

A Critical Pragmatic Analysis of Fans' Online Expressions

Mian Wang^{1*}

¹ School of Humanities and Law, North China University of Technology, Beijing 100144, China

*Corresponding author e-mail: 15801372523@163.com

ABSTRACT. *With the continuous development of various social media platforms and the expansion of the fan base, the fan culture has gradually entered the public's vision. Internet slang of fans is an important part of fan culture, and many current Internet buzzwords also come from it. From the perspective of critical pragmatics, this paper first analyzes the word-formation characteristics of fans' online expressions, and then critically analyzes the reasons for the popularity of fans' online expressions with the relevant theories of pragmatics. It is hoped that it can provide some reference and inspiration for the study of network language and critical pragmatics.*

KEYWORDS: *Internet Slang of Fans; Critical Pragmatics; Discourse Analysis*

1. Introduction

Henry Jenkins, a scholar of fan culture, once defined "fan" as "a person who is fanatically involved in ball games, commercial or recreational activities, who is infatuated with, admires or worships movie and television singers or sports stars"[1]. In 2005, Hunan TV's "Super Girl" caught the attention of the whole nation and swept the country. Fans began to have fan groups named after their idols. For example, "Corn(yu mi)" was the name of Li Yuchun's fans, and fan culture began to develop gradually in China.

Internet slang of fans refers to the language used by fan groups when they pursue stars on the Internet. At first, online expressions of fans were only popular within fan groups and used for communication between fans. However, with the development of the Internet and the emergence of major social media platforms such as Tieba, Douban and Weibo, online expressions of fans gradually came into the public's view, and even some words were widely used by the public. For example, the word "Center position", which is often used nowadays, comes from the Internet slang of fans.

As for the research on fans' online diction, many scholars mostly analyzed from the perspective of the word-formation characteristics of fans' online diction. For example, Chen Yiyuan divides the term "fan circle" into abbreviations, homophonic substitutions, new meanings of old words, and new vocabulary [2]; Zhang Nan analyzed the causes of the generation and dissemination of Japanese-derived loanwords, which are widely used in verbal communication among Japanese culture fans [3]; Some scholars, such as Ma Ruonan, has used relevant theories of linguistics to define the concept and scope of fans' online expressions and analyze the nature and source of fans' online expressions [4]. However, it is rare to analyze fans' online language from the perspective of critical pragmatics. Critical analysis can guide people to treat and use fans' online language correctly and promote interpersonal harmony. From the perspective of critical pragmatics, this paper first analyzes the word-formation characteristics of fans' online expressions, and then critically analyzes the reasons for the popularity of fans' online expressions with the relevant theories of pragmatics, so as to enrich the network culture and provide basis for the standardization of network languages.

2. Theoretical Basis

In the social science tradition, the "critical social theory" emerged from the research of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and the Neo-Frankfurt School, its successor after the Second World War, of which Jürgen Habermas was the most famous [5]. In his paper "Pragmatics as eaction", Jacob L. Mey, a Danish scholar, formally proposed the concept of Critical Pragmatics. In his opinion, there is an imbalance in the use of language, and pragmatics should help people to understand this discrimination and try to put an end to it [6]. He emphasized that in order to discover the various purposes of language use, researchers need to understand the speakers of the language, that is to say, pragmatics research should revolve around "Whose language?"---this question unfolds [7]. At home, in order to distinguish between pragmatic perspective of critical analysis and the analysis of system under the perspective of functional linguistics theory criticism, Chen Xinren systematically illustrates the goals of critical pragmatics, and its objects and research methods, he also points out that the goal is to carry forward the positive social pragmatic way and reveal the verbal communication in a negative or undesirable social ideas, practices, and so on, within the framework of pragmatics theory, through discourse comments [5].

As for the method of critical pragmatic analysis, Verschueren mentioned three steps: first, design a persuasive method to analyze ideology in discourse; Second, analyze relevant data through appropriate channels to strengthen the consciousness of "discourse ecology"; Third, participate in (international) communication, monitor discourse, etc [8]. Guided by pragmatics theory, Chen Xinren puts forward a clear path for critical pragmatic analysis: discourse analysis is divided into three stages. First, it is necessary to find sensitive texts, in which dominant texts can be interpreted directly, while implicit texts need to be carefully explored. Then, the characteristics of discourse are analyzed and discussed through pragmatics theory.

Through the application of pragmatic theories, such as presupposition, speech act theory, conversational implicature, face theory, etc., the context actors adapted to sensitive texts can be investigated and the implicit sensitive texts with the intention of misleading or deceiving readers can be identified. The final step is to make recommendations accordingly [9].

Inspired by the above analysis, because most of the fans' network language are words, this study will mainly adapt three steps: the first step is to analyze the main formation characteristics of fans' network language, after adopting the adaptation theory of pragmatics to make a critical analysis of the network language, an then corresponding advice is given. Its analysis path is shown in Figure 1.

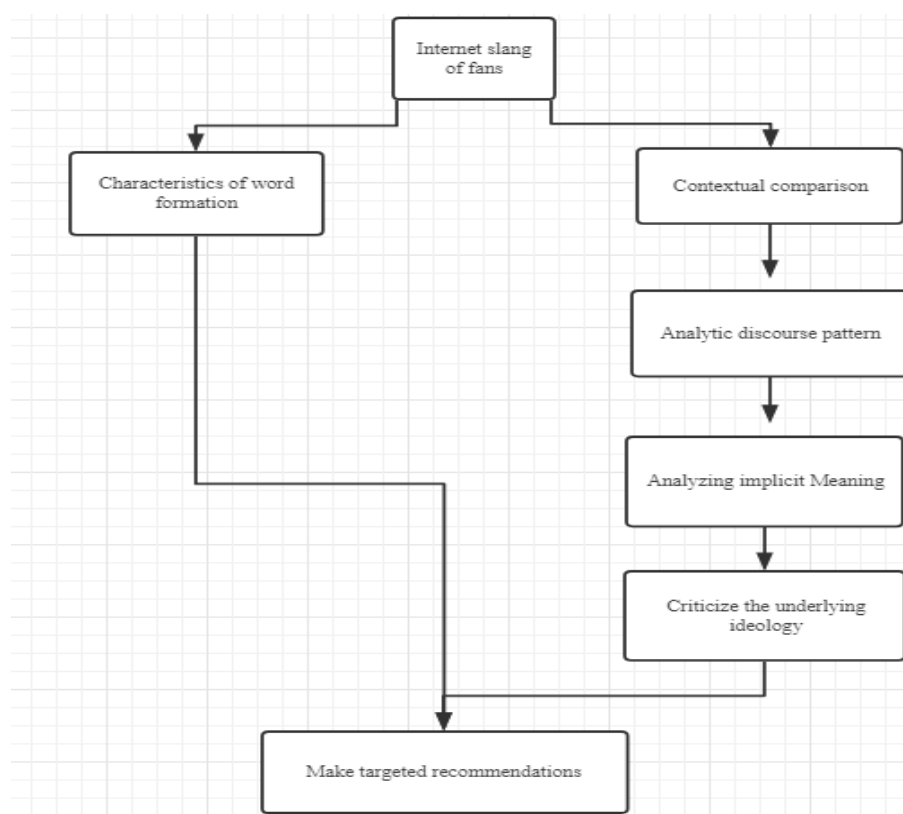


Figure. 1 Analysis mode of fans' network language

3. Word-Formation Characteristics of Fans' Online Expressions

At present, the classification of word-formation characteristics is not fixed in the research on fans' online expressions. By referring to relevant literatures and

combining with previous researches of scholars, this paper divides fans' online expressions into four categories: neologism, acronyms, coingae and loanwords.

3.1 Neologism

Neologism refers to the meaning of a word, which is used in daily life, is given a new meaning in the context of fans' online expressions. Neologism is a method often used in online expressions of fans. It makes use of the original meaning of Chinese words to expand and the inherent sound to load the new meaning, so that "old words" have a brand new meaning.

(1) Expanding of Meaning

The extension of meaning means that the extension of new meaning is larger than that of the original word. For example, "Hui Chun" has four basic meanings in Modern Chinese Dictionary: "winter goes to spring; A skillful physician; Medicines; The river is eroding again." The first meaning of the word has been expanded in fans' language to refer to an aspect of an idol that starts to change from bad to good. For example, XXX Hui Chun, (it means he has made a good appearance) recently, which makes him more and more agreeable.

The Chinese character for "lock" has seven interpretations in Xinhua Dictionary, the second of which means "to lock with a lock." In the fans' language, "lock" expands the meaning to indicate a close relationship between the two stars. For example: XXX and XXX are locked. (It means that the two persons have an intimate relationship.)

(2) Homophonic Words

Some new meanings of fans' online expressions are usually achieved through homophonic words. For example, "stewing (zhēng zhǔ)", which sounds similar to "Right Person (zhèng zhǔ)" in Chinese. By using homophonic words, the new meaning of "stewing (zhēng zhǔ)" is expanded, which refers to a certain star that fans like. For example: I declare that he is my stewing (zhēng zhǔ) from now on. (It means that I am his fan.)

3.2 Acronyms

Acronyms are phrases with longer syllables that are shortened to form shorter ones. Acronyms often appear in the online expressions of fans, which are mainly divided into Chinese acronyms and alphabet acronyms.

(1) Chinese Acronyms

Chinese acronyms are abbreviations and ellipsis of words. For example, "guan xuan" is the abbreviation of "guan fang xuan bu (official announcement)", "du mei" is the abbreviation of "du zi mei li (It means that fans just want their favorite star to develop his or her own career and don't want him or her "tied up" with others)",

such as: Let's "du mei"! (It means: "Let's do ourselves, OK? Do business seriously!!")

(2)Alphabet Acronyms

Acronyms include Chinese phonetic acronyms and English words or phrases abbreviations. For example, "jm" is the Chinese Pinyin abbreviation for "jie mei (sisters)", and "plgg" is the Chinese Pinyin abbreviation for "piao liang ge ge (pretty brothers, often used to describe good-looking male celebrities)". "Nbc" is an abbreviation of the English phrase "nobody cares", and "jss" is an abbreviation of "just so so". E.g. "How come XXX has so many shots? Please give me more footage of my plgg. I don't want to see this character which nbc".

3.3 Coinage

A coinage is a new word created according to the needs of fans who follow stars or communicate online. Such as "du wei", which are the irrational followers who just like their idols and disgust and damage others; "shi ye fen (career fans)", which are the fans who particularly concerned about idol's career planning; "da tou zu (investment group)", which means that fans form groups to rank and vote for their favorite idols; "nie li hui kui (bad feedback)", which refers that someone will be punished accordingly when he maliciously attacks another idol. For example: Among the fans, du wei is really disgusting. Don't curse other idols, you will surely have nie li hui kui (bad feedback).

3.4 Loanwords

China's fan culture is mostly influenced by the Korean entertainment industry, and many of the current expressions of fans come from the Korean fan circle. For example, the word "zou hua lu (flower road)" comes from Korea. It means to take a beautiful and smooth road and hope that things will go smoothly and good things will happen all the time. The word "mang nei" is also derived from South Korea, is the Korean "oppa" the sound of loanwords, it usually refers to the youngest member of the group in Chinese. For example: Our mang nei is so cute, please keep going the flower road.

4. Critical Pragmatic Analysis of Fans' Online Expressions

Adaptation is one of the most important theories in pragmatics, and it can also be used as a theoretical tool for critical pragmatic analysis. Therefore, this article will analyze the underlying reasons behind the popularity of fan network terms from the perspective of adaptation theory, what kind of ideology makes fans even people will use some fans network language in our daily life [5]? Since its proposal, adaptation theory has a wide range of applications and has strengthened its explanatory power for various Linguistic phenomena. "How to use communicative strategies and

means” in communication is actually to adapt to an ever-changing context, which includes Communicative Context and Linguistic context. Linguistic Context mainly refers to context; In the Communicative Context, there are three worlds: physical world, psychological world and social world. The psychological world includes the personality, emotions, beliefs, desires, motivations and intentions of the participants; Social world includes social environment, social system, customs and culture; The physical world includes the time, space and material conditions of communication [10]. This study will explore the causes of the wide spread and use of fans’ online expressions mainly from the perspective of how language users, namely fans, adapt their own language to the above three worlds in the process of online communication.

4.1 The Physical World

The characteristics of fans’ online expressions in the use process reflect the non-face-to-face nature of physical space. Fans communicate via the Internet rather than face-to-face, and this indirect communication also gives the party using bad Internet slang an opportunity to evade responsibility. For example, the use of some obscure or discriminatory words is also common phenomenon in the fan circle. When some fans slander the celebrity, they usually use the abbreviation of the celebrity’s name to intentionally fool the fans or intentionally make the fans not understand the meaning, which is also a violation of the cooperative principle. This way of communication also allows users to escape the responsibility of deliberately damaging bilateral relations or damaging the face of the others.

Another motive for using fan language is to avoid the presence of third parties in the communication process or to intentionally avoid the existence of third parties so that they cannot participate in the communication process [11]. In the final analysis, fan groups are still small groups. Different star fan groups have different "jargon", and each fan group creates its own words that can only be understood by people in the fan group, especially some obscure words, which can effectively avoid "outsiders" from joining in the communication process.

4.2 The Psychological World

The mind of seeking new ideas. The birth and update speed of fans’ online expressions is very fast. In fact, the birth of many fans’ online expressions is the result of users’ pursuit of novelty in order to convey humor. Sometimes people pursue novelty excessively and are not satisfied with using standard language to communicate, so fans’ online expressions emerge in endlessly. In addition to fans, the Internet gives people the opportunity to get in touch with novel things. Ordinary netizens naturally also have this mentality. Therefore, some words belonging to fans’ online expressions will gradually develop into popular online buzzwords.

Herd mentality. Ma Ruonan conducted a survey in 2019 with the online fan groups of idol artist Wang Junkai and Jackson Yee as the main research object,

aiming at the usage of fans' online expressions, the reasons for using them, and the communication effect. One of the survey results shows that 95.37% of fans get to know fans' online expressions through other fans' use of fans' online expressions, which is the embodiment of group effect [4]. The Sheep-Flock Effect, a term derived from zoologists who study the behavior of Flock animals in which the direction of a Flock depends largely on the direction of the leader, meaning that other Sheep follow the leader. In everyday life, this phenomenon is called herd mentality, and is often used to describe people who blindly follow others without taking a stand. The influence of conformity effect on the use of online expressions by fans is mainly reflected in the fact that fans are often influenced by opinion leaders in the fan group when communicating. Opinion leaders here play an important role in the spread of fans' online language. For example, compared with the fans composed of ordinary people, those influential figures such as "zhan jie (the managers and operators of star idol support sites)" can always get in touch with a lot of information about stars first and spread it to everyone, which to some extent also promotes the spread of fans' online expressions.

Similarly, this mentality of blindly following and seeking for new and different will also have a certain impact on the values of teenagers. Blindly following "fan leaders" and blindly participating in various "verbal battles" or some vicious competitions under their influence will, to a certain extent, lead to the occurrence of cyber violence and cultural deviation.

4.3 The Social World

Nowadays, as a part of social culture, language changes at a rapid pace. For example, network languages emerge in endlessly and are updated at a very fast speed. With the rapid development of the society, people are also more in pursuit of innovative ways of speaking. Today's society is an active and open society, which includes the renewal of various languages, the wide spread of network languages, and the constant creation of new words [11]. As a major part of Internet language, fans' Internet language is naturally influenced by its social development. In the process of communication, people will understand and digest the newly input network language and then convert it into their own reserve language, which will be used in the communication with others. At the beginning, not everyone has mastered a certain online language, but after wide spread on social media, some fans' online words will be absorbed and utilized, and then their scope of use will be gradually expanded. For example, "Center position" and other words originally used by fans online have been widely used in people's daily conversation.

However, there are still many problems and phenomena that some fans' online expressions do not conform to the language standards and norms, such as improper use of homophonic and so on. In addition, most fans of stars are teenagers in the critical period for the formation of values, which will more or less have a negative impact on the wording norms and the formation of values.

5. Use Fan Language Correctly

The need for self-identity construction and the multifaceted proliferation of fan bases has led this group to constantly interfere with or swallow other ideologies and evolve into a fierce and highly organized machine. As for its possible future direction, and the social impact it may have on a larger scale, it should not be underestimated [12]. The language used by the public can reflect the ethos of a society, so it is very necessary to regulate the use of language and the way of speaking. This paper also hopes to guide people to use fans' online expressions correctly and reasonably.

Idol-following is originally a way of entertainment for people to relieve their pressure after busy work and study. However, some online expressions of fans are aggressive and even vulgar, which may easily lead to unnecessary "name-calling" and bring bad effects to the network environment. Avoid being overly creative and blindly following the trend, and have your own judgment on everything. Avoid blindly following the public into the online "name-calling", and consciously refrain from using these terms.

It is necessary to create some online expressions of fans with positive energy. Many online expressions of fans, such as "ying yuan (supporting), zou hua lu (flower road)", have a positive impact on people, and these online expressions of fans with positive energy are also a supplement to the Chinese language. Good network language gradually enters into the Chinese language system, will also become a part of Chinese language culture, be known by future generations, and then continue to spread.

6. Conclusion

This paper first analyzes the word-formation characteristics of fans' online expressions, then critically analyzes them with the adaptation theory. Finally, it puts forward some suggestions on how to correctly use fans' online expressions, hoping to help people establish correct values and attitudes towards the application of online expressions and use them in a reasonable and standard way. According to the steps of critical pragmatic analysis model proposed by Chen Xinren and combined with the objects of this study, this paper puts forward a new model to analyze. In addition, this paper also combines the research of other scholars and summarizes the new classification of the characteristics of fans' online expressions. It provides some reference and inspiration for the study of network language and critical pragmatics, and also provides some theoretical basis for the standardization of network language. The future research can also make further discussion on the ideology reflected by fans' online expressions.

References

- [1] H. Jenkins (2016). Text poaching. Beijing: Peking University Press.

- [2] Y. Chen (2019). A brief talk on the term "Dinner Circle". AEIC Academic Exchange Information Centre(China).Proceedings of 2019 4th International Conference on Social Sciences and Economic Development (ICSSSED 2019)(Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, VOL.314).AEIC Academic Exchange Information Centre(China):International Conference on Humanities and Social Science Research. p.790-793.
- [3] N. Zhang (2019). A study on Japanese-derived loanwords used by fans group. Chinese Character Culture, no.21, p.131-134+136.
- [4] R.N. Ma (2019). A linguistic study of fans network jargons(Doctoral dissertation). Shanghai Normal University.
- [5] X.R.Chen (2009). Critical pragmatics: objectives, objects and methods. Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, no.12, p.10-12.
- [6] L.J. Mey (1993). Pragmatics as deconstruction. Social Semiotics, vol.3, no.2, p.219-230.
- [7] L.J. Mey (1985). Whose language? A study in linguistic pragmatics. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- [8] J. Verschueren (2007). Pragmatic steps to an ecology of the public sphere. International Symposium on the 10th Annual Meeting and 10th Anniversary of the Japanese Pragmatic Society, Kansai International Studies University, Japan.
- [9] X.R. Chen (2013). A study of social language from the perspective of critical pragmatics. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [10] J. Verschueren (2000). Understanding pragmatics. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [11] M.F. Sun and W.X. Wang (2017). A critical pragmatic analysis of bad network buzzwords.Literature Education (I), no.6, p.162-164.
- [12] T.Y. Xie and H.W. Zhang (2020, April). Philosophical reflection on fans culture. Guangming Daily, pp. 1A.