

Language Contact and Chinese Character Formation in Modern Times

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Abstract: The transition of modern Chinese from classical Chinese to classical Chinese, vernacular, loanwords and other multi-level language practice interaction made modern scholars and creators deeply understand the Chinese ontology, which is the language background of modern character creation behavior and practice into people's vision. The analysis of language contact and character formation in modern Chinese can help us understand that modern Chinese is not only the continuation of traditional Chinese characters, but also the continuous absorption and re-creation of foreign culture. This paper preliminarily explores the relationship between the phenomenon of modern word formation and language contact, and further investigation of this problem can help us to understand the fact of language evolution in the course of the development of modern Chinese.

Keywords: Language contact; Modern Chinese; Character formation

1. Study the origin

During the evolution of modern Chinese to modern Chinese, there are many important problems worthy of attention. Due to the rapid changes in the political, economic, cultural, diplomatic and other important fields of modern Chinese society, the reference of foreign languages and the emphasis on the spoken dialects in the consistence movement, the language contact and language interaction environment of modern Chinese have undergone unprecedented changes. Thus, it makes the transition from classical Chinese to classical Chinese, vernacular, loanwords and other multi-level language practice interaction. The influence of various factors involved in this process on Chinese has been studied in different degrees from phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, rhetoric and so on.

In terms of the form of Chinese language, people's consensus is that because of the relatively stable formal structure of Chinese characters, Chinese word creation is more justified than word creation. Modern Chinese is the transformation of Chinese from classical Chinese to vernacular, and the transformation of classical Chinese to vernacular is the transformation from monosyllabic words to two-syllable words and multi-syllable words. Therefore, the act of making characters is a very rare phenomenon, and the phenomenon of making characters is also a field that few people pay attention to.

This paper explores the phenomenon of character formation in modern Chinese from the perspective of language contact. Modern Chinese language contact can be divided into external contact and internal contact. External contact refers to the contact between Chinese and other languages, including the contact with other national languages. Internal contact refers to the interaction between different dialects within Chinese.

2. The problem of Chinese character formation in modern times has come into focus due to language contact

Almost all the active scholars and creators in modern times have rich practice of language contact. The practice of language contact includes studying abroad in the target language country, reading and translating foreign language works, reading and writing classical Chinese works, listening and speaking the native dialect, reading and writing the vernacular, and so on. These language contact contexts are diverse, including mandarin context, dialect context, foreign language context, Shanghai Pidgin language context, Hong Kong English context, classical Chinese writing context, popular vernacular writing context, and Chinese and foreign bilingual writing context when living abroad. In the process of language contact, these active scholars and creators had a strong ontological

perception of the form and expression of language, especially through the comparison between Chinese and other languages. This enabled modern scholars and creators to re-understand the Chinese language from an unprecedented perspective, and even dared to break the virtue of “respecting characters and paper” in the traditional Chinese context. Introduce the problem of word formation into people’s vision.

The problem of Chinese character formation comes into focus because of language contact. Among the modern scholars and creators who pay attention to the phenomenon of character making, there are Zhang Binglin, Yan Fu, Liu Bannong, Qian Xuantong, Li Jinxi, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, etc. Their common characteristic is that they have from private school education to modern school education, to overseas study, and then to return home to engage in educational work experience; All have academic experience from generalists to specialists, from which they learn both Chinese and Western. They received traditional language education such as rhetoric, classical meaning, exegesis, textual examination and phonology from private schools, and received foreign language and culture education during their stay abroad. Due to the comparison and reference of contact with other languages, they have different linguistic cognition and experience of Chinese ontology from traditional linguistics.

The separation of linguistics from philology is a necessary stage in modern Chinese when language contact is intensive and frequent. As far as Chinese characters are concerned, whether Chinese characters can be created is produced in language contact. Linguists are concerned with the creation of characters for the reform of writing. In his book 尙, Zhang Taiyan first distinguishes between “using characters” and “creating characters”, and believes that characters can be created from the perspective of the need of translating new concepts. “The main method of Chinese corresponding to new concepts is to create characters”, if not new characters, new things can only borrow the old name, difficult to distinguish. Need to make words or thousands. “Choose the key and make words for it, then you can do it.” Li Jinxi pays attention to the problem of character creation from the perspective of the development trend of Chinese language. He believes that after the realization of “new Pinyin character system” in Chinese, Chinese characters will be eliminated, and new Chinese characters will be unnecessary. According to Hu Shi, dialect literature has two major difficulties. One is that there is no fixed word for the square sound, and the other is that the square sound has no word. Hu Shi believes that it is necessary to create new characters to solve the difficulties of dialect literature.

The Zhou brothers held a negative attitude towards the phenomenon of character creation. Lu Xun called the modern character maker “New Cang Jie”, and Zhou Zuoren called the modern character maker a “strange phenomenon”. In 1925, Lu Xun said in an article titled “Wen Wenzhi” : “Many Chinese chemists can also be new Cangjie.” I think if I use the original text, I will save the effort of making words.” In 1934, Lu Xun said in “Foreign Language Talks” : “Up to now, China is still producing new characters. However, hard to do new Cangjie..... All have made strange words, and all in vain.” In 1926, Zhou Zuoren mentioned in his article “Offending Characters” that Chinese Western medicine created a new character, calling the uterus “openings” next to the word “palace”, and this behavior of creating characters to avoid taboo is a “strange phenomenon”.

3. The phenomenon of character formation in modern Chinese resulted from language contact

The external contact of language refers to the contact between Chinese and other languages. New characters appeared in modern Chinese due to the language contact in the process of the eastward spread of Western learning. The translators of the Jiangnan Manufacturing Bureau represented by Xu Shou and Fu Lanya in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China created a batch of new characters as the names of elements, such as calcium, magnesium, manganese, molybdenum and so on. In 1900, Du Yaquan founded Yaquan Magazine, the first Chinese translation of the element Ar “argon”, thus creating a Chinese naming method for gas form elemental elements, the original light gas, healthy gas, green gas changed to hydrogen, oxygen, chlorine; Later discovered helium, nitrogen, fluorine and other gaseous elements are also based on the Chinese name of “argon” to create a new Chinese character.

Liu Bannong coined the word “she” in 1920 while studying in London, England. He wrote “The Problem of the word” She “in the supplement of” Current Affairs New Times “, explaining the rationality of “there is a third feminine pronoun” in “Chinese characters”. In his new poem “Teach Me How to Miss Her”, he uses four words “she” in just four short verses.

Modern dialect characters are the result of the internal contact of language, that is, the interaction between different dialects in Chinese. Hu Shi took Han Bangqing’s “The Example of Flowers on the Sea” as an example, and believed that in dialect literature, “there are only those who have sounds but no characters.” If you say “don’t want”, write “don’t want”. Lu Xun coined the dialect word “獠”. In Lu Xun’s Hometown, “holding a steel fork in my hand, I tried my best to stab a 獠, but the 獠 twisted his body and ran away from his crotch.” In a letter to Shu Xincheng in 1929, Lu Xun said: “The character ‘獠’ was created by me according to the voice

spoken by the villagers, and it is pronounced like ‘Zha’. ... Now that I come to think of it, perhaps it was the badger.”

4. Types of Chinese characters in modern times

There are different types of character formation in modern Chinese. The most common type is the combination of Chinese and Western pronunciation and meaning of new characters, which is due to the need of pronunciation and meaning. This situation is also due to the need of foreign new knowledge translation, mainly chemical name words and medical name words.

The new words produced by the need of syllable expansion in phonetic contact can be called phonological words. With the input of foreign languages and cultures, many new syllables have been introduced into Chinese, so it is necessary to create characters to expand the phonetic system and ensure that the new syllables can be accurately expressed.

The new characters produced by the need of consistency between speech and text can be called phonetic characters, mainly dialect characters. The importance of spoken language is highlighted in the unanimous voice of speech and text, and the newly created characters are different from the traditional fake characters. The modern phonetic characters are the demands of individual expression under the influence of language contact.

Language contact has a profound influence on the phenomenon of modern Chinese character formation, and the increase of language contact leads to the expansion of the consciousness of Chinese character structure. The influence of language contact is not only limited to the level of words and symbols, but also has a profound impact on people’s way of thinking. Language contact leads to the evolution of language habits and thus makes the expression of Chinese more flexible and diversified. Further investigation and combing of this problem can help us to understand the invisible facts in the development process of modern Chinese to modern Chinese.

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