

Word Model Analysis of 2021 Internet Hot Word “X Zi” Under the Background of Internet Information Age

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Abstract: “X Zi” is very common in modern Chinese. As a buzzword on the Internet platform in 2021, “X Zi” has undergone syntactic and semantic changes. In this paper, the syntactic structure, derivation mechanism and semantic correlation framework of “X Zi” are studied by using the word model theory. This paper proposes that “Zi” was originally the root of the word, indicating the younger lineal relatives; Then generalize to plant and animal offspring, “lineal kinship” and “human sense” fall off; Then it further generalized to small things, and the meaning of “young age meaning” fell off and developed into “affix like”; Finally, it completely becomes “affix” and becomes “nominalization symbol”, and its meaning gradually falls off. The semantic derivation of “X Zi” structure is related to the change of human cognition, and its popularity also reflects the memetics, relevance theory, economy and analogy principles of language.

Keywords: Word Model, “X Zi”, Semantic Variation, Epidemic Causes, Social Value

1. Introduction

The world is undergoing a revolutionary change. The global information and information technology revolution is playing a decisive role in determining the direction of social change in an unprecedented way. In the Internet information age, Internet surfing has become a part of people’s life. CNCN (2022-3-25) Report that the 49th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) on March 25, 2022 outlines our network “self-portrait”: By June 2021, the number of Internet users in China had reached 1.011 billion, an increase of 21.75 million compared with December 2020, and the Internet penetration rate had reached 71.6%. [1] Internet users aged 20-29 had the highest utilization rate of online music, online video, online live broadcast and other applications among all age groups, reaching 84.1%, 97.0% and 73.5%, respectively. That is to say, teenagers play a huge role in the replacement of network buzzwords, and penetrate into all aspects of society through the spread of personal social circle, and then derive network buzzwords with the same structure representing different meanings.

“Juejue Zi” is one of the top 10 expressions on the Internet in 2021 released by the national language resources

monitoring and research center on dec 6, 2021. According to baidu Index on December 17, 2021, the average daily average search index value of “Juejue Zi” is 3198, the average mobile average search index value is 2477, and the highest peak value is 13717, which fully proves the heat and “charm” of “Juejue Zi”.

Previous studies on the structure of “X Zi” mostly started from relative words, dialect words and Buddhist literature. For example, Gao Juan, Sun Ning, Liu Haiping and Sun Zunzhang summarized the use distribution of “X Zi” structure from dialects. [2-4] Liu Lisha and Liu Wangdong found that in xiangyang dialect, “Zi” used to mean “tail” in the real sense, but now it has evolved into “leftover food”, and its meaning changes are quite typical. [5] Ren Ge and Pan Ting compared the differences between “X+ Zi” in Shanxi dialect and Beijing Dialect by taking the morphological changes of words in grammatical features as the starting point. [6] Li Junxiang focuses on a comprehensive description and analysis of the structure of “X Zi” in Buddhist texts of the Han and Wei dynasties, and makes a detailed description from the perspectives of grammar and semantics to clarify the semantic levels of “Zi”

in Buddhist texts of the Han and Wei Dynasties. [7] However, at present, few scholars have studied the semantic variation, causes and value of “X Zi” in combination with the hot spots on the Internet. Therefore, in combination with the hot spots of current events, this paper intends to use the word model theory to study the structural characteristics of “X sub” and analyze the connotation, reasons for its popularity and social value of semantic variation.

2. Multidimensional Analysis of Network Hot Word “X Zi”

Li Yuming first put forward the concept of “word model” and proposed that “word model is a variety of frames with the function of creating new words. [8] The framework is composed of two parts: ‘standard’ and ‘slot’. The standard refers to the invariable words in the word module, and the slot refers to the vacancy in the word module.” In the structure of “X-Zi” such as “Juejue Zi” and “speechless Zi”, the “X” bit is the module slot and the “Zi” bit is the module standard. Such word models include “X person”, “BROTHER X”, “sister X” and “Master X”, which are all popular words on the Network. As can be seen from the annual top ten hot words, “word model” conforms to the word-formation form of postmodern network buzzwords.

2.1. Origin and Rise of “X Child”

“X Zi” first appeared in ancient times, originally is a table of appellation semantics, one is to address respected teachers or people of high esteem, such as “Confucius”, “Mencius”, “Xun Zi”, “Mo Zi”, “Zhuang Zi” and so on; It was used in feudal times when the emperor conferred the titles of “Gong, Hou, Bo, Zi and Male”, such as “Bei Zi” and “Shen Zi”. Japan also has “X”, originally only democracy can use such a noble name, and mostly in the male names, until the taisho period, the “X” is popular with the masses, for ordinary people and communication, and quickly formed a named agitation, such as “Tianzhong Chunzi”, “Guangmo Laingzi”, “Shentian Gongzi”, etc. We find that the use of “X Zi” in ancient Chinese, or “X child” in Japanese, is a good symbol.

The Internet buzzword “Juejue Zi” comes from the village Diva bar on Baidu Tiebar, a gathering place for Taylor Swift’s fans. The bar’s fans like to add a subtitle to a sentence or a word. Zi is for use. Then, in the youth inspirational variety show “Youth has You second Season”, some fans use “Juejue Zi” to cheer for their favorite contestants, which is used to express that the idol is very cute and shortens the distance with their favorite idol. Thus, Juejue Zi has triggered netizens’ attention and discussion on network language. In the program, fans not only use “Juejue Zi” to praise and praise their idols, but also use the overlapping characters of their idols’ names and zi to address their idols. For example, Yu Shuxin’s fans affectionately call her “Xin XinZi”. Later, “X Zi” was further and widely spread because of the appearance of a female growth inspirational program “Ride the Waves Sister”. The name “X child” can deepen the intimacy between players,

shorten the estrangement caused by age and experience, and make the atmosphere of variety show more pleasant. For example, fans call actor quiet as “quiet Zi”, call actor Wan Qian as “Alizi Zi”, call host Shen Mengchen as “Chen Chen Zi”. With the popularity of variety shows, the publicity of a large number of public figures, and the public’s recognition of the way of addressing “X Zi”, “X Zi” has been widely used and spread.

2.2. Structural Characteristics of “X Zi”

In the “X Zi” structure, the change of the “X” position of the mold groove can form words with the same structure but different meanings. According to this structure, people also create more new words that meet the needs of human beings, so as to express real feelings in a lovely and self-deprecating tone. Zhang Binyu and Chen Yuan points out that “X” in the structure of “X Zi” is mostly content words such as disyllabic nouns, verbs and adjectives. [9] In the study, we found that “X” in the structure of “X Zi” roughly has the following four situations.

2.2.1. The “X” Part Is Formed by the Overlap of the Last Word in the Name of the Person

In the variety shows “Youth has You second Season” and “Sister Who Rides the Waves”, overlapping names and “Zi” are the most common. For example, Jinchen is called “Chenchen zi”, Jinsha is called “Shasha Zi”, Huang Ling is homonic called “00 Zi”, Yi Nengjing is called “Jingjing Zi”, Zhang Yuqi is called “Qiqi Zi”.

The form of “name overlap + Zi” can be used as a term of endearment for others and idols. For example, a zhihu user named “Feng and Zhizhiren” commented, “With the broadcast of the show, my love for Xinxin zi grows deeper and deeper. She is like a light that illuminates people around her.” In addition to the expression of the idol’s name, but also to express their own self-professed, the expression of an approachable, refueling attitude. Zhao Yanmei and Yang Wenquan point out that this kind of personification word model “X” has high subjectivity, strong analogy and few restrictions, so it is common in social software. [10] Common uses are:

“Relationship blogger Meimei Zi is online! Didn’t sleep baby to Lao 50 cents of money.” (Weibo user Zeni Anny, 2022-01-03).

“Knock on the blackboard! Coco Zi good skin secret big open! You have all the feedback you want!” (Weibo user “It’s your Coco ha-” 2020-07-30).

“Black eyes become fine lele Zi.” This sentence is followed by a selfie of the broadcaster, which means that the broadcaster is not in a good state recently, describing himself as a “black eye.”

“Today went to the second visit, the situation is ok, Jie Jie Zi to refueling duck, don’t worry, the best!” (Xiaohongshu APP user “Brave” 2021-11-22).

Liu Yue believes that “repeated syllables in overlapping words will stimulate people’s hearing repeatedly, increase people’s feelings, and especially show a kind of affection and compassion. [11] The use of “XX” has the effect of cute, will

make people not consciously “childish” when communicating, so as to produce a lovely affection, but also can further shorten the psychological distance between members of communication, conducive to social communication.

2.2.2. “X” Is Formed by Nominal Words

For example, “beautiful woman Zi”, “darling Zi”, “baby Zi”, “silly melon Zi”, “idiot Zi”, etc., “X” is composed of nouns, at this time the “X Zi” structure is mostly used to express intimate praise or helpless complain, fool into “silly melon Zi” can reduce the complaining tone, make the relationship more close. Such as:

“Fool Zi, how id card return meeting drop?” (Weibo user Pili Invincible Sundae PoPo 2021-5-19).

“Good morning baby Zi, today also want to grow up healthy...” (Lucky Summer 2022-01-05).

“Happy New Year’s Day! Babes Zi! New Year also want to be happy to take pictures!” (Weibo user Su Jin 2022-01-01).

“Books to time square hate less, I like a silly melon Zi, where to start learning?” (Weibo user two tigers love to dance ya 2021-12-18).

“Fool Zi ! How every time four six are so unlucky!” (Weibo user 7727048192 2021-12-18).

We can find that adding sub-words weakens the meaning of nouns and makes them more affinity. Most of the users who use these words are young users. They use the “X Zi” model to create new words all the time, and “X Zi” has strong word-formation ability.

2.2.3. The “X” Part Consists of Adjectives or Phrases

For example, “beautiful Zi”, “cute Zi”, “fierce Zi”, etc., “X” part is composed of adjectives; While “Wuyu Zi” and “Bucuo Zi” consist of an adjective phrase, which generally refers to the speaker’s evaluation after hearing some information, and the tone is strengthened after adding “Zi”. Such as:

“Beautiful woman Zi on a business trip, come and see ~” (Weibo star 2022-01-05).

“No matter, I am the cutest Zi.” (Weibo user Lwlk 2022-01-03) In this case, the cute sub-group is used as an “adjective component” to describe a blogger as very cute.

2.2.4. The “X” Part Is Composed of Monosyllabic Morphemes

For example, “Juejue Zi”, “fried fried Zi”, “XX Zi” indicates their distinct attitude and reaction. There are the following use cases for “Juejue Zi”:

“Juejue Zi is absolutely, speechless Zi is speechless, lonely son is lonely. That is to say, wherever you can use ‘Zi’, you use ‘Zi’, and you have to put three words together.” (Beijing Daily Client, June 25, 2021).

“When you just understand that the meaning of ‘immortal’ is to be envied, rather than sing the praises of the Jade Emperor and queen Mother, and ‘Juejue Zi’ is not an insult to others, but a cute expression of ‘Juejue Zi’, people have started to use the Pinyin of ‘YYDS’ -- ‘eternal god’ to replace words such as good-looking, easy to use and good. Become the ‘high praise’ of all that is good.” (China Youth Daily, July 14, 2021).

“The new osmanthus wine Juejue Zi from the pub next door is so delicious that I inhale it directly and no one can refuse it.” (Beijing Evening News, November 10, 2021).

“Technology Juejue Zi - although the network police are computer technology professionals, in addition to training a strong technical skills, weekdays must keep pace with The Times, in order to achieve a demon gao, dao Gao Zhang.” (Internet Police’s “2021 Internet Buzzwords” on December 30, 2021).

“Insight juejue Zi is impossible -- the opportunity to solve a crime is fleeting, and only the shartest insight can seize it.” (Internet Police’s “2021 Internet Buzzwords” on December 30, 2021).

“Juejue Zi” can be used to mean “great” or “awesome” in most cases, as opposed to ordinary praise.

3. Evolvement of Semantic Connotation of Network Buzzword “X Zi”

Zheng Ying mentioned that the original meaning of “Zi” is “child”, which is mostly combined with other roots to form compound words or compound words in modern Chinese, and now the meaning of Zi is somewhat vague. [12] We find that in the “X Zi” construction, “Zi” as a postposition component, can be roughly divided into five categories of semantics.

3.1. Human Descendants

“Qíwáng zhōng zǐ zhūyīng ér xiǎozǐ bìng.....” («shǐ jì»)

Here “Zi” refers to younger lineal relatives, but in pre-Qin literature, “Zi” still refers to relatives without the limitation of younger age, for example: “Zeng Zi’s mother said, ‘My son does not kill people.’” (Strategies of the Warring States) The “Zi” here refers specifically to the son.

3.2. Refers Generally to Human Beings

We speculate that “Zi” is used to refer to people from the meaning of human offspring. The meaning of “Zi” is further lifted after the age restriction, so it can be used to refer to human beings. Such as:

“Núzi shíqī bújià, qí fùmǔ yǒuzù.” («Guó yǔ»).

“Tiānshì bìxiàng, shí yǒu èr nián, bìhuò cǐtǔ. Èrsānzǐ zhìzhī.” («Guó yǔ»).

Here, the semantic characteristics of “Zi” belong to neutral, which is used to modify the female in front and the context before and after getting married. It can be inferred that the object of “Zi” of “woman” is adult female. The “Zi” in “Er san Zi Zhi ye” can be inferred as adult male according to the semantics above. Therefore, based on the above examples, we speculate that the blood kinship of “Zi” fell off during this period.

3.3. Descendants of Plants and Animals

We believe that the meaning of “Zi” refers to animal baby is generated after “Zi” is used to refer to people. Human beings, heaven, earth, animals, insects and fish all belong to all things.

At this time, “Zi” is expanded from human objects to the offspring of animals. Such as:

“Chāoyuē: ‘bùrù hǔxué, yāndé hǔzǐ.’” (《Hòuhàn shū》).

“Chéngwéi tiānshàng qílínzǐ, guòshì yānxiá cǎifēng xiān.” (《Xīyóu jì》).

“Qiányǒu dàméi lín, ráozǐ, gānsuān, kényǐ jiékě.” (《Shìshuō xīnyǔ》).

“Xīshān méizǐ shúyě. Rùcáo kěwǎng bǐ, suíyì cǎizhāi qù.” (《Zútángjǐ》).

The “Zi” in the first two sentences both indicate the offspring of animals, including two semantic characteristics of kinship and young age. The “Zi” in the last two sentences all mean the fruit of plum trees.

3.4. Small Things

“Jièjie, kě gāi nǐzhì.” (Dàn nà shǎizǐ kē) (Guan Hanqing Opera Collection).

The “Zi” here means “dice”, refers to the three-dimensional small square made of bone, wood and so on. The tiny object meaning of “child” here comes from the human offspring, which retains the semantic characteristics of “small”.

3.5. Nominalization

At this point, “Zi” becomes an affix from the content word. For example:

“Nínà nǎimāzǐ sǐjué le, yěbù shōushi shōushi nǐ, nòngdé hēiméi wūzuǐde.” (《Hónglóu mèng》).

“yuánzi dōngběi jiǎozǐ shàng, niángniáng shuōle, háijiào duōduōde zhōng sōngbǎishù.” (《Hónglóu mèng》).

The above is the change of the semantic meaning of “Zi”, but in “Juejue Zi”, “Zi” reads the sound, which is different from “Zi” with the meaning of content words, and also different from “Zi” indicating the suffix of diminutive words. This construction is usually used to express the speaker’s strong opinion about something, and “Zi” is used to reinforce the emotional color of “X”.

4. The Popular Reasons and Application Value of the Network Hot Word “X Zi”

Memetics is a new theory of cultural evolution based on Darwin’s theory of evolution. It refers to ideas or ideas that are copied and spread among people in a culture and passed down from generation to generation. Memes, as cultural genes, survive by replication and transmission. Language is the carrier of memes, which can be expressed in words, words and sentences. Imitation and dissemination are prominent features of network catchwords, which can be regarded as a kind of language meme. He Ziran emphasizes that language memes play an important role in information transmission in social interpersonal communication activities. [13] The “X Zi” construction popular in the network can be used with words representing names and attributes in different communicative contexts, which has strong word-formation ability, simple expression and easy to remember. Therefore, the “X Zi” construction is easy to

learn and use in network communication and daily communication.

In addition to memetics, the propagation of construction “X Zi” is also related to relevance theory. Relevance theory is a kind of communication theory, which is used to explain the process of ostensive and inferential communication. The success of communication must depend on relevance. This explanation is closer to the essence of human cognitive subject, which is consistent with the general cognitive psychology and the basic facts of human cognition. Tu Haiqiang and Yang Wenquan pointed out that the pragmatic relevance framework of buzzword constructions is constructed in situational context and cultural context, based on which the cognitive subject can mobilize subjective initiative in the cognitive environment and carry out semantic reasoning with minimal psychological input. [14] On the premise of meeting the requirements of frame association, the combination of “X Zi” words can find the correlation before and after the sentence by embedding variable component X continuously, so as to realize the innovation of words. “X” composite structure is relatively simple, can produce strong sex, the principle of language economy principle and so on, can indeed with the minimum during using psychological input to obtain the greatest cognitive effect, therefore, “the child” word class structure, formal based on relevance theory, by the word die batch derived semantic harmony language structure type.

The formation of “X Zi” is in line with people’s pursuit of fashion, flaunts personality psychology, is also a manifestation of “fast culture” dissemination. With the characteristics of convenience, efficiency, rapidity and productivity, Internet vocabulary occupies the mainstream position in “fast culture”, which greatly improves people’s communication efficiency and enhances the fun of communication. Yu Peiyi points out that such meme replication mainly occurs in pronunciation and vocabulary in general. Internet vocabulary is convenient, efficient, fast and productive, occupying the mainstream position in “fast culture”, which greatly improves people’s communication efficiency and enhances the fun of communication. [15] The words “Jue Jue Zi” are generally used for praise, but in rare cases, they are used for satire. More praise and harmonious mutual praise on the Internet are also conducive to purifying the Internet environment, reducing conflicts and helping the world achieve harmony.

5. Conclusion

Based on the model theory of network popular words “X” structure, semantic meaning variation, popular reasons and value are discussed in this paper, the study concluded that “X” structure “Zi” changes associated with human cognitive change, reflects certain social phenomenon, the popularity of “X” and the mode of theory, relevance theory, language economy principle and so on. Language and society complement each other. From the phenomenon of network buzzwords, we can explore the nature of the development of social cognition.

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