

Analysis of the Internet Catchword “City or Non City?”

Yanxin Gao

Xi'an Shiyou University, Shaanxi Province, China

Abstract: Internet catchword, which have emerged with the development of society. They are not only a language, but also a social and cultural phenomenon with characteristics of the times. Therefore, from the perspective of linguistics, this paper analyzes the lexical structure, syntactic features and pragmatic functions of “city or non city?”, and explores its popularity reasons and sociocultural influence.

Keywords: Internet Catchword; City or Non City; Popularity Reasons; Sociocultural Influence.

1. Introduction

The origin of the internet catchword “city or non city?” can be traced back to a video by foreign blogger “Bao Bao Xiong”. In the video, the blogger “Bao Bao xiong” took his sister to visit China, especially when travelling to cities such as Beijing or Shanghai, he asked his sister somewhere in unskilled Chinese, “Is it good to explore? city or non city?”, that is, whether it is fashionable, used to express the attitude or feeling towards a certain city. This devilish accent and expression, combined with the fun interaction between the two people, quickly became popular on the internet. With the spread of network culture, the meaning of this catchword is becoming increasingly rich. It is no longer limited to expressing attitudes and feelings towards a certain city, but is extended to various meanings such as “urbanization”, “fashion”, “trendiness”, “excitement”, etc., applicable to different contexts. Through various channels, it has formed a wide influence and dissemination power with its unique expression and sense of humor.

2. Analysis of Vocabulary Structure

2.1. Basic Word Meaning

The term “city or non city?” originated from a short video posted by a foreign blogger on social media. In this video, the blogger mixes English with less proficient Chinese and humorously asks whether a place is “city”, that is, “is this city like or not?” or “whether it is fashionable?”, quickly becoming popular on the internet. The English word “city” is explained in the Oxford Dictionary as follows: noun. 1. a large important town; 2. a large town that has been given an official title by a king or queen; 3. the town of any size that has definite borders and powers that were officially given by the state government.[1] In the expression “city or non city?”, “city” is used as an adjective, similar to the English word “city-like”, which is not common in traditional grammar. This mixed use of Chinese and English reflects the creativity and flexibility of language use.

2.2. Expansion of Meaning

The word “city” in catchword is an extension of its original meaning, which means “urbanization” is used to evaluate whether a location or scene has the style of a modern city and the atmosphere of fashion trends. With the spread and evolution of online culture, the meaning of “city or non city?” has gradually been enriched and expanded, and its usage is

also flexible and diverse:

1. Fashion dressing: used to evaluate whether the dressing is fashionable and has urban style. When fashion bloggers share their shopping experiences on online platforms, they describe themselves as “Wearing this outfit makes me feel very city.”(Wearing this outfit makes me look very fashionable.) 2.Lifestyle: Used to evaluate whether lifestyle meets the pursuit of modern urbanites. In online videos, some netizens will describe their life pressure. city or non city?”(Busy every day, are you satisfied with this kind of life?) 3.Emotions and attitudes: In addition to directly evaluating things, “city or non city?” can also be used to express an emotion or attitude. When experiencing excitement or intense activities, one would say “very city”(It's so exciting.) to describe this feeling.

Therefore, “city” here not only refers to a city, but is also given descriptive meanings such as “urbanization”, “fashion”, and “exciting”. These meanings make “city or non city?” applicable to multiple language environments.

2.3. Emotional Coloring

The emotional color of “city or non city?” is diverse and flexible, mainly depending on the context and the speaker's intention. Generally speaking, “city or non city?” carries a relaxed, humorous, and even slightly mocking emotional tone in most cases, such as casual conversations between friends, interactions on social media, etc. When evaluating a place or thing as “city”, it usually indicates that it is fashionable, and has urban characteristics. At this time, the speaker often carries an emotional color of admiration or envy. In addition, “city or non city?” can also be given different emotional colors according to specific contexts. For example, it carries a stimulating and exciting emotional color, as the speaker would express when describing highly challenging activities; It also includes an emotional color of self mockery and ridicule, even when self mockery is not “city” enough in certain aspects.

3. Syntactic Feature

In addition, “city or non city?”adopts the expression of positive and negative interrogative sentences in modern Chinese, which is the grammatical feature of “Affirmative and negative”. Positive and negative interrogative sentences are composed of a combination of affirmative and negative forms in the predicate of a single sentence, and the listener can choose one form to answer. [2] “Are you going or not?”

“pretty or not?” and so on. From this, it can be seen that this structure generally applies to verbs or adjectives, rather than nouns. The expression of “city or non city?” breaks through the traditional grammar rules, using the noun “city” as an adjective “with urban characteristics”, forming a unique way of expression. This expression has strong colloquial characteristics, as well as obvious flexibility and adaptability, and can have a special effect in specific contexts.

4. Pragmatic Function

Hu Zhuanglin believes that language has seven functions: informational function, interpersonal function, performative function, affective function, conversational function, entertainment function, and metalinguistic function [3]. And “city or non city?” mainly includes the following three functions:

4.1. Entertainment Function

Bakhtin believed that “carnival” generally has three important factors: humorous square performances, language works (such as parody works), and informal square language (such as insults, jokes, folk praise and criticism poems, etc.).” [4] Entertainment is an important theme in this catchword. The entertainment function plays an important role in language use, as it not only enhances emotional communication between people, crosses cultural and background differences, but also triggers emotional resonance among people. It can also alleviate the tense atmosphere and make communication smoother and more enjoyable. “city or non city?” is mainly humorous, using a mix of Chinese and English positive and negative interrogative sentences with a sense of humor to express netizens’ psychological motivation for pursuing happiness.

4.2. Evaluation Function

The evaluative function in pragmatics refers to the ability of language users to evaluate the value, superiority, and inferiority of others’ actions, thoughts, qualities, or things through speech acts.[5] This function can help speakers convey their stance and viewpoint in daily language communication, influencing the listener’s cognition and emotions. “city or non city?” is mainly used to evaluate whether the object has urbanization, fashion and other characteristics, whether it is evaluating the prosperity of a city, the fashion sense of a dress, or the attractiveness of a location.

4.3. Emotional Expression Function

“city or non city?” can also be used to express emotions and attitudes. The social identity theory advocates that individuals gradually establish their own social identity through cognitive investment and self classification. When they perceive themselves as members of a certain social group, they develop a positive emotional attachment to that group, which helps to boost morale and cohesion within the group. At the same time, when individuals view their community and peers with a positive attitude, they are more likely to experience self-esteem and self-improvement in the process of constructing social identity. [6] For example, “Is this outfit city or non city? (Is this outfit fashionable?)” While receiving a positive response from the other party, I also gained a strong sense of identification. Secondly, it is not difficult to find that many new words are used by netizens to express their personalities. Young people using this catchword to convey emotions not only make communication novel and unique, but also

showcase their individuality and narrow the distance between people.

5. Epidemic Causes

The popularity of “city or non city?” is the result of multiple factors driving it together. We can explore the reasons for its emergence and popularity from the following aspects:

5.1. The Promotion of Language Memes

Language memes play a crucial role in driving catchwords. The term “Meme” originates from Dawkins’ publication *The Selfish Gene* in 1976. Dawkins argues in the book that evolution is not entirely driven by species or individual tissues, but rather the result of replication factors. The so-called replication factor refers to any object in the universe that can be copied. Culture also evolves like organisms, and the replication factor that allows culture to evolve, namely the cultural equivalent of genes, is called a “meme”. [7] He Ziran pointed out that the memes that use language as a medium of communication are called language memes. It, along with its variants, is actually a series of information representations. It carries the intention of the meme host and spreads repeatedly or analogically through language structures. [8] “city or non city?” originates from the network, is created by the meme host, and further spreads by means of cyberspace, such as “B station, TikTok, microblog” and other online interactive platforms. Language memes are triggered, gradually experiencing people’s recognition and acceptance, and then being constantly imitated, processed and spread, becoming popular words. This process forms a typical language meme mechanism.

5.2. Seeking Novel Psychology

From the perspective of language communication, the continuous innovation and development of catchword is also one of the important factors contributing to its popularity. With the progress and popularization of Internet technology, people have more ways to express themselves and show their personalities. As a unique expression, “city or non city?” cannot be separated from people’s psychological needs for novelty and expression, that is, the need for language innovation and expression. This expression embeds English words into Chinese grammar structures, forming a unique language style. People dare to break through traditional language rules, invent a large number of online languages and spread them, enriching the vocabulary of Chinese. By quickly mastering vocabulary and using it flexibly, one reflects their idea of keeping up with the times and not wanting to fall behind. Secondly, people’s herd mentality is also one of the factors. Catchword carries specific cultural connotations and symbolic meanings, which can stimulate people’s sense of cultural identity and belonging. In order to better integrate into language communities, people will align their speech and behavior with the group, seek a sense of identity, and transform niche languages into popular language for the masses, spreading it among various media.

5.3. The Widespread Dissemination of Social Media

Social media plays a crucial role in the widespread dissemination of catchword, such as magazines, television, computers, radio, newspapers, etc. It not only provides a

platform and carrier for the dissemination of catchword, but also promotes the popularization and development of catchword through its unique dissemination characteristics and influence. Firstly, social media can quickly cross geographical, age, gender, and other boundaries, spreading to a wide range of people; Secondly, the spread of popular phrases on social media promotes communication and integration between different cultures, enhances communication and understanding between each other, and promotes cultural diversity and inclusiveness; Finally, social media accelerates dissemination and can quickly capture social hotspots and topics, providing important references for analyzing social forms. Since the release of the video, netizens have continuously reposted and imitated it, which has also resonated with society, especially on various social interaction platforms. Netizens use the topic of "city or non city?" to send and spread text, pictures, videos, etc. related to the topic, increase the sense of topic, attract people's attention, and fill the low dimensional network social with rich and diversified interactions.

In summary, the driving force behind the popularity of "city or non city?" is a complex and diverse process that involves multiple aspects such as culture, psychology, language, and communication. These factors interact and jointly drive their emergence and development.

6. Sociocultural Impact

As an important component of social culture, catchwords have a multifaceted impact on society and culture.

6.1. Reflecting Social Emotions and Public Attitudes

Catchwords often quickly resonates with the public through concise and powerful language forms, making it an important window for the public to reflect social emotions and attitudes. Recently, several news media outlets have quoted the catchword "city", which has sparked public opinions and attitudes towards it. At a regular press conference hosted by Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, comments were made on the popular social media buzzwords "city or non city?". Mao Ning said that China welcomes the arrival of foreign friend. In addition, "city 不city" has become a favorable term for expressing affection towards mainland China under the interpretation of Taiwanese youth.

From this, it can be seen that "city or non city?" can accurately capture and express the public's emotions, which not only reflects the attention and participation of the youth group in society, but also reflects the public's acceptance and openness to foreign cultures.

6.2. Influence Social Cognition and Values

The popularity of catchwords also reflects the public's views on certain social phenomena and issues, which gradually form social consensus through dissemination and influence people's social cognition and values. "city or non city?" does not have a fixed expression meaning, but expresses special linguistic meanings based on specific contexts. From initially expressing an evaluation of whether a location or scene has internationalization, it gradually

extends to various aspects. This also reflects people's positive attitude and values towards life and striving for progress from another perspective.

6.3. Promote Group Identity and Social Interaction

This mixed language expression of Chinese and English has gained recognition and popularity among the group through its innovative approach, and has been widely replicated and disseminated. It not only reflects the flexibility of Chinese language, but also reflects the natural acceptance of cross-cultural communication among contemporary young people. It enables groups from different cultural backgrounds to find resonance points within it, thereby enhancing group identity. In the process of dissemination, "city or non city?" has become a hot topic, providing rich materials for people's social interaction. Whether online or offline, people can engage in discussions and exchanges around this topic, which helps to form close group relationships.

7. Conclusion

In summary, "city or non city?" as a catchword has the characteristics of a combination of Chinese and English, as well as a positive and negative interrogative structure; It includes pragmatic functions such as entertainment, evaluation, and emotional expression. It is mainly spread through language memes, novelty seeking psychology, and social media, and has had multiple positive impacts on society. It is not only a manifestation of language innovation, but also a microcosm of social and cultural phenomena. We should take a positive attitude towards the development and application of popular language, strengthen correct guidance and norms, and create a good language environment.

References

- [1] Pearson Education Asia Limited. Longman Contemporary Advanced English Dictionary, English Chinese Bilingual Version 5[M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching And Research Press, 2014.03.
- [2] Borong Huang, Xudong Liao. Modern Chinese [M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2002.
- [3] Zhuanglin Hu. Linguistics :A Course Book [M].Beijing: Peking University Press, 2013.
- [4] Jidong Li, Qian Wu. Youth identity recognition and discourse practice of internet buzzwords in the past five years[J].Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China),2020,42(08):39-43.
- [5] Meng Chen. An analysis of the popular internet catchword "electronic pickled vegetables" [J].Hubei New Chu Culture, 2024,(11):94-96.
- [6] Jiawei Liu. Investigating Collective Behavior in Online Fan Communities Through the Lens of Social Identity Theory [J]. Journal of Social Science of Hunan Normal University, 2024, 53 (03):130-140.
- [7] Richard Dawkin. The Selfish Gene[M]. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- [8] Ziran He. Memetic Understanding of Language in Fashion[J]. Shandong Foreign Language Teaching,2014,35(02):8-13.