New Linguistic Formations of Modern Standard Chinese in the 21st century

Evolution and change in the features of the language system of any speech community has been a continuing process since the remote pre-historic time of the man. Mainly there are two principal ways as to how the language system acquires new features with the passage of time. First, as the human minds get new ideas in course of dealing with the natural world (the productive forces) simply out of the basic instinct for survival. As result of the new experience they gain out of their struggle for survival, they articulate new expressions while innovating new vocabularies. This is the linear developmental pattern of the language. Second, when the people of one speech community come in contact with the people of another speech community, they learn from each others’ ways of handling the problems of living (from the practice of production struggle) and the pattern of living lots of new vocabularies and expression. This may be studied under the horizontal pattern of language development which is found to be quite common in almost all languages and dialects of different world societies. Migration of the people from one region to another, from one country to another and from one continent to another is a common phenomenon.

There is a long history of population mobility in China. Development has become a shibboleth for the Party and social scientist. After reform and opening up even large scale urbanization took place in China. With the modern economic growth, the labor in search of better means of life migrated to the urban areas. Since mid 1980 mass migration from rural area to urban area is one of the noticeable changes in China. The uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities is the sole cause of migration. In 2011 a total of 252.78 million migrant workers (an increase of 4.4% compared to 2010) existed in China. This migration has not only exerted its impact on China’s economic and social development but at the same time it followed profound socio-linguistics consequences. A group of same speech community uprooted themselves from a familiar linguistics area and settle down in a new linguistics area and this causes socio-linguistics effects of migration. Domestic migration and migration across the border also has an alienable effect on the language system. In China domestic migration is dramatic and noticeable. Thus migration involving cultural interaction has become one of the important subjects of linguistic research.
Besides migration, large numbers of new educational institutions were set up in major cities and towns of China to which foreign language experts and other area study scholars from abroad were invited to deliver lectures. Chinese trade and commerce with foreign countries also expanded rapidly. Many international events like Beijing Olympic (2008), Shanghai Expo (2010), and Guangzhou Asian Games (2010) were held which have led to the increased interaction between foreigners and the Chinese people. Thus, a beginning was made in the exchange of ideas and thoughts on a number of issues ranging from such topics like science and technology, trade and commerce to many other subjects of social science in the new period of reform and opening up. New words and vocabularies were introduced. Besides, internet has brought radical change in Chinese society and it also impacted Chinese language. As the Chinese people got more opportunities to communicate with foreigners, there began a rigorous exchange of thoughts and ideas. In order to express the new ideas and thoughts, loan words were borrowed from the foreign language. With the passage of time and due to the frequent usage of those terms and expressions, loan words do not remain foreign words, but became inherent component of the new language system and turned out to be popular among the native speakers in that society. The globalization movement and the popularity of technologies too have substantially contributed to this process of linguistic change in the society.

History has also proved that technology has all along played a very important role in developing language. The invention of print media, television, telephone, telegram also had impacted the language. New words were invented to describe new technologies. However, since last two decades it is the Internet that has made tectonic shift in global communication and networking. Internet has knocked down main barriers to realize the dream of “global village”. The communication through internet has led to a number of significant linguistic developments. China the most populous country in the word; it is quite oblivious that the netizens will also be significantly more in number. There are a total number of 668 million Internet users in China by the end of 2015. It is reported 54% of the total internet users are less than 30 years old. There are three broad ways in which internet language has redefined and challenged the existing standard Chinese language system with the netizens using internet vocabularies of different kind: New tags, Numerical vocabularies and New coinage due to influence of English language. Some scholars have claimed that internet possess threat to the existence of linguistic heritage (or purity). This paper will attempt to look into how the Chinese language which belongs to a
completely different language system is changing and adopting new vocabularies and terminologies because of the greater use of internet. To what extent new borrowed terminologies due to internal migration has become part and parcel of modern standard Chinese will also be a part of this paper.

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