An Empirical Study of Psycholinguistics of Chinese Restaurant Names in Xi'an City under Culture Differences

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Abstract. Under the background of "The Belt and Road" and the inclusion of Xi'an city in the international metropolis, this study takes Chinese restaurant names in Xi'an city as the object. Through the language description and semantic information and on the basis of collecting a large number of data, consumers' interests in these names and the deep roots for naming from restaurants owners are explored. The study also applies psycholinguistic theories to systematically analyze the generation mechanisms and internal rules of restaurant names from different linguistic levels, hoping to make great efforts for the scientific naming and healthy development of the catering industry.

Keywords: Xi'an City; Chinese Restaurant Names; Chinese Restaurants Names.

1. Introduction

Restaurant names, constructing the linguistic landscape, are the an effective mirror of people's spiritual and cultural life, and have witnessed the progress in the city. Owners of the restaurants creatively make use of this special language to attract all walks of consumers in all walks of life. Xi'an, as the starting point of the ancient Silk Road and an important node city of "The Belt and Road", is the ancient capital of 13 Dynasties, with deep cultural accumulation and a long history. Xi'an has been listed as the third international metropolis, with the momentum of rapid development. Xi'an has a current population of about 10 million. With a large influx of tourists at home and abroad, how do the Chinese restaurant names effectively stimulate consumption while taking into account the cultural differences of different groups, that is, growth environment, economic capacity, cultural level, etc.? Therefore, to strengthen the theoretical research of restaurant names could provide some theoretical support for the scientific naming in the future, which conforms to the requirements of the times and is of great significance. Meanwhile, the vigorous development of Chinese restaurants in Xi'an is beneficial to promote the economic growth, enhance the international reputation and influence, promote the enthusiasm of foreign tourists, and improve people's quality of life and so on.

2. Psycholinguistics Theories of Restaurants Names in Xi'an City

2.1 Schemata

A schema is a structure in semantic memory that specifies the general or expected arrangement of a body of information (Carroll,1999). Bartlett uses the concept of schema to explain the advanced psychological activity of humans. In his view, remembering is by no means a process of rote or reproduction, rather, it's the one that people retain the general impression of an event, and from which then reconstruct the detailed information. Therefore, the schema is a reflection or an active organization to the past experience. when individuals comprehend new things, they need to associate new things with the known concepts, past experiences, or background knowledge. The comprehension and interpretation of new things depends on the schemata already existed in the mind, and the information input must match to schemata. Hence, schemata have the obvious guiding effect.

2.2 The Information Processing System

This system (short for IPS) is composed of 3 structural Components-sensory memory, short-term memory (or working memory) and long-term memory. Under the stimulation of auditory, visual and other senses in the outside world , plenty of things experienced are kept temporarily in the mind when people stays in the sensory memory. Then, some information has been noticed and temporarily stored, while other information is filtered out. The former is encoded into working memory. After that, the information is further processed and stored permanently in the mind, eventually enters into long-term memory. This system is an unusually complex psychological process (Carroll,1999).

2.3 Chunking

Working memory, severely, is restricted in size. Seven plus or minus two units of information can be held approximately. While, the retention is enhanced by grouping the single and random pieces of information into larger and related units. This process is recognized as chunking (Carroll,1999). In terms of Chinese restaurant names, when the strange names that people run across in the street could be formed into the familiar expression in the ordinary life, more capacity could be saved, which is beneficial to the storage of long-term memory. Therefore, cognitive economy could be achieved.

2.4 Compliance and Violation of Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975) has proposed four maxims governing conversations, that is, the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner, which specify things participants should engage in so as to interact efficiently, rationally and cooperatively. From the perspective of Grice, participants strive to remain in an informative, clear, relevant and truthful way. Nevertheless, participants, sometimes, deliberately or unintentionally violate these maxims to convey implicit intention (Carroll,1999). As for Chinese restaurant names, some owners denominate names by taking advantage of these maxims to indicate more than what is literally expressed, which easily exist a deep impression on consumers.

2.5 Inferences

Inferences are drawn routinely and subconsciously in the process of comprehending new events and also they become integrated into the memory representations of the event. With the time passing by, people are more likely to confuse the presented information and the inferred information (Carroll,2000). That's how the restaurant names take effect. Through the language and the semantic information, consumers, based on their own knowledge reserves, make inferences and form the related psychological representation for the names. Therefore, excellent restaurant names can successfully attract and please consumers, and thus resonate and promote consumption.

3. Psycholinguistic Analyses of Chinese Restaurant Names in Xi'an City

The study neglects the investigation of the grammatical structure of the restaurant names. It emphasizes the influence of literal information on the inner activities of the consumers, and studies the generation mechanisms and internal rules of the names at the levels of phonetic, lexical, rhetoric and glyph structure.

3.1 At the Phonetic Level

A syllable is the basic structural unit of speech and the smallest unit that is normally spoken by itself . Each Chinese character and number correspond to one syllable. This study has shown the number of 4 syllables appears most for Chinese restaurant names in Xi'an, consistent with finds from other scholars (Mao Yibo, 2016). In terms of Chinese restaurants, if the names are too short, they could neither convey much information concerning the restaurants, nor is conducive to the spread for the business, since the same names would appear repeatedly. According to the

information processing system, approximately 5 to 9 units of information can be held in the working memory. Names with 4 or 5 syllables are in line with people's cognitive rules. While, if the names are too long, they would result in cognitive burden for consumers, difficult to remember such long information at a glance.

3.2 At the Lexical Level

3.2.1 By Numbers

The mechanisms are information processing system. E.g. 57°C Xiang *Province*. When consumers see restaurant names containing numbers, they couldn't help but ponder over the underlying meaning. The information has been focused on and gain processing from working memory. Consumers had better enter the restaurant if they are interested in the mystery, which demonstrate that 57°C is the best temperature for the food eating in the mouth as determined by the Culinary Association of China.

3.2.2 By Names

The owner's surname or full name is used in the restaurants names. The mechanism is inference. E.g. *Cold Noodle from Wei Jia*. Here, the restaurant is run the owner whose surname is Wei. Chinese has always attached great importance to the development of the family industry. Owners usually name the restaurant by their true names, which could inherit the family business. More importantly, this naming is similar to brand effect for consumers, who always assume names secretly convey the exquisite crafts and superior quality. As long as real names are used, consumers will naturally infer that it has a long historical, with outstanding quality and reasonable price.

People's nickname or salutation is also used, with schemata as mechanism. E.g. *Noodles Made by Wife*. Typically, wives are good at cooking. Facing with countless strange restaurant names in the street, only by linking with consumers' familiar things in life can better strike a chord in their hearts.

3.2.3 By Places or Cities

Its mechanism is schemata. E.g. *Chongqing Hot Pot*. Such names often reflect local characteristics straightly. Humans possess unlimited imagination, as long as a little information is mentioned, those implicit connections would be perceived by consumers. Through the literal message, consumers easily associate with pungent and spicy taste here, which is also derived from the consumers, with fine processing and deep memory.

3.2.4 By Animals, Plants, Sceneries and Other Objects

The mechanisms are schemata and IPS. Chinese dragon, bamboo and lotus are frequently used. When consumers see these things, they could easily imagine with no difficulty that Chinese dragon symbolizes auspicious beast, while lotus and bamboo highlights peoples with noble moral principle, and restaurants with elegant environment. Also, owners use some obscure objects. E.g. *Steamed Bun with Dog tongue in Youhuai Town*. Consumers must feel puzzled what is. Under IPT, consumers' stop, ponder and exploration will know the dog's tongue resembles clay oven rolls, wide and long.

3.2.5 By Blessing Words and Appraisive Language

The mechanisms are compliance of manner, inference and schemata. Maxim of manner requires to make the contribution relevant to the aims of the ongoing conversation. Owners combine their hope of flourishing business and best wishes such as happiness and integrity into names. Owners' naming psychology is obviously detected, which could please customers with same mentality, who have greater chances of consumption. People's knowledge determines they would produce deep-rooted and inherent perceptions of certain things. When consumers see time-honored brand and other appraisive language, they probably make corresponding inferences, and naturally expect attractive cuisine, first-class service, excellent quality.

3.2.6 By Poems, Idioms, TV Work, Literature, Songs, Celebrities, Television Columns, Etc.

The mechanism is schemata. This naming is achieved by quotation, mainly ones with widespread reputations. E.g. *Hot Pot of Zhang Liang, Casserole of Friends*. Whenever people see things, they would form specific and steady connections with former experiences. Zhang Liang, a famous model in China, is known as exquisite cooking skill. Here, consumers' glance of his name could assume appealing food of this restaurant. US series *Friends* unconsciously pull close distance with consumers by semantic information.

3.2.7 By Dialects

The mechanisms are schemata and IPT. Every region has its unique dialect. Names with dialects brings the familiarity to the consumers, long for the local specialties and bring curiosity for the non-local people, speculating what they are indeed.

3.2.8 By Operating Characteristics, Target Market and Health Care Efficacy

The mechanism is compliance of manner. Obeying this maxim, such names provide more definite dining information, such as restaurants target at spicy food, vegetarians and health preservation.

3.3 At the Rhetoric Level

3.3.1 By Homophony

The mechanisms are chunking and IPT. The pronunciation is *shilaiyunzhuan*, with the homophony between the Xi'an restaurant name 食来运转 and Chinese idiom 时来运转 (Every dog has its day). The former contains 4 syllables, while the latter 1 syllable. By chunking, random words are bound into a meaningful idiom, thus memory capacity is saved. In addition, Chinese citizens are pretty familiar with Chinese expression. They easily detect the restaurant stresses the food sold, rather than wrong words are used. While pondering, the processed information impresses deeper.

3.3.2 By Personification

The mechanism is schemata. E.g. *Crazy Chips.* This naming offers short-term immersion and perception, thus resistance decreases. Through personification, the inanimate things transform into characteristics unique to humans, which enables consumers better empathize with the restaurant, and bring their knowledge system into the anthropomorphic things. This increases the possibility of interaction with consumers, and reduce the feeling of being guided. Personification satisfies the emotional expression of consumers, eliminates the feeling of boundaries and strangeness. Empathy implicitly affects the psychology and behavior.

3.3.3 By Hyperbole and Irony

The mechanism is violation of quality, requiring to say true things. False and inadequate information can't appear. E.g. *No Barbecue*. It is a restaurant running grilled meats. But, the owner purposely express the opposite information. He creates the nervous and exaggerated atmosphere to arouse consumers' attention and make reasonable deduction.

3.3.4 By Reiterative

The mechanism is IPS. E.g.顶顶香，with the pronunciation of *dingdingxiang*. Repeated syllables stimulate people's hearing again and again, so that people's perception of speech is greatly enhanced (Yang Li, 2013). Thus, it has more chance to be retained by sensory memory. Also, many scholars have mentioned it enhance the rhythm of the language, giving the name of a harmonious musical aesthetic. The reasonable and proper use of reiterative in the restaurant names will produce an interesting and expressive effect.

3.3.5 By Onomatopoeia

The mechanism is schemata. E.g. *Zilala Shanghai Fried Plain Bun*. This naming, usually, imitates the sound in nature, more intuitive stimulation to consumers' sensory organs, and stimulate their sense of taste to have vivid association, as if they were immersing in nature.

3.4 At the Level of Glyph Structure

This naming is mainly made by traditional and rarely-used Chinese character, and the similarity of Chinese character. E.g. 龍門蚝客, 犇羴鱻, 口吕品酒家. The mechanism is maxim of manner, requiring to say clear things. Obscurity and ambiguity should be avoided. Here, the owner gives up the simplified and distinct characters, rather choose the more complicated form. The intention is obvious, to arouse consumers' attention.

4. Conclusion

Chinese restaurant names are a one-way, hidden form of advertising. Not only do they convey semantic information and establish brand effect, but produce economic effect. Owners rack their brains to generate some intriguing names to attract and resonate with consumers.

Acknowledgements

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