Abstract

Since the 1980s, the Chinese new words have been a hot research area at Mainland China. However, it has hitherto been almost unexplored on the new words in Singapore mandarin while they are continually cropping up. It is especially regrettable that, it is only recently that researchers have begun to delve into the more profound problems of the bi-culture in Singapore, a bilingual society.

Based on a large-scale Singapore mandarin corpus, this study investigates the new Chinese words in Singapore that emerged from 2000-2006, focusing on the lexical mechanisms and its socio-cultural motivations, namely how a lingua-culture paradigm shapes these new words. 2257 new words have been successfully sifted through 105,785 Chinese words very carefully. In the context of contemporary Singapore society, they typically display a character that popular culture temporally talks about.

This research consists of four chapters:

Chapter 1 lays out the key research question, methodology and materials of this study. A novel ‘Singapore model’, which helping to clarify the specific Singaporean type of culture and language, has also been established. It emerges as an amalgam of influences from China and West.
In Chapter 2, a statistical breakdown is carried out to deeply investigate three key lexical areas including the meaning, formation and survival of the new words. It is noteworthy that those characters of popular culture of Singapore society are correspondingly highlighted in the new words, which embody in the popular trait of their semantic distribution, the large-scale produce of word-building, and the pragmatic struggle mechanism. Full and accurate examples are served here.

Chapter 3 further probes into the socio-cultural and psychological motivations. As more and more English-educated Chinese become totally assimilated into the west culture, they may only retain surface manifestation of Chinese. Accordingly, popular media becomes the main agent on Chinese transmission. The desire for innovation, concision and popular recreation also has been responsible for such a trend.

Chapter 4 summarizes the main findings and significance of this study. Planning of further research is also proposed.