

## Original Paper

# Linguistic Analysis of the *Chinese Network Neologisms*

## “Xiaohaige”

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### Abstract

*New words on the Internet are closely related to social development, reflecting the changes of the times and the psychology of the masses. This paper is mainly guided by the metaphor theory of cognitive linguistics, and takes the new Internet word “Xiaohaige” derived from social hot spots as the main research content. The paper first uses the semantic component analysis method to obtain the distinguishing features between the new Internet words “Xiaohaige”, “Xiaohai” and “Ge”, and then obtains the grammatical and pragmatic differences between the three through syntactic analysis and context. The study found that “Xiaohai” and “Ge” will have semantic conflicts, but the two can be cleverly combined and form new meanings in the conflict, thus launching a metaphor analysis from a cognitive perspective.*

### Keywords

*conceptual metaphor, Chinese network neologisms, semantic component analysis, Xiaohaige, Chinese character formation*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In 2023, the new online word “Xiaohaige” appeared in the air, which triggered a heated discussion. Some children are young but skilled in their movements, and they become popular on the Internet because of their skillful actions. Recently, “Xiaohaige” and “Xiaohaijie” have exploded on social media. Although they are young, they have great skills. Obviously, they are children, but they are called “Xiaohaige” and “Xiaohaijie”. Some of them have full-scale skills to crush ordinary adults, and some have a vision pattern beyond their age. What resonates most with netizen is probably their stable mood of being calm when they are in trouble.

As one of the three elements of language, vocabulary resonates with the development of society at the same frequency and has the closest relationship with the development of society. Language is a social phenomenon, a social communication tool, a psychological phenomenon and a tool of human thinking. The appearance of network neologisms often reflects social psychology and the changes of the times. Studying the new network neologism “Xiaohaige” in 2023 is helpful to understand the public psychology and deepen the study of network neologisms in metaphor.

## *1.2 Theoretical Basis*

### *1.2.1 Semantic Component Analysis*

In 1943, L. Hjelmslev proposed the idea of separable meaning, that a word item could be decomposed into a smaller set of components.

American linguist Bronfield also proposed the term “semantic feature” (semantic feature), the semantic component (semantic component), to name this smallest unit of meaning.

With the development of structuralist linguistics, semantic component analysis (Complementation Analysis) came into being and became the core method of studying semantic components. The original intention of the semantic component analysis method is mainly to study the semantic meaning of the vocabulary. To put it simply: semantic component analysis is the practice of extracting common features from a set of meaning-related words, namely, semantic components (sense components) or semantic elements (memes).

In the semantic component analysis, there are three steps. The first is to determine the analysis object and select the contrast word group; the second is to extract the common semantic and distinguishing semantic elements (when extracting the common semantic components and the essential elements of things, and the non-essential elements can be ignored; the extracted semantic components must be the smallest and cannot be continued to be analyzed). Finally, the description of the semantic analysis (“+” means that it has this semantic feature “-” means that it does not have this semantic feature).

### *1.2.2 Conceptual Metaphor*

The theory of conceptual metaphor was first proposed in Lakoff & Johnson’s *Metaphor We Survive*. Its earliest definition is in Aristotle’s poetics: metaphor is a novel application, either from genus (genus) to species (species), or from species to genus, or from one species to another or another by analogy.

First of all, the center of metaphor is not language, but thinking. Not a rhetoric, but a way of thinking. Is to conceptualize and interpret the experience. The basis of mapping is that this feature is shared by source and target domains, that is, they have similarity (beam, 2004). Metaphor is the understanding of another kind with the help of the understanding and experience of one kind of things, and is constructed based on the similarity between two different domains. Metaphor is a mapping, that is, from the source domain to the target domain. The specific features of the two domains have a systematic ontology correspondence. Map the inherent ontology features of the source domain to the intrinsic features of the destination domain, which is the experience and interpretation of the experience of the narrator.

Second, the cross-domain mapping is not completely symmetric, but rather local. The system of metaphor enables people to understand a certain aspect of the concept through that concept, and this system makes people inevitable to hide other aspects of the concept when they focus on one aspect of the concept (Wang Yue, 2020)

Third, metaphor is a phenomenon of language use, which can only be produced in a certain context, and isolated words cannot appear metaphorical. Two words in the conceptual metaphor can not appear in the same context, which will cause ambiguity.

To sum up, with the development of the society, more and more novel and abstract things continue to appear. Based on the existing concrete objects, we use the existing experience to find out the connection between the two, and form a process of mapping.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Literature Research Method*

Collect a large number of books and papers about linguistic motivation and cognitive linguistics before writing a thesis, and read relevant literature and materials during writing a thesis, which can accumulate relevant theoretical knowledge about linguistic motivation research. By reading the research of predecessors, we can grasp the latest research situation and provide the direction for the thesis.

### *2.2 Case Study Method*

This paper will select some typical and representative online buzzwords since the new century as cases, analyze the semantics of online buzzwords through sorting out and analyzing the cases, and deeply explore the internal mechanism of the popularity of online buzzwords, and reflect on the internal social essence of online buzzwords.

### *2.3 Text Analysis Method*

The text analysis method is to collect and analyze a large amount of information about typical examples of the new Internet word “Xiaohaige”, and on this basis, deepen the judgment of related concepts of “Xiaohaige”, the characteristics of “Xiaohaige” itself, and analyze the views of people in the society on Xiaohaige, thereby reflecting the profound changes in contemporary people’s values.

## **3. Result**

“Xiaohaige” is not only different from the traditional “Xiaohaige”, but also embodies the personality characteristics of the new online word “Xiaohaige”.

First, it reflects the expansion of the semantic scope of the new online word “X+Ge”. In the traditional “X+Ge”, the elder brother mainly addresses people of the same age or older than the speaker. According to the age of “X+Ge” in the new network words, generally, people around the age of 20-50

can be called “X+Ge”, and younger ones such as “Student Ge” can also be called . It can be seen that “Xiaohaige” is the personality embodiment of the younger online new word “Xiaohaige”.

Second, the position of word formation is relatively fixed. The traditional “Ge” position is not fixed, and it can be in front (buddy) or behind (big brother), while the “Xiaohaige” represented by the new network word “Xiaohaige” has become a fixed suffix at this time. It embodies the transformation from specific personal nouns to collective nouns. The traditional “Xiaohaige” is mainly an individual appellation that refers to someone, while some of the “Xiaohaige” in network neologisms refer to someone, but they are not used for communication, and later they become generalized to refer to a group with a certain characteristic. “Xiaohaige” refers to the group.

Third, network neologisms reflect the characteristics of high collocation of single items, that is, under the condition of keeping a certain construction unchanged, one position remains unchanged, while the other has too much variability. There are more words that can be replaced by “X” in the new online word “X+Ge”. In the sense of color, traditional brothers mainly show more colors of respect and praise, and some are neutral. However, the color of “Ge” in network neologisms is only about 15% positive, 15% negative and the rest is neutral. It can be seen that great changes have taken place in emotional color.

Fourthly, network neologisms are characterized by different semantic transparency. In the new usage, the two parts of “X+Ge” are closely combined, but the degree of meaning fusion between the two parts is different, which leads to different semantic transparency of the new usage of “X+Ge” family words . “Xiaohaige” is a representative of low semantic transparency.

In a word, the continuous generalization of “Ge” pragmatics has greatly expanded the scope of words and accelerated the spread of languages, and a large number of online languages have sprung up. Many new words have been generalized to varying degrees in the process of communication. The generalization of these new words has expanded their referential scope and pragmatic scope (Wu Ruimin & Dong Xiuying, 2015).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Semantic Analysis of “Xiaohai” and “Ge”

In this chapter, we will use the tools such as Chinese dictionary, Chinese dictionary network and so on to know the meanings of the three items, and then analyze their semantic features by using semantic component analysis.

#### 4.1.1 Semantic Analysis of “Xiaohai”

An analysis of the meaning of “Xiaohai”. There are three meanings in the definition of Chinese Dictionary.

(1) Children; child. From *New Book of the South*: Peng Zu is still a young man, and Chen Lang is especially a child.

(2) Young or young children. *Lee Joon's "Biography of Li Shuangshuang"*: Second, both of them have children, and their tempers are getting bigger.

(3) Generally refers to minors. Sometimes it is also used as a young person's claim to his elders. Chapter 52 of *A Dream of Red Mansions*: We only wonder that the girl who punished the girl was originally poor, but I'm afraid the children's family has never seen her.

According to the semantic component analysis, we can know the sememe of children [male, consanguinity, -peer, -elder/peer, -intimacy, -respect, -kinship/kinship-like appellation].

#### 4.1.2 Semantic Analysis of "Ge"

Refer to [www.zdic.net](http://www.zdic.net) and *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (6th Edition). The meaning of "Ge" includes two parts, one is lexical meaning and the other is grammatical meaning.

Among them, the grammatical meaning of "Ge" mainly refers to personal nouns, and its lexical meanings are as follows:

(1) Brother, a man with the same parents (or only the same father and mother) or the same generation and older than himself, such as: Da Ge (Big Brother) ; Er Ge (Second brother); Elder sister-in-law; Brother (brother; Address for boys). It is also used to address the elder brother among relatives and relatives. Such as: uncles and cousins. According to the semantic component analysis method, its semantic features are: elder brother [+consanguineous/consanguineous, +elder, +peer, +male]

(2) honorifics or nicknames for men who are a little older or about their own age, with the meaning of intimacy, address people who are not related by blood by kinship terms, aiming at narrowing the distance between listeners. Such as: Zhang Ge; Li Ge/Li Ge/ Yong Ge; Buddy (a nickname between men). Its semantic features break through the limitation of age and generation, and are [-consanguineous/consanguineous, -elder, -peer, +male, +affectionate/respectful].

It can be seen that the semantic features of "Ge" are constantly being generalized. As a appellation, it is mainly used to address men of the same generation or older or similar age, sometimes with respect and intimacy. Although it breaks through the age and generational restrictions, it still retains a solid semantic meaning, and "Ge" still mainly refers to [+male, +individual, +elder/same age].

#### 4.1.3 Semantic Analysis of "Xiaohaige"

As a new network word in 2023, "Xiaohaige" is not introduced in the dictionary. According to Baidu Encyclopedia: Xiaohaige, Xiaohaijie, network language, refers to some mature children or pupils beyond their age, which is a commendatory term in most cases.

Based on the definition of different platforms, this paper further analyzes relevant cases and different media evaluations, and draws the conclusion that "Xiaohaige" actually refers to young teenagers with perfect skills, strong emotional management ability and excellent character, and most of them imply praise in emotional color.

At the same time, using the semantic component analysis method, we can find that the semantic components of Xiaohaige [+male, -elder, +intimacy, +respect, +peer, -blood, +human, -kinship/kinship-like appellation].

“kid brother” exists as a new network word, and there is semantic conflict between “Xiaohai” and “Ge”, in the process of conflict, each of them highlights and hides some semantics.

#### 4.2 Grammatical/Pragmatic Analysis of “Xiaohai” and “Ge”

By searching and analyzing the BCC (BLCU corpus center) corpus, it is found that both “Xiaohai” and “Ge” can be used as appellations, but “Xiaohai” as appellations generally implies derogatory meanings. “Xiaohai” are mostly used in written language, and can be used as subject, attribute and object in sentences. “Ge” rarely exists as a subject or object alone, but is usually used as a title to form a sentence independently, or combined with other morphemes and words as a subject and object. As a subject, “Xiaohai” and “Ge” both refer to a certain person.

##### 4.2.1 Grammatical/Pragmatic Analysis of “Xiaohai”

The pragmatics of “Xiaohai” is mainly reflected in that it can be used as a title of one party in the communication process between the two parties, as well as a reference noun, which can be used as a general reference or a definite reference.

##### (1) As an object

Question: “Why don’t you get married and have children (xiaohai) yet?” Answer: “Maybe next year.”

Question: “Give birth to a baby(xiaohai) and have fun” Answer: “Ha ha, I am very afraid of having child(xiaohai)!!!!!!!!!!”

##### (2) As the head language

“How can you be so good? You must be thinking, why should I have such a good child (xiaohai)!”

As a appellation (independent language)/subject, it often implies derogatory meanings.

“Child (xiaohai), what are you doing?”

“Children (xiaohai) are the most annoying thing.”

It can be seen that at this time, “xiaohai” can exist as a form of personal address when it is used as a subject/address (independent language).

##### 4.2.2 Grammatical/Pragmatic Analysis of “Ge”

(1) Single use, mainly used as appellation and head language. Generally, it is not a subject or an object alone. At this time, it can be used as kinship terms and kinship terms. “Bah! What kind of brother (Ge) is he? “Fatigue of Life and Death (Mo Yan )

(2) Words that can be overlapped or added. Can be said alone, subject, object, can also be used as the head language. Kinship appellation or kinship-like appellation.

“The bride’s brother (who is secretly called the “brother-in-law” today), the guests who sent the bride off and the” big guests “who acted as matchmakers are all distinguished guests, and Juemin will not be sent to sit with them.” Autumn (Ba Jin)

(3) Adding a name or a word before it, or a name+ranking+Ge, or adding a prefix of “big/small/old”, or adding the affix “men” after it, is generally a kind of kinship title, which shows intimacy and respect, and draws closer the relationship between them. Sometimes with a respectful tone, it can be used as a title, subject, object and attribute.

For example: The woman said, ‘I’m from Nanshan, and I came out to run for my life. I helped you push the mill. Just send me a bowl of fried noodles, big brother (Ge)! “people” Jia Pingwa.

(4) Big/small/+overlapping “Ge”, that is, “Da Ge (big brother) /Xiao Ge (small brother)”. Or “surname/first name+Ge”, which implies intimacy. Generally speaking, it is more common for women to address men as “Da Gege”/“Xiao Gege”, which is similar to kinship or kinship.

People who say they have nothing to do with themselves, or jokingly call animals, plants, objects etc. Pan-kinship appellation has the following structures: noun+Ge, verb+Ge and adjective+Ge. At this time, it is a kind of special reference predicate, which is no longer used as a face-to-face word, and its scope of use is more generalized. It is no longer used to narrow the distance between the two sides, but only to name news figures, so it has no communicative purpose in the context of verbal communication. For example, “Magpie Ge”/“Cooking Ge”/“Oil Ge”, sometimes “Ge” breaks through the semantic restrictions of [+elder, +male] and even [+human], such as “student Ge”, “Chun Ge” and “Zhangyu Ge”.

In a word, “Ge” is generally not used alone. When used alone, it is mainly used in spoken language and acts as a title. If you want to act as subject and object, you can add prefix and suffix, ordinal numbers, surname or first name. When overlapping, the color of intimacy is more obvious than other uses. When “Da+Ge” is used, it sometimes expresses a tone of respect. When it is not used as a personal address, it is not used in social situations. At this time, “Ge” is more like a root. Wang Jing (2013) the network term “Ge” has the most typical characteristics of quasi-affixes. And the “Ge” in “Xiaohaige” is classified as a quasi-affix in this paper.

#### 4.2.3 Grammatical/Pragmatic Analysis of “Xiaohaige”

“Xiaohaige” still exists as a title, but it does not exist as an act, and it is rarely used as a title for children in face-to-face communication. You can be the head, subject and object in a sentence.

##### (1) Object

A peer with a bad mouth criticized the child (xiaohaige): “I don’t like your hairpin, it’s not as good as mine”.

##### (2) Subject

“The classmates said that the clothes he was wearing were ugly. The Xiaohaijie asked his mother to buy the same one and change it every day.

##### (3) Head language

A “Xiaohaige” in Shandong searched for his father in high school.

The museum’s first-class player “Xiaohaige” explains Dafang tripod to tourists.

Through the analysis of the above articles, we can see that “Xiaohaige” is mainly a kind of pan-kinship appellation for minors by adults at this time, which also includes the color of praise.

A contrastive analysis of the pragmatics of “Xiaohai” and “Ge” and “Xiaohaige” shows that “Xiaohai”, as a personal noun and as an address (independent language), is derogatory at this time, not often used as an address (face-to-face address), mainly used as a head, an object and a subject. Finally, “Xiaohai” is mainly used by the elderly to address the young, and can also be used as a humble address. When “Ge” is used as a personal noun, it has a strong oral color and can be used as a title, mainly in person, that is, it is very communicative. It can be used as the head language, but it should be used with other words when it is used as the subject and object. Finally, when it is used alone, “Ge” is mainly used as a title or nickname for a man who is a little older or about his own age. However, “Xiaohaige” is mainly used as a back address here, which is weak in communication, and can be used as an object and a head language, with a small part as the subject. At the same time, “Xiaohaige” is mainly the title of the elderly for the young.

#### 4.3 Metaphor Analysis in “Xiaohaige”

From the above, it can be seen that there is a semantic/pragmatic conflict between “Xiaohai” and “Ge”. First of all, “Xiaohai” is mainly the appellation of elders for young or underage children, while “Ge” is the appellation of men who are older or similar in age to themselves, while netizen who call “Xiaohai Ge” are young adults, while those who are addressed are minor, which violates the pragmatic principle. Secondly, the word “Xiaohai” has a derogatory color meaning, while “Ge” has no derogatory color meaning. Finally, in the process of collocation, “Xiaohai” will intentionally highlight the semantics of “young, mentally naive”, while “Ge” will have more semantic components of “mentally mature”. Finally, both “Xiaohai” and “Ge” can be used as appellations, and there are similarities. The formation of “Xiaohaige” is more a mapping process from “Ge” to “Xiaohaige”, and there is a partial mapping at the same time.

##### 4.3.1 Similarity or Adjacency-the Basic Condition of Metaphorical Meaning.

The formation of metaphorical meaning needs certain conditions, that is, similarity or adjacency. Because there is a certain similarity between ontology and vehicle, it lays the foundation for the formation of metaphorical meaning. Similarity can be divided into psychological similarity and physical similarity. The reason why both speakers and listeners can understand metaphorical meaning is that their living environment, contact with things and cultural background are similar to some extent. The relationship between online buzzwords and their forms, sounds and meanings is inspiring to some extent, which can be further proved. In online buzzwords, the signifier remains unchanged, but it is given a new meaning, not the original meaning (Luo Xiang, 2017). The article emphasizes physical similarities, such as sound and appearance, for example, porridge (like).

First, physical similarity refers to the existence of shape similarity between the original source domain and the target source domain, which is also called shape similarity, that is, the literal expression can



reflect things that are suitable for it. For example, “pig-headed man”, “dinosaur girl” and “pig-headed man” refer to men’s faces, which are big and fat, like pig’s face, which is a derogatory metaphor, as well as various special emoticons commonly used in network language and so on. Secondly, there is psychological similarity, which is different from physical similarity. There is no obvious objective similarity between the two things involved in psychological similarity. Human’s view of things must go through an intermediate stage-cognition. Psychological similarity is a subjective similarity based on human cognition, which is a similarity created by human beings on the basis of physical experience, mental experience and cognitive thinking ability. For example, “marriage is the grave” people with different cultures and experiences have different understandings of marriage, resulting in metaphors from different origins. “Xiaohaige” is not only related to physical similarity, for example, it shows stable and mature characteristics in speech or behavior, just like an adult “Ge”. At the same time, it also affects psychological similarity to a certain extent. For example, sometimes “little adult” is used to describe a child, which is based on the understanding and judgment of a child’s behavior and speech, and psychologically feels great similarity with adults, thus creating the spoken word “little adult”. Finally, the appearance of “Xiaohaige” has more psychological similarity, followed by physical similarity, in which “Ge” produces new semantic components mainly through metaphor. Similarity transfer in metaphor means the evolution between old and new sememe caused by some similarity between things.

#### 4.3.2 Semantic/Pragmatic/Grammatical Conflict-the Basic Conditions for Metaphor

Shu Dingfang (2000) the transfer of meaning between the vehicle and the ontology is only the transfer of some semantic features. If two things are exactly the same or have absolutely no similarities, metaphor cannot be established.

Because there is a local mismatch in the process of mapping from the source domain to the target domain, one of the basic conditions of metaphor is the conflict between semantics. Semantic conflict is common in network metaphor, as a mapping of a word, such as “sun salary” and “sun photo”, among which there is semantic conflict between “sun” and “photo/salary”. The original meaning of sun is to put things in the sun, and here “sun” means “sharing”, which is a conflict between semantics and pragmatics.

Similarly, in the same context, the same person cannot be called “Xiaohai” and “Ge” by the same object, that is, there is a semantic conflict between the two words and they cannot be used in parallel. However, as a non-simple addition of the two words, the new online word “Xiaohaige” appears in the same context, and “Xiaohaige” refers to the same person, and the address object also refers to the same person, which has really changed a lot. To some extent, the semantics/pragmatics in “Xiaohaige” show obvious conflicts. As a network appellation “Xiaohaige”, most netizen as appellation groups are adult young adults, while the addressed groups are underage teenagers, and most of them are in the primary school stage. In “Xiaohaige”, the main semantic feature of “the appellation is older than oneself or the

same age” is lost, but the “male” remains the color of respect and intimacy, and its semantics is empty, making it a quasi-affix. However, the main semantic/pragmatic features of “Xiaohai” are still preserved, and the important semantic features of “Xiaohai” such as mental maturity and superb skills are strengthened or increased, and “Xiaohai” is compared to “Ge” or “Xiaohai” is the eldest brother”, that is, the mapping from “Ge” used as the address form in adults to “Xiaohai” in the target source domain, just like “Xiaohaige”

#### 4.3.3 The Destruction of Literal Meaning-the Basic Way of Metaphor Operation

Metaphor is the destruction of literal meaning by expressing meaning, that is, there are contradictions and conflicts between literal meaning and expressing meaning. From the perspective of context, literal meaning and expressive meaning belong to two different contexts.

The destruction of literal meaning also comes from the local mapping phenomenon of metaphor. In the process of mapping, some meanings of the original words are discarded, and new meanings are also produced.

When metaphor appears in a word, take “eating melon” as an example. If you put it in such a context, “I ate a big melon online today”, if it is simply understood as eating melons in reality, it doesn’t make sense here, because eating melons is in the wrong place, so eating melons is the destruction of literal meaning on the basis of the original meaning, and there is a mapping relationship between them.

When metaphor appears on a morpheme, we analyze it with “information snack”, in which “snack” exists as a morpheme. At this time, “snack” is suitable for the network context, and “Xiaohai” and “Ge” in “xiaohaige” also exist as morphemes. The applicable context of “Xiaohaige” is not equal to the separate contexts of “Xiaohai” and “Ge”. Contrastive analysis of “xiaohaige”, there is not much research on the new online word “Xiaohaige”. Based on the analysis of a large number of data and contexts, we can find that “Xiaohai” in the traditional sense mainly appears in the appellation of elders to minors with a low age and seniority, and the frequency of “Xiaohai” used as appellation is low, which is derogatory to a great extent. “Ge” mainly appears in appellation, and often appears in colloquial form. However, when “Xiaohai” and “Ge” are mapped to the word “Xiaohaige” at the same time, the context changes, and “Xiaohaige” as a title implies a compliment. At the same time, it is a kind of honorific title for the elderly to the young, and it can appear in written language and act as the subject and object. Therefore, the destruction of literal meaning is the basic way to produce “little brother”.

At the same time, with the help of network tools, we can roughly search that “Xiaohaige” once appeared in the dialect of a certain area, but we generally don’t see this word in our daily life. However, this kind of “Xiaohaige” is very different from our present “Xiaohaige”. In terms of superficial meaning and emotion, the “Xiaohai” in the traditional dialect is a root, while “Ge” is an affix, which has no specific meaning, only grammatical meaning, indicating a color of intimacy and love, The contemporary “Xiaohaige” is that its structure has not changed, and it belongs to “new wine in old

bottles”. Its internal meaning and emotional color have changed greatly, which is the destruction of the traditional meaning of “Xiaohaige”. The grammatical meaning of “Ge” has changed here, and its semantic meaning has changed a little, for example, its ability is strong, its mind is mature, and its emotional color has also changed, from the initial intimacy to respect and respect. It is reflected that with the development of the times, “Xiaohaige” has been endowed with new lexical connotations. Netizen can willingly address “Ge” and “Jie”, and will not wear colored glasses because of their young age, which reflects the open, inclusive and pluralistic mentality of contemporary people and is no longer conservative.

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