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Dynamic Categorization of Semantics of Fashion Language: A Memetic Approach

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Abstract

Categories are not invariant. This paper attempts to explore the dynamic nature of semantic category, in particular, that of fashion language, based on the cognitive theory of Dawkins' memetics, a new theory of cultural evolution. Semantic attributes of linguistic memes decrease or proliferate in replication and spreading, which involves a dynamic development of semantic category. More specifically, it is committed to unveiling the dynamic categorization of semantic category of fashion language through analyses of different lexical memes, sentence memes, and discourse memes. It is found that: (I) the replication and spreading of linguistic memes are closely related to the dynamic categorization of semantics, i.e., the stability of semantic categories is maintained by the replicability of memes, and the dynamic nature of semantic categories is determined by the evolution tendency of memes; (II) the underlying working mechanisms for meme variation and mutation are metaphor and metonymy; (III) how memes replicate and vary plays an important role in dynamic categorization of semantics of fashion language.

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1. Introduction

Semantic categories are categories constituted by semantic attributes of words, sentences, or discourse (Liu & Liu, 2005). Semantic categories are characterized by both static and dynamic features, which have become a new perspective of research on semantic category. Linguistic memes and their replication in spreading aroused great interests amongst scholars after He and He (2003) first introduced memetics into China. Characteristics of memes, their spreading mechanisms and the roles they play in language imitation and communication have been investigated (Yu, 2016). Semantic attributes of linguistic memes decrease or proliferate in replication and spreading, which involves a dynamic development of semantic category. In the case of fashion language, which is a typical changing meme whose replication and spreading are accelerated by Internet, its semantic category is changing constantly due to contextual variations and differences in emotional input of the host (He, 2014). This paper attempts to explicate dynamic categorization of semantics of fashion language from the perspective of memetics through a case study of Chinese fashion language. The study primarily centers around: (I) how dynamic categorization of semantic category of popular memes has been achieved; (II) how dynamic development of semantic category of fashion language varies with fashion language, as a strong language memes, and replicating and spreading in different ways. By answering these two questions. We try to explicate the relationship between language memetics and dynamic categorization of semantic category.

2. Theoretical Frame'work

Memetics, as a new theory of cultural evolution, is based on Darwin's (1976) theory of evolution. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, meme is the basic unit of culture and spreads by non-hereditary means, especially imitation. Dawkins (1976) argues in *Selfish Genes* that genes are the basic unit of biological evolution, and replicators are the ancestors of life. They survive by constantly replicating themselves. As an organism, human is only the host of genetic inheritance and reproduction. Dawkins (1976) thinks that there are memes in culture, and they work like genes. Memes are duplicative and evolutive. Replication and evolution of linguistic memes involve varying linguistic levels from morpheme to discourse.

According to He (2014), memes can be categorized into two types in terms of different frequencies of language spreading, namely, strong memes and weak memes. Weak memes usually get very few opportunities for imitation, which are easily forgotten by people and therefore often disappear by themselves. Strong memes are further divided into two categories: (I) stable memes, such as basic vocabularies and grammatical structures of the language; (II) variable memes, such as hot words, slogans, phrases, lyrics, advertising words, film and television dialogues, sentences in literary works, and some popular discourse in a particular period of time in society. These memes may be replicated and transmitted relatively steadily at beginning, but their spreading frequency and mode will vary due to switching of intention in host, differences of emotional input, and changes of context. Most of fashion languages belong to strong variable linguistic memes.

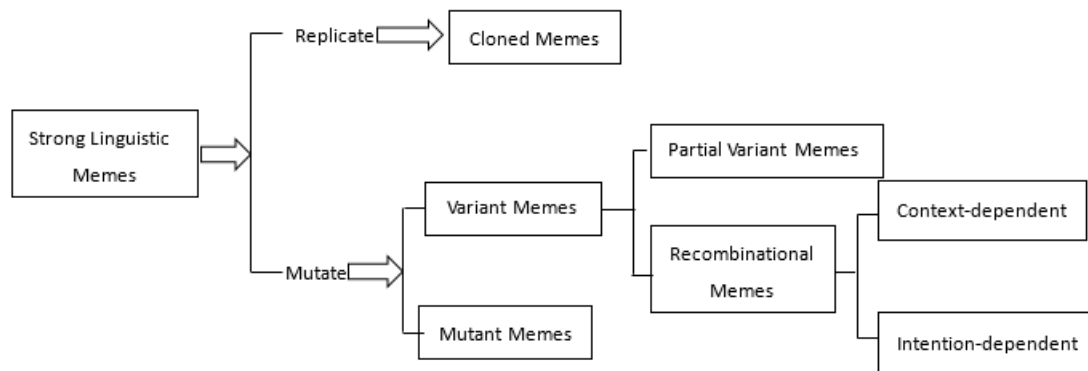


Figure 1

Classification of Strong Language Memes

We divided the strong variable language memes into three categories in terms of different ways of spreading and variation: Cloned Memes, Variant Memes, and Mutant Memes (Figure 1). The content of the boxes represents the classification of strong language memes, and the double arrows represent the development or differentiation of memes. As shown in Figure 1, most memes go through the stage of being ‘cloned’ first. In the early stages of spreading, probably because of its novelty and applicability, the memes will be very popular and fully replicated. After a period of time, these memes will be different. A small part of them remain intact and continue to be cloned and transmitted. Because they are usually strongly affirmed and propagated by the authority, they can be fully catered to the psychological intention of people as the host of information, and applied to various contexts. These memes are cloned meme. While the other memes are differentiated into variant memes and mutant memes.

According to He (2005), variant memes often replicate the same or similar form or content of information representations in communication, including the creation and improvement of memes by language communicators. In other words, memes make use of hosts’ behaviors to make themselves replicate and spread. Variant memes can also be divided into two types: partial variant memes and recombinational memes.

Partial variant memes are partial variations in language per se in order to adapt to different contexts. The recombined memes are mainly due to the switching of host’s intention, difference in emotional input, and contextual changes. Original memes will recombine with new memes and get new developments in the variation.

Mutant memes are memes that deviate drastically during spreading, so that significant information increasing or decreasing occurs. They can be semantic mutations caused by social changes or needs of objective communication, or emergent meaning resulting from co-text.

3. Dynamic Categorization of Semantics of Fashion Language in Memetics

Croft and Cruse (2004) insisted that meaning should be based on dynamic cognitive construe. Liu and Liu (2005, p. 30) also argued that “category attributes which are dynamic are mainly represented by relativity, variability and textuality”. The dynamic categorization of semantic categories is similar to memes, involving the dynamic development of semantic meaning, sentence meaning, and discourse meaning. Due to the dynamic nature of category and the dynamic construe of meaning, semantic categories may go through the following development motivated by metaphor, metonymy, etc.: (I) gradual change within category: the

adjustment of family members within category; (II) interaction/spanning between adjacent or similar categories; (III) de-categorization: transferring beyond the same cluster model. It is claimed that the stability of semantic categories is maintained by the replicability of memes, and the dynamic nature of semantic categories is determined by the evolution tendency of memes. Therefore, memetics can better explicate the dynamic development of the semantic category of fashion language.

3.1. Cloning of Memes and Stability of Semantic Categories

Cloning is a typical mode of memetic spreading. Memes make themselves survive by the behaviors of host. In the process of meme cloning, no change has taken place in the pronunciation, structure, and image schema of linguistic units (Li & He, 2014). Therefore, the semantic categories have been completely copied in spreading.

Let's take *da call* as an example. *da call* is one of the top ten fashion languages in 2017. We often find such expressions on the Internet or on WeChat: 'we crazily *da call* for...'. What is the meaning of the meme *da call*? Literally, the buzzword is understood as 'making a phone call'. But obviously, in the following context: "I'm crazily 'da call' for this cosmetics", the meaning "making a phone call" does not hold. In order to understand the meaning of the word, we must analyze it from its etymology. *da call* actually comes from the *aid culture* of Japanese concerts. When singers give concerts, fans often hold fluorescent sticks to express their appreciation and support for their idols. Waving, chanting, singing, or responding to songs fill the concert with a sense of interaction and enthusiasm. So the meaning of *call* here is not to make a phone call, but to shout or call out excitedly and loudly. The core semantic category of *da call* is: 'love + cheer + praise + support'.

The word *da call*, in the meaning of expressing 'cheer for...' or 'support', inspires us to fill the image with a warm and exciting image of the scene of aid culture, where people 'shout or call out excitedly and loudly'. And, in its simplest form, the word expresses the appreciation and support of people for their favorite or loved ones, according to the economic principle of language. These factors make the word *da call*, which ever belonged to minority culture, gradually become a popular strong meme. At the same time, netizens have also produced a *da call* emoji package, so that this meme is more easily copied and spread by more people. Chinese examples are as follows:

- (1) Zhoumo de bianlunsai ni yào nuli , wo hui zai tai xia wei ni fengkuang da call de!
(You should try your best at the debate this weekend and I will cheer for you!)
- (2) Zhe shi wo chiguo de zui meiwei de lazi ji, wo wei ni de chu yi fengkuang da call!
(This is the most delicious spicy chicken I've ever eaten. I love your cooking!)

During the duplication and propagation of this meme, the core characterization of 'love + cheer + praise + support' in its semantic categories has not changed and has been originally cloned.

The super meme has universal applicability and caters to the psychological intention of the information host. It can clearly express people's similar emotions and has the pragmatic functions that the host expects to perform. Its language is concise and informative, so that it has the information representation of convenient copying and memorizing. It can be recognized by language users, so it can get people's pursuit or media hype. Therefore, in the process of meme copying, its pronunciation, form, content, and image schema are cloned completely, and more importantly, there is no variation in its semantic category. So we can conclude that the cloning of language meme maximizes the stability of semantic categories.

However, as Yu (2016) pointed out, complete inheritance facilitates the entrenchment of new semantic items as category members, but long-term cloning will lead us to go against economic principles because there is no change. As a result, many memes vary in the process of spreading and replication, depending on different emotional input of the host or contextual variations, that is, the meme gradually varies or mutates.

3.2. Gradual Variation of Memes and Adjustment of Semantic Category Members

Blackmore (1999) believes that language variation is a ubiquitous sociolinguistic phenomenon. The language we use is varying all the time, which can also be interpreted as variation and recombination of linguistic memes in the process of reproduction and spreading. Gradual variant memes can be divided into two types: partial variant memes and recombinational memes. Ways of variation in memes have important influence on the dynamic development of semantic categories of fashion language.

3.2.1. Partial Variation of Memes and Gradual Change in Semantic Category of Fashion Language

Linguistic meme is not only a simple copy and propagation of language information, but also a variation in different degrees. For example, the word meme *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers), originated in Qian zi wen, refers to the power that can destroy the world. In 2015, in the fantasy drama *Hua Qian Gu*, Zhao Liying's *Hua Qian Gu* has the *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers)", which is the strongest power in play on August 8th, 2016, in the semifinals of the women's 100m backstroke at the Rio Olympics, Fu Yuanhui, a Chinese contestant, said in an interview: 'I have used the power *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers)' with a funny expression. The word *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) has quickly spread to the Internet, and 'unable to

control the power of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers)' has become a popular joke for netizens.

The three stages of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) show that it was originally an ancient and weak meme, but due to the change of social conditions and the need for objective communication, the language information has become active again and turned into a strong meme.

In the process of transition from weak meme to strong meme, the semantic category boundary of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) is gradually expanding, and its family members in the semantic category are constantly adjusting and increasing. Smith and Samuelson (1997) holds that category is dynamic, and we can dynamically construct the boundary of category and category members according to our needs, but this is restricted by context. Semantic category of primitive meme can be constructed dynamically in context, with its boundary subjected to expansion or shrinkage and its prototype to change, which adjusts its semantic category members and leads to the gradual change of semantics in the category. *Honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) belongs to the category of FORCE. FORCE can be described in terms of degree and a folk ranking list of FORCE in literature is suggested by litterateurs: *Chuihui zhi li* (the effort needed to blow away a speck of dust) < *juan ai zhi li* (negligible effort as a tiny stream of dust) < *mianbo zhi li* < *fuji zhi li* (strength for binding a chicken) < *yibi zhi li* (the power of a helping hand) < *gugong zhi li* (the power of one's legs and arms) < *quanma zhi li* (labour of dogs and horses) < *xiong pi zhi li* (The power of the bear) < *jiuniu erhu zhili* (the strength of nine bulls and two tigers -- tremendous effort) < *kangding zhi li* (The strength to carry tripods) < *ba shan chao hai zhi li* (the power to move the mountain and ocean) < *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers). Along this

hierarchy, *honghuang zhi li* which originally means the power to destroy the world, ranks at the top and is the original meaning of the primitive meme. In the fantasy drama *Hua Qiang* the power of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) is not used to destroy the world, but rather the power of God to move the mountain and ocean (*ba shan chao hai zhi li*), and the owner can dominate the world. *honghuang zhili* (prehistoric powers) used by Fu Yuanhui refers to the strength of the humerus, that is, our own physical strength, which means she has tried her best in the Olympics. Since then, the meme conveying this meaning has been widely reproduced and spread online. For example:

- (3) Weile yingjie nimen, wo yijing yong jin le honghuang zhi li la!
(I've run out of prehistoric powers to entertain you).
- (4) You daole xizao kao yongqi, xiyi kao yili, qichuang kao baofali, chumen shangke xuyao honghuang zhi li de jijiele.
(It's cold winter again that we took a bath by courage, washing by perseverance, getting up by the explosive force, and going out for school by prehistoric powers).

Therefore, from the dynamic semantic categorization process of the linguistic meme *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers), we can find that the boundary of its semantic category is constantly expanding, and its semantic family members are constantly adjusting and increasing. Now this meme *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) contains at least three semantic family members: the power of destroying the world, the power of moving mountain and ocean, and the physical strength owned by common people. These three kinds of power relate to each other through family resemblances. Although the meme inherited the

original image schema of power and did not change in phonetic, literal, and structural forms in the process of copying and propagation, its image schema is not fixed. With the dynamic change of context, the power of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) gradually changes within its semantic category, and its power gradually decreases.

This gradual variation is realized by metonymy. Metonymy is an important cognitive mechanism underlying the process of meme variation. As a way of cognizing the world, its most essential features are proximity, prominence, and interchangeability (Zhao, 2001). According to Wen and Ye (2006), proximity includes the proximity within language, reality, and concept themselves and the proximity relation among them. In Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM), proximity means: proximity between Global ICM and its parts, and proximity between part and part in the same ICM (Wen, 2014). The 'whole' and 'part', and 'part' and 'part' can be transformed by metonymic mapping.

The power of *gugong zhi li* is part of the power of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) (Figure 2). In the spreading of this meme, the whole is metonymically mapped onto the part, whereby the abstract force capable of destroying the world is used to stand for the physical strength we are most familiar. The way this meme changes gives people a sense of novelty and humor. It also highlights the psychological struggles that people face in reaching their goals or the hardships of trying to break through with all their power. In this way, the meme of *honghuang zhi li* (prehistoric powers) successfully complete the transformation from weakness to strength. This transformation is an objective, partial variation of language itself which can adapt to different contexts.



Figure 2

Gradual Change in the Semantic Category of 'honghuang zhi li (Prehistoric Powers)'

3.2.2. Meme Recombination and Interaction between Semantic Categories of Fashion Language

Meme recombination refers to combination of new meme with familiar ones to coin new meme complexes. Meme complex contains familiar meme, which is helpful to decipher the connotation of the complex (Li & He, 2014). Recombination of memes can be caused by variations of context or changes in hosts' emotions.

3.2.2.1. Context-dependent Meme Recombination

Context, including situational context, linguistic context, cognitive context, and cultural context, is the main trigger of linguistic memes. Linguistic memes can be induced or stimulated, by any one or more of the above contexts, to begin the process of reproduction and propagation, and recombining with new memes in corresponding context to form a new meme complex (Li & He, 2014).

Take the popular sentence meme *wo keneng xx jia xxx* (I may xx fake xxx) in 2016 as an example. The meme originates from fake wine in Russia, where illegal merchants made fake alcohol from alcohol-containing personal washing products and sold it, which caused many people to be poisoned and even died. Thus, the meme 'I may have drunk fake wine' began to spread on microblog. Later, some netizens said that when they visited Xi'an in 2016, they had seen fake

terracotta warriors. Then, the memes of 'I may have seen the fake terracotta warriors' spread again. It really made the meme *wo keneng xx jia xxx* (I may xx fake xxx) become popular. What really made this meme popular was in the special situational context of the final exam. In the special context of the final examination, a series of facial expressions made by the students during the final examination in colleges and universities have aroused the strong resonance of the students who have not obtained satisfactory results in the examination. During the final exam period of the university, a series of emoji packages produced by some students aroused strong resonance of candidates who failed to achieve satisfactory results in the exam. Chinese examples are as follows:

- (5) *Wo keneng fuxile jia shu.*
(I may have reviewed the fake book).
- (6) *Wo keneng yu daole jia laoshi.*
(I may have encountered a fake teacher).
- (7) *Wo keneng zhangle ge jia naozi.*
(I may have fake mind).

Because of its economy, popularity, and novelty, the sentence meme of *wo keneng xx jia xxx* (I may xx fake xxx) is activated and recombined in different contexts, and thus widely replicated. People find that as long as they use this meme, they will find the answers to many otherwise unsolved riddles. Such as:

(8) Jinnian meiyou wo xihuan de jiemu, wo keneng kanle yi chang jia chunjie lianhuan wanhui.

(There is no program I like this year. I may have watched a fake Spring Festival party).

(9) Zhuang mian bu hao, erqie houqi zuo de name cha, wo keneng paile yi zu jia hunsha zhao.

(I may have taken a group of fake wedding photos because my makeup was not good and the Photoshop skill of the retoucher was poor).

(10) Qingren jie lian hua du bu song, wo keneng jiale ge jia laogong.

(My husband didn't even give me flowers on Valentine's Day. I may have married a fake husband).

In these examples, with the change of the context, meme hosts combine different new memes with the familiar meme *wo keneng xx jia xxx* (I may xx fake xxx) to form a new meme complex. So a group of 'false' related, vivid and interesting meme complex came into being. The complex contains familiar memes, which helps us to decipher the connotation of the complex and learn something new from them. The meaning of *jia* in the primitive meme is 'false/untrue'. We can discover from the above examples that the

meaning of the word *jia* in this meme has got part variation with the change of context. For example: (5) *jiashu*: the wrong book; (6) *jia laoshi*: irresponsible teacher; (7) *jia naozi*: stupid mind; (8) *jia chunjie lianhuan wanhui*: boring Spring Festival Gala; (9) *jia hunsha zhao*: ugly wedding photos; (10) *jia laogong*: tedious husband.

Because of the different contexts, the semantic category of the word *jia* in the recombined meme *wo keneng xx jia xxx* (I may xx fake xxx) has expanded, from the most primitive meaning of 'untrue/false' to 'wrong', 'irresponsible', 'stupid', 'boring', 'ugly', 'tedious', and so on. Therefore, the family members in the semantic category has increased. There may not seem to be much connection between these senses, but in fact they have similar psychological associations, that is, they express a feeling of dissatisfaction but helplessness. All of the semantic items belong to the same category in the ICM of 'dissatisfaction' with similar psychological connections to each other. These metaphorical mappings between 'untrue' and 'stupid, boring, ugly, tedious, wrong, and irresponsible' occur in the cognitive domain matrix 'dissatisfactory' and there is no phenomenon of de-categorization (Figure 3).

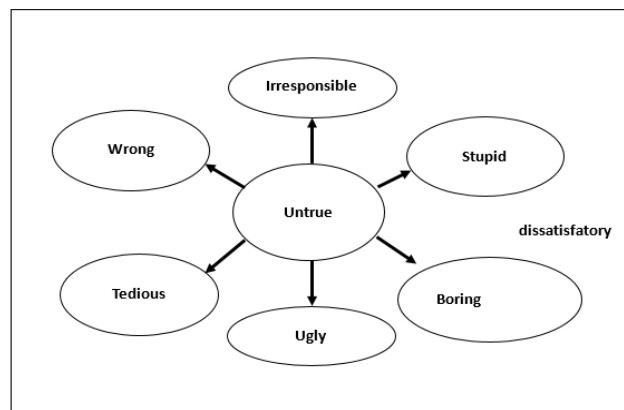


Figure 3

Interaction between the Similar Semantic Categories in the ICM of 'Dissatisfaction'

3.2.2.2. Intention-dependent Meme Recombination

Another important reason that leads to memetic recombination is that memes carry subjective

factors such as host's emotion and intention during their replication and propagation. Different hosts carry different intentions. In the process of meme spreading, each meme, while

replicating and inheriting the former meme, will take into account the host's emotion and recombine with new meme, so that it will vary and develop. Most of these variant memes are structurally similar to primitive memes, but differ in meanings: they inherited the main structure of primitive memes, so they have similar form to primitive memes but they are different in meaning because of the host's intention. These memes, which are recombined due to emotional needs of the host, have been repeatedly propagated. They gradually become new items in the semantic category of the meme and increase the family members of the category.

We take the creation of a discourse *Nanshan Nan* in 2016 as an example. The discourse meme *Nanshan Nan* was originally a song written by folk singer Ma Xuan and was once recreated by Zhang Lei, who is the winner of "Chinese Good Voice". The original lyrics are as follows (see appendix 1 for Chinese Pinyin):

You are the shade who is covered with the numerous snow in the southern dazzling sun shine. I am the wanderer who is suffering in every chilled night, though surrounded by the spring-like climate. If there is time left before the sunset, I am going to remove your eyes from my memory. Though spoiled my whole life, I failed to taste the end of the imaginary dream. Ever never did he talk about the meeting separated islets. Since his heart has already been desolate. His heart cannot accommodate a home any more. He became a mute who just retained his mouth to tell lies to himself. He said that: Your beauty appreciated by everyone could not convulse my heart like the first time I saw you. However, the moribund time past cruelly and we could do nothing. If all the continents connect with each other. I will spend all my time to walk towards you, just to bury you into my arms. Though travelled from drunkenness

to dream, he didn't forget to say goodnight to you.

Mostafa (2017) argues discourse is a complex process that not only goes beyond the sentence but also exceeds individual and group characteristics, embracing ideologies, and all human abilities— it is a 'mixed game' to use. Therefore, discourse memes are also variant. By the end of 2015, it began to snow in Beijing, but the sun was still bright in Nanjing. In the afternoon, the official microblog of Nanjing University released a message: "You are in the cold night in snowy Beijing, while I am in the spring of sunny Nanjing", and at Peking University and Tsinghua University with two pictures of Beijing on sunny day and the snowfall in Xianlin campus of Nanjing University. Five hours later, Peking University's official microblog replied as the following: If there is time left before the sunset, I am going to keep this beautiful memory that crossed the north and the south. Shanghai Jiaotong University followed them and said, "Though spoiled my whole life, I failed to taste the end of the imaginary dream". Then a college version of *Nanshan South* began to take shape.

The lyrics relay of 'love show' in the university let the song begin to be widely imitated and spread in universities. In the process of meme imitation, the new host adds his own feelings, which may arouse the resonance of subsequent hosts. And based on their own reality, the subsequent hosts integrate the textual meme with their own stories and feelings, which makes *Nanshan Nan* a strong meme whose different versions can be expanded continuously through the network and television. In addition to the version of Tsinghua University, Wuhan University, Southwest University, more than a dozen variants, belonging to different universities, are popular.

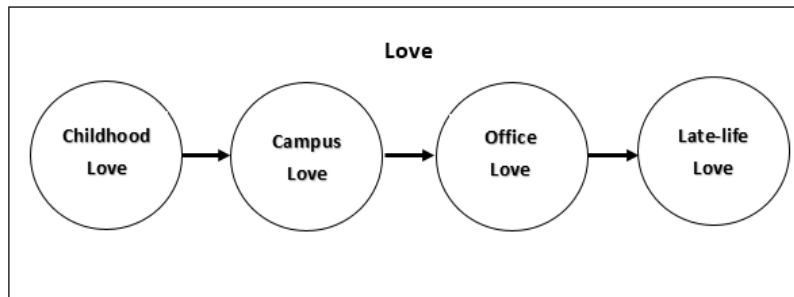


Figure 4

Spanning between Adjacent Categories in the Love ICM

The original meme of *Nanshan Nan* carries the meaning: ‘affectionateness + being nostalgic + sadness +regret, etc.’. The song itself does not include ingredients or elements of youthful energy and vitality, while the style of the song and the emotion it expresses are more in line with the psychological and emotional state of the young people. The broad category of ‘love’ includes childhood love, campus love, office love, late-life love, and so on. In the ICM of love, there is part-to-part proximity (Figure 4).

In the process of replication and spreading of the meme, the college students accomplish the interaction/spanning between adjacent categories by metonymy. They used campus love, which is familiar to them and most of them will experience it in university, to substitute childhood love with which they are relatively unfamiliar, and complete the transformation of discourse meme from weakness to strength. However, these metonymic mappings all occur in a single cognitive domain of love and involve no de-categorization. Let’s take an excerpt text of Southwestern University version of *Nanshan Nan* as an example (see appendix 2 for Chinese Pinyin):

You stand on the distant Jinyun mountain, looking far away. I sit beside the bank of the Jialing River, recalling the past. If we have time before sunset, I am going to go to Lake Chongde with you and compose an endless love song for you. You always like to stop and look at the north

gate, for it is the first place to meet. I still remember the 4th stadiums where we held hands, trying to embrace your gentle shadow at night. You say that any beautiful scenery is less than the magnolia in March. Flowers bloom and time flies. Maybe I spent four years in southwest university, only expecting to meet you and finally I succeeded.

In Southwestern University version of *Nanshan Nan*, meaning of ‘affectionateness + being nostalgic’ in the original meme is inherited, but ‘sadness + regret’ is removed. As new hosts of this meme, college students adapt the song, incorporating their different loves for their university as a characteristic element, so that everyone with the same memories or experiences could recall their own stories while appreciating the song. The input of host emotion not only revitalizes the primitive meme, but also increases the semantic category members of the meme. The versions of different universities are semantic family members of the primitive textual memes. Because of different campus environment and different love experience, each family member brings the song with different elements of ‘Jialing River’, ‘Chongde Lake’, ‘Camphor trees’, or ‘Tsinghua Park’, or ‘cherry blossoms’ and so on. Every adapted version adds a new semantic member to the category of textual meme *Nanshan Nan*. Although they are all about the unforgettable campus love, they convey slightly different meanings. Inheriting core meaning representation from the primitive meme, each

version adds the meaning of 'nostalgia' or 'youth' or 'optimism' or 'sentiment' to it.

Through the above discussion, it is demonstrated that changes of context or difference in emotion will promote the variation and recombination of memes, and the family members of the semantic category will be increased with the spread and variation of memes. Partial variation of memes will lead to gradual change in semantic category of fashion language, while recombination of memes leads to interaction/spanning between adjacent/similar categories. These variations and recombination will result in increase or decrease of semantic category members, and there will be similarities and differences among members.

3.3. Meme Mutations and De-categorization of Semantic Categories of Fashion Language

Meme mutations are caused by semantic deviation in propagation of memes so that information increases or attenuates substantially. They can be mutations due to social changes or needs for objective communication, such as *Guoqing huangjinzhou, Chongqing zhaoyule lvyou jingpen* (The golden week of national day, Chongqing encountered a booming tourism); they can also be emerging meanings derived from the context, such as: *Qing nao bu yixia women shengli de changjing* (You can imagine our victory). There are also some memes that may disappear with the development of society and self-evolution of language. Some other memes may experience a process of de-categorization due to metonymy or metaphor, giving rise to completely different meanings from the original meaning of the meme. In subsequent replication and propagation, memes are likely to undergo re-categorization, for example *Anli* (Amway).

Anli (Amway) is originally a noun for Amway, a largest Direct-Selling enterprise in the world. The noun form *Anli* (Amway) represents the concept of Amway enterprise, which is made up of a

number of elements, such as the employees, products, marketing strategies and so on. We can consider Amway as a 'whole' and other elements as 'part'. Wen and Ye (2006) illustrated various models for production of whole-partial relations, including construction model, hierarchical model, complex event model, category-attribute model, and summarized specific types of metonymy cognition derived from these relations. According to them, in object model, the whole can substitute the part, and the part also can substitute the whole through by metonymy mapping. In category-attribute model, category can substitute the prominence attribute by metonymy mapping and vice versa. We can often find the following examples in Chinese:

- (13) Ni shi zuo shenme gongzuo de? Wo shi anli.
(What is your job? I am Amway).
- (14) Ni chi de shi shenme baojian pin? Wo chi de anli.
(What health food do you take? I take Amway).

In example (13), the part (the employee) is substituted by the whole (Amway company), which means that the speaker is an employee of Amway. In example (14), it is also the metonymy mapping between the part (products) and the whole (Amway company), which means that the speaker takes health-food produced by Amway. The meanings contained in these examples form the semantic family members of the noun category 'Amway'.

Amway Company has been operating for many years, its marketing strategies are 'sincerely recommended', 'enthusiastic sharing', 'sincere help', 'succeed in sales by caring for others', and so on. Due to the function of metonymy, the cognitive subject selects and activates a prominent event in the cognitive domain as cognitive reference point in the process of language comprehension. In the process of replication and propagation, based on the

principle of linguistic economy, we use the category-attribute model of metonymy to highlight the category attributes, that is, the whole category of Amway is used to substitute its outstanding marketing strategies of ‘enthusiastically recommend’. Consequently, the meaning of Amway began to de-categorize from the original semantic category.

Liu and Liu (2004) hold that, nouns will be characterized by the disappearance of morphosyntactic features, loss of referential meaning, abstraction, generalization of meaning, deprivation of discursive function, and shift of categorization and function after decategorization. The transformation of semantic category of

Amway fully accords with the above characteristics. Amway has de-categorized successfully from the noun category to the verb category and obtained the meaning of ‘enthusiastically recommend’ (Figure 5). This meme began to spread to social media such as microblogging and WeChat. In the summer of 2016, Amway unwittingly became a popular meme for the meaning ‘strongly recommended’ on the Internet. For example:

(15) Wo lai anli yixia zhege APP.

(I'll Amway this APP).

(16) Wo lai anli yixia zhe kuan lingshi.

(I'll Amway this snack).

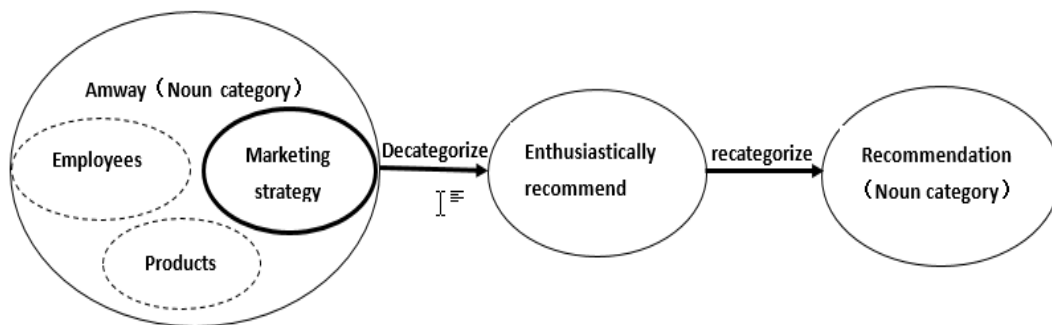


Figure 5

Metonymy Mapping of 'Amway' and its De-Categorization

In addition, the derived meaning has also changed in *Ganle zhewan Amway*. The original meaning of *Ganle zhewan Amway* is to satirize people who take a lot of Amway health products, or Amway salespeople who oversell. But now it means: ‘Please accept my recommendation’ or ‘I accept this recommendation’. Amway has now begun to show a tendency of re-categorization and entered the noun category again. The meaning of Amway is: recommendation. Figure 5 shows the metonymic mapping of Amway and its de-categorization and re-categorization.

4. Concluding Remarks

The theory of memetics based on Darwin's theory of evolution provides a new method for studying

the dynamic development of the semantic category of fashion language. We choose popular words, sentences, and discourse in recent years, and interpret them from the perspective of memetics, which will help us better understand the evolution of this semantic category. It is found that (I) the replication and spreading of linguistic memes are closely related to the dynamic categorization of semantics. The stability of semantic categories is maintained by the replicability of memes, and the dynamic nature of semantic categories is determined by the evolution tendency of memes. (II) Metaphor and metonymy are important working mechanisms for meme variation and mutation. (III) The way meme replicates and varies plays an important role in dynamic categorization of

fashion language semantics. The cloning of language meme maximizes the stability of semantic categories, so the complete inheritance facilitates the solidification of new semantic items as a category member. Partial variation of memes will lead to the gradual change in semantic category of fashion language, while recombination of memes leads to the interaction/spanning between adjacent/similar categories. The mutation of memes leads to the de-categorization of fashion language, and as meme continues to spread, its semantic re-categorization becomes possible.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Ni zai nanfang de yanyang li, daxue fenfei. Wo zai beifang de han yeli, siji ru chun. Ruguo tian hei zhiqian lai de ji, wo yao wangle ni de yanjing. Qiong ji yisheng, zuo bu wan yi chang meng. Ta bu zai he shei tanlun xiangfeng de gudao, yin wei xinli zaoyi huangwurenyan. Ta de xini zai zhuang buxia yige jia, zuo yige zhi dui ziji shuohuang de yaba. Ta shuo ni renhe weiren chengdao di meili, buji ta di yi ci yujian ni. Shiguang gouyancanchuan, wukenaihe. Ruguo suoyou tudi

lian zai yiqi, zou shang yisheng zhi wei yongbao
ni. He zuile ta de meng, wan'an.

Appendix 2

Ni zai cangcang jinyunshan shang, yaowang
yuanfang. Wo zai yang yang jialingjiang pan, di
mei huishou. Ruguo riluo zhiqian laideji, xiang
he ni qu chong de hupan, pu yi qu, chang bu wan
de ai zhi liange. Ni zong shi xihuan zhuzu

ningwang na bei men, yinwei na shi chuci
xiangfeng di difang. Wo yiran jide women
qianshou de si yun, yemu xia xiang yongbao ni
na wenrou de yingzi. Ni shuo ni renhe
tianyhaijiao di meijing, buji san yue shengkai de
yulan. Hua kaihua luoluo bu wan na liunian.
Ruguo si nian zuji lian zai yiqi, zou bian xi da zhi
wei xiehou ni, deng daole ni huimou, zu yi.