

Semantic Construction of Internet Neologisms under Conceptual Integration Theory

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Abstract

With the continuous development of modern technology, all kinds of online neologisms on social media are widely used and new words are constantly emerging. Conceptual integration theory, as one of the most common cognitive models, is widely used in various cognitive domains, plays a central role in people's learning, thinking and daily life, and has a strong explanatory power for language. This paper provides more theoretical basis for the use of Internet neologisms from a cognitive perspective, and explores the semantic construction of Internet neologisms.

Keywords

Conceptual Integration Theory; Internet Neologisms; Semantic Construction.

1. Introduction

With the popularity of the Internet and the rise of social media, the Internet has become an important platform for people's communication and expression. On this platform, people have created a large number of new words on the Internet, which usually have unique expressions and meanings, and can more accurately and imaginatively express the way of thinking and cultural characteristics of contemporary people. The popularity of Internet neologisms reflects the pursuit of language innovation and language personalisation by contemporary social groups, who have a more open, tolerant and innovative way of thinking, and thus display their own personalities and attitudes.[1] The popularity of new words on the Internet has enriched the way of language expression and promoted cultural pluralism and innovation. They reflect social change and progress, while bringing new possibilities for cultural development. However, at the same time, the widely used Internet neologisms have deviated from their original literal meanings, and the meanings of Internet neologisms are generated through people's cognitive processing process.[1] Fauconnier and Turner proposed the conceptual integration theory on the basis of psychospatial theory. Conceptual integration theory provides a cognitive framework to help us understand the process of meaning construction. It emphasises the interactions and dynamic adjustments between concepts, which is an important revelation for the study of the cognitive process of linguistic thinking and meaning. Therefore, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the conceptual integration theory provides an analytical path for us to effectively understand the meaning of Internet neologisms and help us use them appropriately, and this paper, based on the conceptual integration theory, explains the construction of meaning of Internet neologisms by using the case study method.

2. Internet Neologism

Language is a product of the social development of the times, and it keeps changing with the times. Especially in the present information age, every aspect of social life has a direct or indirect impact on the change and development of language, and more and more new words have begun to appear. On the one hand, the formation of new words reflects the change of

society, and on the other hand, the formation of new words also reflects the psychological needs of people's communication.

Internet neologisms are based on Internet applications and are the smallest online linguistic units that can be used independently.[4] Understood in a broad sense, Internet neologisms contain both technical and humanistic dimensions. From a narrow level of understanding, the technical category of network neologisms mainly refers to the borrowing of Internet technology vocabulary to express meaning, such as algorithms, AI, VR, etc.; the humanistic category of network neologisms is used to express all the special terms related to the use of the network, refers to the interaction, communication, and use of the naturally occurring, displaying the user's cultural characteristics of a kind of emerging network language in the Internet, social networking, intelligent platforms, etc., such as Taobao, Ali, etc. The development of online language in China has gone through four stages, from germination to popularity.[2] In the first stage of germination, Internet technology provides services to the society, at this time for the general public, the Internet is still a strange concept. The participants were mainly technicians, highly educated intellectuals and early game players, etc. Internet language was popular in electronic forums, Internet chat rooms, electronic bulletin boards and other internal community interactions, with technical symbols or punctuation to simulate the human facial expression as the main form, resulting in expression such as "sofa", "bench" and other special language. The second stage is the development period, with the rise of new network platforms represented by blogs and SNS, the public has gradually become the main body of Internet communication. The Internet has become an important field for information interaction and public opinion supervision, and the virtual space is connected with real life, so the content of Internet language has gradually penetrated into social topics and influenced the public sphere. Therefore, Internet language has become a new tool for the public to understand problems, express their emotions and interact with each other. Its prominent manifestation is the correlation of social hotspots, and the emergence of Internet buzzwords such as spoofs, push-ups, terriers, etc. with clear references and strange vividness. The third stage is the popularity period. After mobile social communication became a trend, mobile phones became the main tool for people to access the Internet, and microblogging emerged as a social media, giving individuals the power to comment and leave messages to groups and pulling the wind of public opinion. During the same period, the new generation of Internet featuring personalisation, interactivity and in-depth services became newly popular, the transparency of social information was enhanced, and the participation of the general public in public affairs became the norm. Along with the development of 4G, big data, cloud computing and other technologies, the rise of WeChat has opened up a new pattern of overwhelming new forms of communication. As a result, the network language with diversified contents, unconventional forms and generalised topics has become more and more popular in the society. The fourth stage is the popularity period, in which the Internet celebrity industry, e-commerce live broadcasting and short videos are gradually emerging, creating a new social scene, and the network language occupies the economic field in an active form, becoming a discursive force to reorganise social resources, prestige and benefits. Especially since the outbreak of the epidemic, due to the restriction of physical space mobility, more groups have expressed their opinions, attitudes and ideas online, and the combination of diverse interests and ideas has enriched the content of cyberlanguage. Language development depends on the process of social progress and is changeable. Internet language involves a wide range of perspectives, such as a different understanding after being stimulated by an unexpected event, an emotional appeal to a certain general phenomenon, and a desire to gain empathy and seek social relief through the Internet platform. Therefore, the vocabulary of the Internet is constantly changing and iterating, developing new connotations or extensions in the wide range of applications by social groups.

3. Overview of Conceptual Integration Theory

3.1. Conceptual Integration Theory

(1) Conceptual Integration Theory is mainly based on the psychospatial theory of French linguist Gilles Fauconnier, which was established by Fauconnier and Turner. The origin of this theory is the “Conceptual Metaphor Theory” proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980).[2] Conceptual Integration Theory suggests that the human brain activates various cognitive frameworks when comprehending discourse and stores these cognitive frameworks in working memory, and the collection of information stored in the mind forms a “mental space”. Conceptual integration is the process of constructing and integrating mental spaces in language processing, in which input information from different spaces is selectively extracted to produce emergent meaning. Two input spaces are selectively projected into a third space, a synthetic space that can be dynamically interpreted. Cross-space mapping utilises schematic structures common to the input spaces or develops other common schematic structures, which are contained in a fourth space, the so-called shared space.

(2) Conceptual Integration Network (CIN) is one of the core concepts of Conceptual Integration Theory. CIN consists of four mental spaces including: Input Space I, Input Space II, Generic Space, Blending Space and projection chain.[3] Input Space I and Input Space II provide information input from the outside world, and Input Space refers to the cognitive framework of single or multiple input concepts. Each input concept has its own structure and semantic content, and through cross-space partitioning, a number of input concepts are matched and integrated in the blending space, to form new concepts and understandings; Generic Space means that when two Input Spaces are constructed, there is a part of the same structure between them, and this structure is the generic space, which can guarantee the smooth mapping; the blending space is a space that can be dynamically interpreted, which contains the shared schematic structures extracted from the input concepts, and these shared schematic structures are developed in the composite space to form new concepts and understandings; the projection chain is the chain connecting the four mental spaces, which describes the flow of information and conversion in the process of reading integration. The cognitive subject selectively extracts part of the information from the Input Space I and Input Space II for matching, and projects the extracted similar information into the blending space by interconnecting them through the cross-space mapping. “Conceptual integration” means that human beings selectively project input information from different spaces into the blending space. In the blending space, the three-step cognitive mechanism of composition, completion and elaboration operates to form a layer-created structure with a newly created meaning. These four mental spaces are connected to each other through projections to form a conceptual integration network. Fauconnier and Turner, after examining the possibilities of various projections, proposed four main types of conceptual integration networks: mirror networks, simple networks, single-domain networks, and dual-domain networks.[3] Conceptual integration networks provide a cognitive framework to help us integrate concepts and it is important for us to understand the creativity of language and metaphor.

3.2. The Process of Conceptual Integration

Having understood the above description of the four mental spaces, to achieve conceptual integration, the concepts need to undergo the following processes: 1) Composition. Projections from the input spaces are combined to form new relationships that did not previously exist in any of the input spaces. 2) Completion. With the help of cognitive and cultural models and knowledge of contextual frameworks, a composite structure is projected from the input space into the composite space, which can be considered as a constituent part of a larger complete structure in the composite space. The pattern structure activated by the

extracted structure in the synthetic space is continuously improved and forms a larger layer-creation structure. 3. Elaboration. The layer creation space can be expanded by performing operations in the synthesis space according to its own logic. After going through the above process, the concepts of the two input spaces have been conceptually integrated, forming a new conceptual structure when we process the discourse online.[4].

The process of conceptual integration includes the following steps: 1) Transformation: In the process of conceptual integration, concepts can be transformed to change their form and nature. Such transformations can be mapped from one space to another, or transformed from one level to another, and concepts can be reconceptualised and understood in different contexts. 2) Recombination: In the process of conceptual integration, concepts can be reconfigured to form new combinations and structures. Recombination can be a way of reorganising the concepts in a synthetic space, or a way of recombining the concepts in a synthetic space. Recombination can also be a way of reorganising concepts in the input space. Through reorganisation, concepts can form new associations and meanings. 3) Adaptation: In the process of conceptual integration, concepts can be adapted to new environments and requirements. Adaptation can be achieved by adjusting the attributes and characteristics of concepts, or by reorganising the relationships between concepts.

Overall, conceptual integration is a dynamic process involving interactions and adjustments between different spaces and levels. Through the processes of combination, refinement, and expansion, concepts can form new associations and structures, which in turn lead to more complex and enriched meanings. This is of great significance to fields such as cognitive science and language comprehension research. Conceptual integration essentially reflects human cognitive network-like organisational work and describes a universal mental process, and thus can be widely applied in the field of analysing multiple linguistic phenomena such as the semantics of new words, and is an important analytical method contributed by cognitive linguistics, which is of great significance to research in the fields of cognitive science and language understanding.

4. An Analysis of Semantic Construction of Internet Neologisms based on Conceptual Integration Theory

Conceptual Integration Theory has a powerful interpretive power on language and guides people's creative thinking and activities. Internet neologisms can be interpreted through the four-space theory, thus revealing the process of psychological dynamic construction when people see these Internet neologisms.[5] The following is an analysis of several common Internet neologisms as an example to illustrate their dynamic Semantic construction process. All the mental spaces within the conceptual integration network of mirroredness share the same organisational framework and are suitable for interpreting hieroglyphic and synonymous compound words as well as harmonic variants. It is easy to see that the common structures reflected in their class spaces are shape similarity, meaning similarity and pronunciation similarity, respectively. So the Mirror Network is integrated by blending based on similarity. The two input spaces contain similar concepts.

4.1. Tearful Eyes (Simple Network)

The most basic of the conceptual integration networks is the simple network. It consists of an Input Space I containing frames and roles and an Input Space II containing values. The synthesis space integrates frames and values in the simplest way possible, and then the integration space produces a hierarchical creation structure that contains newly created meanings, but this structure is not visible in any of the input spaces alone.

The original meaning of the word "tearful eyes" provides an organisational framework for Input Space I. The word comes from Han Yu's Nanshan Poetry, which originally means tearful eyes, shedding tears to express the sadness. The reason why human beings shed tears is due to strong emotional fluctuations, pain, joy and so on. Input Space I constructs the framework that changes in human feelings will lead to tears. Input Space II has only value elements, whether it is a touching story or a tear-jerking life, which causes emotional fluctuations, resulting in the impulse to want to shed tears. Specific events correspond to emotions and produce a blending space, a space that generates new meanings, i.e. an emotion of wanting to cry about something or other. The sincere and beautiful feelings that people have, and the sympathy they feel for events, are enriched by the word "tearful", which creates a stronger resonance in people's minds, thus giving the word a deeper social meaning.

4.2. Recieve a Boxed Lunch (Single Domain Network)

In a single-domain network, Input Space I and Input Space II have different organisational frames, where one of the organisational frames of the input space projects to the synthetic space, and the other organisational frame has only a number of elements that project to the synthetic space. Obviously, the projections are unbalanced, reflecting the nature of metaphor, which means the use of one thing to illustrate another, as a way to improve the efficiency of understanding and communication.

On gaming social network platforms, we often see such pop-ups or comments: "The blogger is recieving a boxed lunch again", "I can only recieve a boxed lunch" and so on. The term recieve a boxed lunch appears in all of them. According to the theory of conceptual integration, the term "recieve a boxed lunch" is in line with the generation mechanism of single-domain networks. The semantic construction of this network neologism involves two input spaces and one blending space. Input Space I is the domain of the public's cognition of "recieve a boxed lunch". "recieve a boxed lunch" is defined as "to receive a portion of rice sold in a box". As boxed rice has the characteristics of convenient catering, it is usually rice-based with various side dishes such as stir-fried vegetables. Therefore, when you mention "recieve a boxed lunch", your mind will be filled with the sight of buying all kinds of packaged fried vegetables and rice on the street and going home, which is the fireworks that boxed meal imparts to this term. In addition, the game mechanism sets up some parts or episodes of the game, stipulating that the game ends under such settings, and such perceptions constitute the input spatial domain. By mapping across spaces, a mapping was established between the shared attributes and characteristics in both occupations. The Generic Space selects the components common to both Input Space I and Input Space II, that is, the same components such as "off the line, finished, end the game". The organisational framework in the blending space was only provided by the input space, the original organisational framework of the term "receiving a boxed lunch", and after three processes of composition, completion and elaboration, it was concluded that in the game mechanism, such as a game session or situation was also called "recieve a boxed lunch", and thus this session was constructed in the brain.

4.3. Lemon Extract (Dual Domain Network)

The Input Space I and Input Space II of the dual-domain network have their own different organisational frameworks, and both input spaces are selectively projected into the synthetic space, which draws in some of the structures from both input spaces simultaneously in its organisational framework, and then forms a layer-created structure. Lemon extract is a high-frequency term in the web platform, originally referring to a sugar-containing compound isolated from lemon juice, and also referring to stomach acid. However, its meaning has shifted considerably over the course of its use. People use it to describe people who are very fond of souring others and are jealous of them. Now it is mostly used in a self-deprecating way to

express multiple envies of others from the outside to the inside, from material life to emotional life. According to the conceptual integration theory, the word involves two input spaces. Input Space I is the frame of lemon extract, which means a sugar-containing compound isolated from lemon juice, and contains such contents as “sour”, “bitter” and “sour in the heart”. Input Space II is the network, especially in the gaming circle, the extreme fans of a particular team because of the game performance of the long life of the heart unbalanced state so as to say the acidic words, and gradually developed the life of jealousy of others, envy, jealousy, hate of the expression. The two input spaces have different organisational frameworks, one of which refers to the sour compounds in fruits, and the other refers to a class of people who can't see that others are better than themselves, who constantly find reasons to vilify others, and who speak in a very acidic manner. Emphasis is placed on a self-deprecating expression--the emotion of multiple envy of others, from the outside to the inside, from the material life to the emotional life. But in the category space both encapsulate common shared features such as sourness in the heart and sour emotions. The elements that are similar in these two input spaces are projected into the synthetic space. The synthetic space extracts the meaning of “sourness and bitterness” from input space I, and the emotion of sourness in people's hearts when they see other things that are better and more excellent than themselves from input space II, respectively. After combination, refinement, and expansion, the element of “sourness” and the element of “jealousy of others” trigger our cognitive mechanism, activate the relevant background knowledge stored in the human brain, and thus generate a new layer of creation structure and derive new meanings. The word “lemon extract” can be used to express the situation when people see someone or something better than themselves and become sour in their hearts, and can't help but find reasons to vilify others and speak in a sour manner. It means “such a person or thing makes my heart sour”. This new word in the network platform in the application process, to image the vocabulary instead of the whole sentence can save time, accurately express the netizen's state of mind, more by the majority of netizens sought after.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the popularity of network neologisms reflects the need for new cultural demands for individuality in the new era, and these network neologisms are not only linguistic innovations, but also cultural innovations, which have enriched our linguistic way of thinking, and at the same time promoted the diversified development of culture. However, the process of constructing meaning in language is a complex cognitive process that involves the operation of multiple mental spaces, so it is worthwhile to explore the understanding of neologisms and their metaphorical meanings. Conceptual integration theory provides a better way to understand the semantic processing path of vocabulary. In language learning, conceptual integration theory can help people connect new knowledge and information with the existing knowledge framework, so as to better understand and memorise new concepts; in the process of linguistic thinking, conceptual integration theory can help people integrate different ideas and perspectives to form a more comprehensive and integrated cognition; in the area of language In cognition, conceptual integration theory can help people understand and explain the meaning and use of language, and by integrating the vocabulary and grammatical rules of language with existing concepts, people can understand and express more complex meanings. Therefore, our exploration of the use of conceptual integration theory in daily life can help people understand and explain complex phenomena events by integrating different information and experiences together, which can better decipher the cognitive mechanisms inherent in language and better explain the construction of meaning of Internet neologisms. By exploring the semantic construction of Internet neologisms, the need for rapid real-time communication on the Internet can be realised, and by using a few simple words to express

feelings quickly, elicit empathy from netizens, and gain a sense of self-realisation from the group, a better understanding of the way the world works and more informed decision-making can be achieved.

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