Research on the Use of Network Language in Chinese Government Microblogs

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The emergence of government microblog not only widens the channels for the people to participate in politics, but also is of great significance for the government to understand public opinion and promote the process of political democratization. In recent years, the frequency of network language in Chinese government microblog has gradually increased. Taking the “Beijing release” official microblog as an example, this paper discusses the characteristics of network language, and puts forward some suggestions on the use of network language in government microblog: in terms of syllables, network language below three syllables should be selected to meet the requirements of short length of government microblog; In terms of part of speech, network terms such as nouns, verbs and adjectives can express emotional attitude and value judgment; In terms of emotion and style, emotional attitude forms such as intimacy, love and respect are selected. In addition, the norms of network language in government microblog can not be generalized. We should not only pay attention to the expression effect, but also set foot in multiple disciplines and fields.

Keywords: government microblogging, network language, regulation

Introduction

In recent years, media discourse has received increasing attention from the academic community, which is not only a reflection of reality but also an important part of promoting social development (Xin Bin et al., 2013), and the continuous development of Internet technology has greatly enriched the type and content of media language and reflected some characteristics of the network. In this paper, we will examine the use of network language in government microblogs, starting from the very popular microblogs nowadays, and propose relevant usage strategies accordingly.

Definition and Development Status of Government Microblogs

Government microblogs, mainly referring to microblogs set up for public affairs on behalf of government agencies and officials, can be divided into two categories according to the subject of publication: one is the government microblogs of official government agencies, including the government at all levels, the Party Committee, the National People’s Congress, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the People’s Procuratorate, the People’s Court and other agencies, such as the Central Committee of the Communist

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Youth League and the Supreme People’s Procuratorate. The microblogs are opened by individual government officials, such as Ye Qing, deputy of the National People’s Congress and deputy director of the Hubei Provincial Bureau of Statistics. The purpose of government microblogs is to collect opinions, publish information, serve the public, communicate with the public, and establish a communication platform for citizens to participate in political life and promote the process of political democratization and social construction. In addition to the simplicity of microblogging, the diversity of users, the fragmentation of content, and the timeliness and efficiency of dissemination, government microblogs also have their unique characteristics: high authority, systematic and unique functions, regional culture, and interaction in asking questions about politics, and they have gradually formed a relatively complete system.

At the end of 2009, the first government microblog opened by a local government in China, Hunan Taoyuan government website, brought government microblogs into the public eye. The year 2010 was called the first year of government microblogging, and the number of registered users of government microblogs increased dramatically, and government microblogs entered an era of rapid development. According to the Report on the Impact of Government Microblogs in 2020 released by People’s Daily Online, by the end of 2020, there were 177,437 government microblogs certified by microblogging platforms, including 140,837 official microblogs of government agencies and 36,600 microblogs of public officials. The forms also continue to develop and innovate, gradually integrating various expressions such as text, pictures, videos, motion pictures, links, interactive games, VR special effects, mobile live streaming and other functions, reflecting the characteristics of multimodality. In addition, the matrix management model consisting of government microblogs at all levels and functional departments breaks down the barriers of departments and sections within the system, which helps solve practical problems, optimize administrative processes, improve administrative efficiency and address administrative costs. Therefore, government microblogs have made certain development in terms of quantity, expression and management mode, and have maintained a good momentum of development.

The Use of Network Language in Government Microblogs

Definition and Characteristics of Internet Language

Shi Chunhong (2010, pp. 70-80) points out that network language refers to the language produced and used on the Internet, and there are two understandings, broad and narrow. The broad understanding refers to various forms of language used in the field of online communication, which mainly includes two major categories: first, specialized terms and special terms related to the Internet, such as broadband, domain name, mouse, virus, browser and netizen, cyber cafe, hacker, virtual space, information highway; the second is the communicative terms used by netizens in chat rooms and online forums. The narrow understanding mainly refers to the latter, which is also the research content of this paper. Network language is regarded as a kind of social dialect in the information age, and Internet users constitute the main body of using this kind of language.

According to Sun Mingqiang (2009, pp. 20-27), the author summarizes the characteristics of Internet language into the following aspects:

(1) **Topicality and timeliness.** Temporality is the most significant feature of network language. Internet language is used by Internet users or introduced to the Internet, and has its own time period of popularity. Some
Internet languages have entered the general vocabulary because of their powerful generalization and expressiveness, such as géili.

(2) **Innovation and producibility.** In terms of the method of generating network language, the vast majority of them are created, and the expressions did not exist before or were not widely used; there is another category of network language that existed before, but after being transformed by Internet users, other meanings were attached. In addition, some word modules or phrase modules with strong ideographic ability are formed, such as XX, what do you think?

(3) **Simplicity.** Simplicity is a distinctive feature of network language, such as “88” for bye and “666” for good performance in activities. There are also many network languages that are derived from reduction, which are loved by Internet users because of their ease of input and high generality.

(4) **Entertainment.** The freedom of the Internet environment, the lag of regulation and the public’s purpose of using the Internet have led to the production and dissemination of network language with a strong color of entertainment or even parody.

**Network Language in Government Microblogs**

From a stylistic point of view, the microblogging language is the subordinate of the network language, so government microblogs are bound to have the characteristics of network language and also reflect the authority of government agencies. However, due to the short time of emergence and the lack of usage norms, some problems have arisen in the development of government microblogs. Sun Zhongliang (2013, pp. 36-40) summarizes as follows: losing the attention of netizens due to official phrases and clichés, encountering cold treatment from netizens due to not being able to speak, and losing the attention of netizens due to not being able to speak. In the microblogging world, the positive official words are not listened to, and the negative criticism spreads thousands of miles, highlighting the defects and failures of mainstream propaganda. Therefore, using the network language well can bring the distance with the people closer and truly play the role of government microblogs.

In this paper, the top ten Internet languages from 2012 to 2020 released by the Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission, as well as the network language with high frequency that we found in my reading, were selected as the corpus of Sina Microblog “Beijing Publishing” from its inception to the end of 2020, and their frequency of occurrence was counted in the following table.

| Ranking | Network language               |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| 1       | Positive energy                |
| 2       | Gelivable                      |
| 3       | Pro                            |
| 4       | Thumb up                       |
| 5       | Yes or no                      |
| 6       | Gaining new knowledge          |
| 7       | Awesome                        |
| 8       | large and luxurious            |
| 9       | Hold                           |
| 10      | What do you think              |
By analyzing the above network languages, we noticed that they have certain commonalities in word meanings, especially in accompanying meanings, so I adopted the viewpoint of Zhang Zhiyi and Zhang Qingyun in their book *Lexical Semantics* for the microstructure of meaning positions for analysis. The book divides word meanings into base meanings, which are the basic meanings, and accompanying meanings, which are meanings other than the basic meanings, which can enhance and strengthen the expression function of language, which is the reason for the popularity of network language.

By analyzing the above network language, we can see that in terms of the number of syllables, there is one monosyllabic network language, three bisyllabic, five trisyllabic and one over trisyllabic. In terms of lexical nature, 2 are nouns (including pronouns), 4 are verbs, 3 are adjectives, and 1 is a small sentence; in terms of mood accompanying meaning, 7 are positive, and the remaining 3 show the emotional attitude of fondness, intimacy, and modesty; in terms of image accompanying meaning, 4 have dynamic images. As network languages, they are all widely spread by virtue of the medium of network, and they all have the style and meaning of network corpora, and they also have been appearing in the government microblogs since they were created, which have certain universality.

The main subjects of government microblogs are government agencies or officials, and the recipients are the general public. The contents of the releases are mostly policy information and related interpretations, or life service information and historical and humanistic propaganda, which improve the timeliness of government and public communication, get rid of the lag of traditional methods, improve the efficiency of government agencies, and help government agencies form a good image among the public. At the same time, the open and entertaining environment created by the Internet makes it impossible for government microblogs to communicate with the public in a traditional, serious and stereotypical way. As the democratic process continues to advance, the public is calling for a more equal status, and network language is facilitating communication and winning the attention and recognition of the public. For example, the phrase “yes or no” at the end of a sentence reflects a consultative tone, changing the traditional language of government affairs from a more formal one to a more lively one.

**Analysis of the Effect of Network Language in Government Microblogs**

The following two government microblogs containing the above web language were selected by the author for analysis. 

(1) 【# Dialogue on old brands in the capital # Micro Interview: Preview】 Pro, do you want to hear the legendary stories behind old brands in the capital? Do you remember the good memories you had with old brands? On October 30 (Thursday), 15:00-16:00, @BeijingPublishing @BeijingCommercialCommission invites leaders, experts and representatives from the Municipal Commercial Committee and Beijing Old Brands Association to be our guests for micro-interviews. Come and ask questions!

The above-mentioned government microblog begins with the word Pro and addresses the people who read this microblog, bringing them closer to the readers and eliminating the serious and high-minded feeling of traditional government information. This reflects the change of the role of government agencies from decision maker to service provider, strengthens the connection between the government and the public, and further promotes public participation in social governance. In addition, the microblog also set up a “Ask the guest a
question” button to make the interaction more convenient and smooth, so that the relevant suggestions can be conveyed in a timely manner, and truly for the people to use.

(2) 【The city’s obstetricians are in short supply】 With the adjustment of maternity policy, the demand for maternal and child health care is increasing dramatically. Although the city’s obstetric services can meet the demand, but obstetricians “hard work, income is not high”, facing a shortage of successors. There are views that major general hospitals should give more support to obstetricians in terms of economic treatment and further training, and give them a good space for development in order to attract more medical students to choose obstetrics. What do you think?

The last sentence of the above example uses “what do you think” to ask questions and solicit opinions. It changes the shortage of “talking about itself” and effectively includes the public in the discussion of the issue, reflecting public opinion in the decision-making as much as possible and responding to the central government’s policy of focusing on the wisdom of the people. This microblog post focuses on the current problem of insufficient obstetrician backup, which concerns every family. The “What do you think” is more like the words used in daily life to solicit opinions, promoting effective interaction on the basis of the description of the phenomenon, and combining with the comment function of microblogs to allow full discussion of the opinions of netizens, and the blogger selecting representative views to reply, forming a complete exchange and interaction. Such a format is conducive to the understanding of the grassroots by governmental organs, and the policies formulated on this basis will be more in line with the people’s demands, and will play an important role in alleviating social conflicts and promoting social development.

Countermeasures for the Application of Network Language in Government Microblogs

Micro-use Countermeasures

In terms of the number of syllables, government microblogs should try to choose web language with a short syllable count, because the number of words in microblogs usually cannot exceed 140 characters, and readers are used to reading short texts, so government microblogs should be concise. The number of syllables of the above-mentioned frequent network languages does not exceed 4 syllables. For some powerful Internet phrases, such as “my buddies and I are stunned”, netizens extracted some of the “buddies” with intimate emotional accompaniment, which became the common Internet language in government microblogs.

In terms of construction, government microblogs should try to use small sentences of network language. The specific construction is based on the expression effect, using nouns, verbs, adjectives and other network terms that are good for expressing the speaker’s emotional attitude and value judgment. As the spokesperson of the party and government organs, the attitude of government microblogs can be regarded as official and authoritative. Therefore, when choosing network language, we should choose that are conducive to strengthening communication, interaction and guidance, such as gelivable.

In terms of sentiment accompanying meaning, government microblogs should use network language with intimacy, love, respect, modesty and other accompanying meanings as much as possible, or forms rich in positive meanings, in order to create a cordial and equal communication environment and a relaxed atmosphere, which can make the release and explanation of policies smoother. In different contexts, some negatively colored
network language can produce new affective accompanying meanings, so it is applicable to government microblogs, and it is also worth our attention to them in terms of their practical effects.

Through the analysis of high-frequency Internet language, we believe that words or meanings with image accompanying meanings are mostly beneficial to each other, and can make government microblogs more vivid, such as pro, thumb up, awesome. Therefore, the use of suitable network language with image accompanying meaning can make government microblogs present in a more concrete and intuitive way, and give readers a real sense of live with multimodal forms such as pictures and videos.

Reflections on Macro-normativity

With the continuous enrichment of linguistic facts and the deepening of language research, our view of language norms is also evolving. Dong Kun (2018, p.141) proposes three necessities for language norms to implement the principle of flexibility: first, language phenomena are complex, and beyond the large number of general cases, there are often a few special cases that need to be taken care of. Second, the linguistic life of society is fluid and evolving, so the norms themselves need to keep pace with the times and be constantly adjusted. Third, the specification of language is an academic and professional task, which needs to be done by the public and experts and scholars, which inevitably has different opinions, and it may be difficult to make a ruling for a while, so it also needs to leave some room for flexibility. Diao Yanbin (2021, p. 5) points out that, looking at 70 years of language regulation, there are two prominent problems: one is excessive regulation, and the other is the lack of regulation, the former refers to rigid standards, and the latter refers to a certain degree of confusion or even loss of control in the use of language and writing in society. The problem of regulation of network language reflects both of these points. Therefore, in the face of the complex use of network languages, we should not simply adopt a “one-size-fits-all” approach, but should establish a flexible and developmental view. On the one hand, we can select network languages that have been used for a long time and are used more frequently according to the usage situation, and include them in tools, or officially publish and explain representative network languages, such as Chinese Internet Language Dictionary and Xinhua Network Language Dictionary, the inclusion of the word gelivable in the Modern Chinese Dictionary, and the annual Chinese Language Inventory, all play a role in promoting and popularizing. On the other hand, the principle of flexibility does not mean that it should be allowed to develop at will, but should be guided to a certain extent, especially to ensure the authority of government microblogs.

In terms of semantics, network language is more complex and diverse, with everyday words given new meanings, derivations of the semantics of network language, the creation of new words, and the combination of English and Chinese, so the semantics are very complex and should be chosen carefully when used. Government microblogs are the voice of government departments, and they are also an important means to enhance the credibility of government organs and shape the image of government departments, so they should not use network language as freely and heavily as ordinary users, and they should not use insults and other network language that reduce the credibility of the government, which is why the above-mentioned high-frequency network language shows a high consistency in semantics. Most network language have a short life cycle, and even some of them tend to recede in the year they appear. Therefore, when selecting, it is important to choose according to semantics, not only the conceptual meaning, but also the color meaning, corporal meaning, and style
meaning in the online environment. Government microblogs are responsible for publicizing government affairs and guiding public opinion, while maintaining a close interactive relationship with the audience, so that they can not only express and communicate smoothly using network language, but also guide netizens to establish the correct three views, promote and carry forward positive energy, and promote social progress, showing a silent effect.

In addition, the network language in grammar and rhetoric also reflects the characteristics of extraordinary. In the face of these situations, we should face them with a tolerant attitude. The rigid view of language in the past is inappropriate in the face of the rapidly developing language facts. Therefore, we should change our concept from rule-based to expression-based, focus on the fundamental properties of language as a communication tool, and give full play to the significance of government microblogs as a bridge between the government and the people, so as to improve the effect of communication and promote the efficiency of government departments.

At this stage, with the continuous enrichment of network language and the continued deepening of related research, the understanding of related norms has also been deepened. Zheng Yuanhan (2007, pp. 38-45) points out that there are two kinds of norms of nature at the language level: agreed norms and explicit norms. Network language is in the midst of rapid mutation and change, and its normative work also needs to be constantly revised as the language changes. This is not simply a matter of description, but of having something to evaluate, guide, and recommend, and government microblogs can serve precisely these purposes. Language planning have a certain lag, and this deficiency is magnified in the face of rapidly evolving network language. Language change and standardization work are opposites, and the two work together to promote healthy language development and keep the truly vital network language as an organic component of the language system. Li Yuming and Wang Min (2020, pp. 1-11) point out that network language life is a unique linguistic life with its own operational characteristics and language use features, and that the online media is still undergoing rapid development and change. Therefore, it cannot be simply regulated by the established rules of real language life and trimmed to fit the shoes. In particular, we should pay attention to the “exemplary,” “bottom-up,” “developmental,” and “domain” characteristics of the network language in government microblogs. It is worth mentioning that the network language in government microblog should pay attention to its characteristics of “demonstration”, “bottom-up”, “development” and “domain”, combine language norms with communication effects, pay attention to the correlation law between society and language, and analyze it from multiple disciplines and fields. Li Yuming (2015, pp. 3-11) divides language life into three categories: macro-linguistic life, meso-linguistic life, and micro-linguistic life, in which network language can be attributed to the “domain linguistic life” in the meso-linguistic life. Different domains of language life have their own characteristics, and their language regulation should be analyzed in a specific way, and a “cyber linguistics” should be established for the rapidly changing characteristics of network language. Shi Chunhong (2010, pp. 70-80) points out that if there is a need for a Weblinguistics, it should be studied in terms of the linguistic and non-linguistic values of Web languages. When planning, it is equally necessary to look at the laws of language development itself as well as other disciplines and fields side by side, combining a dynamic and flexible view of language in order to truly promote the healthy development of government microblogs and web languages.

As the influence of network language continues to expand, we should adjust our view of language regulation and analyze the characteristics of the online environment, not only from a linguistic perspective, but also in
relation to other disciplines and fields. As government microblogs connect government agencies and the people, they should not only use network language to bring them closer to their readers and to communicate with them, but also play a role in demonstrating the use of network language through the carrier of government microblogs, moving from rigid regulations to flexible guidance.

**Conclusion**

From the perspective of language planning, not only government affairs microblogs, but also other fields should be treated with flexibility and tolerance. The expression effect should be regarded as one of the important reference dimensions of language planning, and at the same time, it also should be faced from the height of the subject. The rapid development of language changes and the establishment of network linguistics are both necessary and feasible. It is of great significance to the healthy development of the language for the rational use of network languages.

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