its unique word-formation. They become the mainstream of netspeak, and they are also the most creative and vivid part of the netspeak. On the other hand, vague words have great flexibility and openness, which will not leave handles to others and leave ways out for one's own. Therefore, nitizens are willing to use them, which invisiblely increases the use frequency of network language vagueness and promote the development of the netspeak vagueness. For a specific purpose, citizens always use "nonce formation" to create new words. Creating new words has its rules. Jiang Yuefei thinks one of the rules that dominate the netspeak creation is homophonic. The reason is that one of the most important sources that make

network language appear is the intelligent spelling input system of Microsoft. Before the input system of Microsoft come out, words in the input system ranged with the use frequency. On speed-first internet, netizens have no patience to ensure the accuracy of typing, thus choosing words arranged in the front. Though input system is becoming more and more perfect, netizens still use this kind of way to create new words. What is more, they also use the homophone and similar sounds of mandarin and dialect to create lots of new words on internet. Another rule, Chen Liu think, is simplification. In order to improve the efficiency of online communication and shorten the time of transmiting messages, netizens try to simplify the polysyllabic network words to disyllables. As for the complicated ones, they use acronyms or homophony to represent the whole word. For example, abbreviated creations-abbreviating phrases into a word are simple and concise. "Naikan" is short for "naizhexingzikan"; "tiancai" is short for "tianshengchuancai". Secondly, we cannot ignore metaphors. The majority of the netspeak users are the young who advocate the humorous linguistic style. And the new words that created by parables are representative. For example, figurative word-formation-han (sweat), pubuhan (much sweat like waterfalls), baoyulihuahan (to describe the shameful mood), synecdoche word-formation – xiaoqiang (Cockroach, to refer to the people with tough vitality. Internet originates from western countries, so Chinese netspeak is greatly influenced by the British one. There are several examples: the abbreviated class: alphabetic abbreviation: MM = meimei (sister), GG = gege (brother); English abbreviation: BB (Bye Bye), BTW (By the way), PC (personal computer), IP (internet phone), IT (information technology).

2.2.1 Lexical Deviation in Chinese Netspeak

Symbol graphics class means to combine punctuations, numbers and alphabetic character to simulate morphology and represent some meanings. We can divide them concretely into the following types:

a) Punctuation group: - -) (smiling face); : - - - - (sadness).

b) Punctuations and numbers: 8 - -) (eyes wide open);: - - T (angry).

c) Punctuations and alphabets: - - P (stick out tongues); T—T (tearing).

Number receptive class means to imply some meanings with certain numbers and number symbols. For examples: 0001000 (I'm lonely), 345(it's hard to miss someone), 1314(the whole life)

Bilingual class: Wo I ni (I love you), B2B (the online trading between businesses), f2f (face to face), 3X (thanks), dang (download)

Pure paraphrase is divided into two types:

a) Invention: weibo (microblog), xiazai (download), tiaozhijietiaoqi (modem)

b) Borrowing: caidan (menu); liaotian (chat), fanghuoqiang (firewall), shubiao(mouse)

Meaning-transferred class is divided into two types:

a) Meaning-extension: zaozhuan (focus on writing), guanshui (send out passages at random in forums)

b) Lexical class change: my friends phone me. (Phone is used as a verb rather than a noun)

Words repetition: Piaopiao (pioaliang = beautiful), blingbling (fashion and flickered objects)

Lexical variation also manifest in the usage of words, which means to betray the regular usage of words and make a regular words gain the nonce meaning to create unique conceptions. For example, "dajiangyou" is a usual daily matter in virtual language but is given a new meaning in netspeak which means to stand by for the things happening around. It vividly describes the contemporaries' attitudes – it has nothing to do with me.

2.2.2 Lexical Deviation in English Netspeak

English netspeak forms lots of new words by the method of variation as well. What we use most are abbreviation and acronym. For examples: ASL = Age/Sex/Location , AFAIC = As Far As I'm Concerned , LOL=laugh out loudly, AFK = Away From Keyboard, BBIAB = Be Back In A Bit, FYI = For Your Information, GF = girlfriend, IYKWIM = If You Know What I Mean, AYSOS = Are You Stupid Or Something, etc. Besides the new words and abbreviation, following types are characteristic of Lexical deviation in English netspeak:

1) Shortenings: Hiho/yo = hi/hey/hello, holla = come to talk with me; holla at yo boy //holla at yo girl etc. , Sup/wuz up = what' up, nn = nite, ppl = people, tho = though

2) Single letters replace words: b = be, c = see or sea, o = Oh, k or kk = Okay, r = are, u=you, y=why

3) Single digits replace words:1= won or one, 2= to or too, 4=for, 8=ate

4) A single letter or digit replaces a syllable or phoneme:

A) 2 can be expressed as to or too, so tomorrow mutates to 2mro or 2moro; today mutates to 2 day.

B) 4 can be expressed as for or fore , so before mutates to b4; forget mutates to 4 get.

C) 8 can be expressed as ate, so great mutates to gr8, late mutates to l8, mate mutates to m8; wait mutates to w8, hate mutates to h8, date mutates to d8, later mutates to l8r or l8a, create mutates to cr8, skate mutates to sk8, skater mutates to sk8r

5) Combinations of the above shorten a single or multiple words: your and you're mutate to ur, wonderful mutates 1drfl, someone mutates sum1, no one mutates no1;any one mutates any1 or ne1, see you mutates cu or cya, for you mutates 4u, easy mutates ez;enjoy mutates njoy, adieu mutates +u

6) Blending: cybercide = cyber + cide, netizen = net+citizen, webonomics = web + economics

7) Derivations: e-lance = electronic + free-lance, cyber-art, hacker = hack + er, flamer = flam + er

8) Semantic changes: lame = lan, shuai (random and terrible) (example: dude, thats the lamest thing ive ever heard.), pwnz = ownz = niubi! (good job) (example: pwnz demo!; Wayne ownz all the others!), rullz = qiang! (powerful and perfect) (example:Wayne rullz!; you guyz rullz!!!), you rock! = ni niubi!，surf = look quickly through information on internet, spam = unsolited messages esp. ads sent through mails or postings, flame = to post an insulting, emotional and caustic message.

9) Loaned words: cybernoir (terror on the internet, borrowed from French), anime (cartoon of Japanes style, borrowed from Japanese), viva (long live, borrowed from Italian), fire water, war painter(loan translation).

2.3 Phonetic Variants

Phonetic variants are special in netspeak because communication happens in virtual space. Compared with traditional face-to-face communication, netspeak has the features of both literal and spoken language. Collot & Belmore (1996) put forward the concept of "talking in writing", which means netspeak is oral communication by characters and it must depend on phonetic assistance, using the "reading" method to understand the contents to transmit. And because of lacking non-verbal clues like tones, body language and expressions, it takes on rich and polybasic patterns in language styles.

2.3.1 Variations in Chinese Netspeak

There are several types of variations in Chinese Netspeak:

1)New words and transliteration: ic = I see, jiangzi = zheyangzi, 3166 = zaijian (bye)

2) Use phonetic symbols and Arabic numbers to represent characters: 88 = ziajian (bye), 5201314 = wo ai ni yi sheng yi shi (I love you all my life), 55555 = wuwu (sound of crying)

3) The imitation of dialect accent : e di shen a, qi si ou le=I am very angry, kuai bang ta sa

4) The overlapping words: hao piao piao, shen me dong dong, hao pa pa

2.3.2 Variations in English Netspeak

English phonetic variants usually tend to be informal and even borrow foreign lexicons. For example: Gottcha, gotcha = got; ya, yea, yep, yup, y = yes, yeah; gotta = have to; nah, nope = no; ghey = gay; cya, cu = see ya = see you; atcha = at you; soz = sorry; CIAO = Goodbye (in Italian); nada = nothing (in Spanish); pffffff = whatever (the number of "f" represents the emotional intensity.)

2.4 Syntactic Variants

2.4.1 Syntactic Variants in Chinese Netspeak

Syntactic variants are common in Chinese netspeak like speech shift. There are several types as followed:

1) Use a noun as a verb: bai du yi xia = to search by using baidu, you kong Q wo = if you are free, contact me by QQ. Hen bao bei ta de gou gou = treat his dog as a treasure

2) Use an adjective as a verb: bu yao hei wo = don't destroy or delete me, hao hao ku yi ba = completely relax and enjoy yourself

3) Change nouns to adjectives: ni tai cai le = you have low level, talk very Clinton = be good at lying, zhe zhong biao da hen shu ben = the expression is formal

4) Convert adjectives to adverbs: kuang ai, kuang zou Nanjing, mai bao le, yan zhong tong yi

5) Inventions: meaning and class are not stable: CCTV = cheat and lies (news is false) or CCTV = money and influence (if there is enough money, CCTV can do anything for you like making you show more in Spring Festival Gala or CCTV = disobeying rules (because of forcing out and overbearing)

Grammar variations in netspeak first manifest in lexical usage, like the word "cool", which has no grammar limitations. For examples:

1) Cool pic gives the movie an sci fi feel.(used as adjective to modify nouns)

2) Its cool how they made him look kinda tough, lol, I imagined him to be a gay. (to be a noun used as subject)

3) That's cool, cos she'll be more concern about that sweatness I can offer when she's so stressed out worrying about making money.(to be an adjective used as predicative,also there is writing change to show a pretty mood)

4) How to start to cool it down? (used as a verb)

5) Take the list to bed with you.(a noun is used as a verb)

2.4.2 Syntactic Variations in English Netspeak

English netspeak syntactic variations mainly manifest by using large number of brief and incomplete ellipsis. For example:

A: Hru

B: Hi

A: Where r u frm

B: im frm ny

B: and wht abt u

B: asl (age, sex, location)

A: Eric

A: 31, u?

This is the common dialogue from nitizens and it reflects the brief and direct style of netspeak language. This is not only because of the pursuit of speed and conciseness, but also because they are in a virtual space and there is no need to talk about politeness, face, thus leading to simple and direct style. What's more, there are lots of exclamatory sentences in English netspeak to express nitizens' strong feelings.To make up the silent communication, netizens pursue the "speech-like" style like this.

2.5 Writing Variations

Writing and pronunciation are closely related; the phonetic variations frequently reflect in writing, and they have the overlapping part.

2.5.1 Writing Variation of Chinese Netspeak

There are lots of emotion icons, English and Chinese mixed acronyms and some other icons in Chinese netspeak. This expression forms are the use of the writing variation, which present such characters as wit, emotional and vague. The virtual community members of cyber space take the advantage of the advantageous features of the international networker's extending over the entire globe to express emotions and gesture language through Chinese and foreign language, digital cross usage and special symbols in order to make up the lack of words. That is emoticon.

2.5.2 Five Categories of Emoticon

The category of joy, anger, sorrow and happiness: :)smile, >_< sad, :-(anger, (^0^) cheer with hands-up;

- The category of action's expression: 8-) wearing glasses, 3-3 awakening from sleep、…@-@|||||… feeling dizzy、(⌒ - ⌒) very boring、^_^|||very embarrassed、(-_^) acting coquettishly;
- The category of personal identity:)_(fatty、8:-) enchanter、C=:-)cook、{^0~0^} grand old man;
- The category of voice tone:><@awful、:-O shout、:-@ outcry;
- The category of animal:^(OO)^ pig's head、^..^ bat、•_• panda、=^.^=kitty;

Besides, there are lots of network alphabetic words in Chinese netspeak, including those composed of Latin alphabets (including Bopomofo), even Greek alphabets or composed of characters, symbols and numbers.

2.5.3 Three Types of the Word-Formation of Netspeak

When it comes to the word-formation of netspeak, it can be summarized into three types by Wu Limei (2003) .

The first type is pure alphabets' combination, which contains several initial alphabets of English words, for example: AFAIK as abbreviation of "as far as I know"; innate English words, such as outlook, banner, cyberspace; the combination of initial alphabets and English words, e.g. "B to B" equals to "business to business"; Symbols: .com /. .net /; the monogram of Bopomofo :HSK , GB,RMB.

The second type is "monogram plus character", including several English words and characters, such as club wenhua, internet zhanlue; the combination of initial alphabets and characters: the E-mail dizhi; symbols plus characters:.com gongsi, zhonguoruanjian .net and so on.

The third is the combination of numbers and alphabets, such as B2B, 3C and so on. The forth is mixed assemblage of numbers, letters and characters, such as MP3, 3COM. For alphabetic words, Yuanxinmei (2002) considered that it had a nice expression function: the first is that it's concise, striking and image intuitive; the second is that it's playful, implicit and humorous; the third is its fashion and internationalization.

CONCLUSION

Netspeak vagueness is a kind of social variants of natural language vagueness. Through the study of netspeak semantic vagueness generation system, we can find out that netspeak using is not only restricted by the conventional language rules, but also restricted by different communication principles and pragmatic rules. It is the special communicative context that causes this. Variability is the most essential characteristic of netspeak semantic vagueness. And it is not only the nitizen's divergence strategy of netspeak language variation, but also the internal netspeak vagueness will result in the semantic variation of vague language. Therefore, compared with natural language, netspeak has the more general vagueness. Though there are some form differences between English and Chinese netspeak because of their different language and culture, they have the same dominating generation mechanism.

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