



Research Paper

A study on Pragmatic Function of Address Terms on Chinese Socialnetwork from Memetic Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This paper delves into the pragmatic functions of address terms on the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, commonly known as “Little Red Book”. In modern Chinese buzzwords, the scope of references to relatives and occupations has been expanded, showing the extension of social appellations and the blurring of gender boundaries. The study explores how users employ address terms, with the four address terms listed as “husband(老公)”, “wife(老婆)”, “mommy (妈妈/妈咪)” and “teacher (老师)” within the context of their posts and comments to fulfill various communicative goals. Based on the study of semantic generalization and memetic perspective, this paper seeks to comprehensively and clearly analyze the semantic generalization of appellatives in Chinese social media and its causes from three perspectives: the evolution of words, the situation of generalization, and the causes of generalization. Through qualitative analysis of a small self-built corpus of interactions, the research uncovers the multifaceted roles these terms play, for example, how they express intimacy, establish social relationships, or influence the reception of content. The paper also examines the impact of cultural norms and individual preferences on the choice and use of address terms. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the linguistic strategies employed in social media communication and provide insights into the evolving nature of address practices in the digital age. The study concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for social media interactions and the broader sociolinguistic landscape of contemporary China.

KEYWORDS: Address Term, Language Generalization, Meme

Received 08 Feb., 2025; Revised 17 Feb., 2025; Accepted 19 Feb., 2025 © The author(s) 2025.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, the study of sociolinguistic phenomena has expanded beyond traditional contexts to encompass the dynamic and diverse interactions on social media platforms. The forms of address used in these spaces reflect the intricate interplay of social, cultural, and personal factors that shape communication. This introduction aims to set the stage for a sociolinguistic inquiry into the use of address terms on the Little Red Book (Xiaohongshu), a platform that has garnered significant popularity among younger generations.

Address terms, as defined by Alenizi (2019), are integral to communication, serving not only as a means to direct speech towards a specific individual or group but also as a vehicle for expressing identity and social relationships. The seminal work of Brown & Gilman (1960) laid the groundwork for understanding the social dynamics inherent in forms of address. Their principles have since been applied and expanded upon in various sociolinguistic studies, revealing the complex ways in which address terms can convey respect, power dynamics, and social distance. One of the key insights from research on nominal address forms, as noted by Braun (1988), is the disconnection between the literal meaning of a word and its social meaning when used as an address term. This decoupling allows for a rich tapestry of address forms that can be adapted to different communicative contexts and purposes.

Xiaohongshu, founded in 2013, has become a vibrant community where users showcase their lifestyles and interact through shared interests. With a user base predominantly born after the 1990s, Xiaohongshu offers a unique lens through which to examine the pragmatic functions and social implications of address terms in a digital, youth-oriented context. The platform’s user demographics, as highlighted by Wu (2024), with 70% of its active users being post-1990s individuals, underscore the importance of understanding the evolving nature of address terms in this demographic. On Xiaohongshu, address terms exhibit distinctive characteristics: they often do not have a close relationship with their literal meanings and may even disregard traditional social

relationships, age, and gender. This observation raises intriguing questions about the pragmatic functions of generalized address terms in social networks and the factors influencing the spread of address form memes on social media.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the pragmatic functions performed by the generalized use of address terms on social networks?
2. What factors influence the spread of memes of address forms on social media?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Address Term

Domestic and foreign studies mostly discuss the influencing factors of address form, such as context, occasion, power, affinity, role, personal factors, subjective emotions, communicative purposes, and the age of the speaker. Beginning with the seminal work of Brown and Gilman (1960), they proposed dimensions of power and politeness to analyze the use of epithets. The work of Sifianou (1992), who extended Brown and Gilman's model to include more socio-cultural factors. The use of epithets has changed as society has evolved, as Eckert and McConell-Ginet (1992) explored the relationship between gender and language. Watts (1992) states that identifying the appropriate behavior necessitates the elaborated investigation of the fundamental sociocultural variables and contextual conditions. Agha (2007) argues that address term usage relies on widely shared ideological models of language use that assign a particular social significance to patterns of deictic utilization. Xu (2007) and Fang (2007) traced the diachronic evolution of the semantic meaning of individual address terms such as "miss"(小姐), "Sir"(先生) and "comrade"(同志) from a micro perspective.

From a whole point of view, forms of address can be divided into two categories, namely, kin terms and social terms (Dickey 1997). Among them, kin terms refer to relatives, such as "mum", "dad", "son", and "cousin", whereas social terms refer to non-relatives, such as "friends", "colleagues" or even "strangers" (Liu 2009; Sandel 2002). Yang & Chen (2020) pointed out that kin terms (e.g. 儿子) will be used in online discourse as a result of generalization of address forms.

In the modern context, especially in the context of digital media and globalization, the use of appellatives presents new features and trends. In recent years, the rise of social media has provided new contexts for the use of appellatives, as in Danet and Herr-Steinhart's (2003) study of appellatives in online communication.

There are a number of research gaps in studies on address terms. The following is a description of these research gaps:

1. Differences between face-to-face interactions and social media discourse:

Most of the existing research has focused on face-to-face interactions and neglected the use of address terms in social media discourse. With the popularity of social media, communication between users has increasingly shifted to online platforms, which requires researchers to explore the use of address terms in non-face-to-face communication.

2. Functions of address term in social media:

Another research gap concerns whether address term in social media can fulfill the same functions as in face-to-face interactions. In online environments, it may carry different social and emotional meanings, and their use may be influenced by the characteristics of the digital medium, such as emoticons, cyberlanguage, and so on.

3. Lack of multimodal analysis:

Existing studies often lack an analysis of the use of address term at the multimodal level. Multimodal communication includes a variety of communication modes such as language, images, sounds and videos, and these elements together constitute the full picture of communication. In social media, the use of appellatives is often combined with other modalities such as emoticons, images, and videos to form a rich form of communication. Researchers need to adopt a multimodal analysis approach to fully understand the use of predicates in social media and their effects.

Henceforth, studies of address term need to expand into the social media domain and adopt a more integrated research approach to reveal its role and meaning in modern communication.

2.2 Meme

The term meme was first proposed by biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene* to describe the unit of cultural information dissemination. With the development of the Internet, meme evolved into a phenomenon in online culture, i.e., images, texts, videos, etc. that spread rapidly through social media.

Dawkins (1976) believes that in cultural evolution, there is also such a gene-like replicator, that is, “meme”. It is mainly produced by the process of imitation. She argues that memes are information that replicates through mutation and selection. The selection of memes also drives the evolution of ideas to a certain extent. As memes reproduce, they mutate. Language is also a meme. In the process of transmission, language will be subject to subjective or objective influences and inevitably undergo language variation. If some words or phrases want to become a language meme, they must have three characteristics, which are imitative, replicative and propagative.

Foreign research on meme is more mature, and the research includes the definition, classification, communication characteristics, and socio-psychological effects of meme. Some studies regard meme as a cultural phenomenon and analyze its cross-cultural communication and influence in the context of globalization (Shifman, 2014). In addition, there are also studies focusing on the application of meme in politics, business and other fields, exploring its potential as a social mobilization and marketing tool (Milner, 2012). Domestic research on meme started later, focusing mainly on the dissemination mechanism, social impact of meme in network culture, and the cultural meaning behind it. For example, some studies have analyzed the transmission path of meme in online communities and explored its impact on social values and youth culture (Xiong, 2019; Ma, 2021). Despite the fact that existing studies provide a multidimensional perspective for our understanding of meme, there are still some research gaps. For example, there are relatively few studies on the differences in meme communication in different cultural and linguistic contexts.

2.3 Pragmatic function of address terms

Foreign studies usually explore the pragmatic functions of predicates from the following perspectives. Firstly, from a sociolinguistic point of view, it studies how address terms embody and construct social relations and identities, such as power, respect and intimacy. Some linguistic studies involving cross-cultural communication also analyze the differences in the use of appellatives in different cultural contexts and how these differences affect communication effects (Ide & Yamashita, 1998). From the pragmatics perspective, the strategic use of address terms in specific communicative situations, such as politeness strategy and face maintenance, is mainly studied. Converted to the domestic research field, researchers usually tend to study the use of address term and their pragmatic functions in different social relations and contexts (Zhao, 1997). With the development of social media on the Internet, studies have emerged to analyze the innovative use of appellatives in the online environment and the impact of these emerging usages on social relations (Ge, et al).

Based on the results of previous research and independent observation of the Little Red Book platform, we constructed a comprehensive pragmatic functional framework to analyze the phenomenon of the use of address terms on the Xiaohongshu platform. The framework integrates multi-dimensional pragmatic functions as follows:

1. Strategic Function:

This study will explore the strategic use of address terms in online communication. When interacting with unfamiliar Internet users, the choice of appellatives may be based on specific strategies, such as opening a conversation, attracting attention, or using specific appellatives when making a request in order to enhance communication. This strategic use reflects the critical role of appellatives in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

2. Cultural Function:

The study will analyze how address terms reflect and convey specific cultural characteristics and values. For example, in a specific cultural group, for instance the ACGN (Animation, Comic, Game, Novel) group, the use of the title “mommy(妈咪)” reflects the group’s unique communication habits and cultural identity.

3. Affective and Social Function:

This study will examine the role of address terms in expressing emotions and establishing social relationships. The use of specific epithets may implicitly serve an evaluative function, whereby only individuals who fulfill certain conditions (e.g., pretty physical characteristics) are given specific title. Such usage is usually associated with praise and commendation, conveying the speaker’s affective attitude. In addition, variations in titles (e.g., from “妈妈” to “妈咪” to “咪”) break down gender and age constraints to a certain extent, and sound more intimate and natural, reflecting the closeness of the relationship. The gradual change of titles not only conveys emotional expression, but also reflects the gradual closeness of the relationship, which is particularly important in conversations between strangers on the Internet.

III. METHODOLOGY

In examining interactive discourse on social media platforms, a systematic methodology was adopted to ensure rigor and depth of the study. This study focuses on Xiaohongshu, a popular social sharing platform in China, to explore how users express intimacy and social roles through interactions in the comments section.

First, we defined the keywords for the study, including the kinship terms “husband(老公)”, “wife(老婆)”, and “mommy (妈妈/妈咪)”, and the social terms “teacher(老师)”. These terms reflect not only intimate relationships between individuals, but also social roles and status. Through these keywords, we were able to capture how users construct and express these relationships on Xiaohongshu.

In the data collection phase, we collected the interactive discourse by searching these keywords on Xiaohongshu. To ensure the authenticity and representativeness of the data, we manually filtered these discourses to create a small corpus. This process ensured that it was able to deeply analyze the interaction patterns and discourse expressions among users. Based on the four keywords above, we collected a total of 180 authentic discourse, 45 for each keyword (which included the body of the notes as well as the real comments under the notes). The self-built corpus contains 11886 words, as well as usernames, text messages, emoticons and memes used by users.

In the data analysis phase, we used NVivo (version. Release 1.2 (426)), a specialized qualitative research tool that helped us code, categorize, and thematically analyze the data we collected. With NVivo, this paper was able to identify the main conversational patterns in the discourse for systematic generalization and classification. In addition, we considered the context of the discourse, the relationship between the user and the blogger, and the sentiment of the discourse, all of which may affect the expression and reception of the discourse. By synthesizing these dimensions, our study aims to provide a comprehensive perspective.

Overall, the methodology of this study combines qualitative analysis and quantitative data collection through systematic keyword searches and NVivo’s data analysis to provide a new perspective to deeply understand user interactions on social media platforms.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Referent of the address terms

REFERENT	CASE NUMBER
Consistency of recipient with real semantics	1
Inconsistency between recipient gender and real semantics	30
Inconsistency between recipient identity and true semantics	149

Table 1: Statistics on the (in)consistency of the recipient with the original semantic meaning of the address term

The results of the study show that in the analyzed interactive discourses on the Xiaohongshu platform, the consistency and inconsistency of the appellatives with their true semantics show significant differences. Specifically, there are only one case in which the predicates are consistent with their true semantics, while there are 149 and 30 cases in which the predicates are inconsistent with their true semantics, identity and gender, respectively. This phenomenon suggests that the four selected appellatives show a tendency to generalize in actual use.

- (1) 61:@aY 🤔
 aY:但是你真的是我老公呀 🤔
But you ARE my husband 🤔
 61 回复 aY: 老婆 🤔
Wifey 🤔

In very few cases, the use of the appellatives was consistent with their traditional or literal meanings. This may indicate that in some specific contexts, users still follow the traditional rules for the use of appellatives, or that appellatives are used more conservatively and traditionally in a particular social or cultural context (Dickey, 1997).

- (2) 滨眠 ^ RuoioTwT: 老公你你怎么.....

Husband, how did you...

我老公简直帅呆了#吉赛尔 #giselle #老公

My husband is so gorgeous #giselle # Giselle # husband

(3) 次序你就放心:沉浸式第一视角

Immersive first perspective

替互联网姐妹摸了, 一手包不下 🍑

I touched it for my Internet sisters, my boyfriend's peccs can't fit in one hand...

#男朋友 #情侣 #男妈妈 #健身 #肌肉 #男大学生

boyfriend # couples # male mom # fitness # muscles # male college student

(4) 池樱花是你家含光君: 老公.....我深圳的, 近吗, 近来来跟我谈一下 🍑

My husband... I'm from Shenzhen. If it's close, please come and be my girlfriend 🍑

冻羽(作者): 我擦我也是深圳的我也是深圳的

OMG, I'm from Shenzhen, too.

The main cases of gender inconsistency between the appellative and the recipient are summarized below. As in (2), fans' cross-gender portrayal of their idols may use terms that are inconsistent with traditional gender roles out of their deep love for their idols and personal emotional projection. For example, female fans call their female idols "husband", a usage that transcends the limitations of biological sex and reflects a fan's imagining and shaping of the idol's intimate relationship. The use of this address term reflects a new way of expressing intimacy in fan culture. In Internet culture, the term "husband" is sometimes used for women who are handsome or unisex in appearance. This usage may be intended to emphasize the handsome, unisex appearance of these women in (4). Through the use of such address term, netizens to a certain extent reshape the way of gender identity and expression, reflecting the recognition of gender diversity and fluidity (Smith, 2021).

At the same time, there is also a gendered shaping of address to partners (Rendle-Short, 2009). Women may refer to their male partners as "male moms", especially if they exhibit behaviors traditionally considered feminine, such as taking care of the family and being compassionate. The use of this title may be to emphasize certain positive attributes of the male partner, such as gentleness and consideration, or to refer to the advantages of being well-built, as in (3). It may also be a humorous or playful challenge to gender roles.

The diversity of gender identity and expression in modern society is not only reflected in the self-modeling of personal identity, but also in social and cultural changes and the development of Internet language. People are exploring and expressing their gender identities, and at the same time redefining and reconstructing social expectations and perceptions of gender roles. This is both a manifestation of individual freedom of expression and a sign of the gradual opening up and diversification of the social concept of gender.

(5) 熟人别发现我: 这话说的真没错, 你叫一个男的老公, 一直叫, 哪天不叫了, 他自己就怀疑了。



This is really true, you always call a male husband, once you don't, he will suspect himself

你这样就不可爱了: 真的吗老公

Really, husband?

熟人别发现我回复 你这样就不可爱了: 别问, 问就是真的。还能给你买香云纱那种。

Absolutely. I can even buy you a gambiered Guangdong gauze.

(6) 香辣鱼小姐姐: 什么老公你是一辈子的老婆 🍑

You're not a husband. You're my wife for life 🍑

麻辣椰丝儿作者: 遵命

Ok!

(7) 七屿: 老婆穿冲锋衣好帅 🏠 (置顶评论)

Wifey, you look good in a storm jacket 🏠 (Pinned comment)

时迩(作者): ARISEISM

(Cloth brand)

(8) 愿你无忧：啊啊啊👉摸摸老师，其实不一定要出掉，可以留最喜欢的宝宝在身边到最后一刻的

Awww👉! In fact, you don't have to sell this doll, you can keep your favorite baby around until the last moment

要成为光. 作者：谢谢宝宝❤️其实我想出掉是感觉他们年纪轻轻就跟着我住在地下有点委屈👉我有点犹豫，但是我又很喜欢，有些舍不得👉

Thank you, babe❤️! Actually, I want to sell because I feel a little aggrieved that they're living underground with me at such a young age👉. I'm a little hesitant, but I really like them. I'm still hesitating👉...

In the collected conversations, it is possible to observe the inconsistency between the identity expressed by most of the recipients and the original intent of the address terms, a generalization that also reflects the innovative and open nature of the Internet for new appellations (Smith & Lee, 2020).

Traditionally, “老公” is a term used by wives to address their husbands, and “老婆” is a term used by husbands to address their wives. After generalization, “husband” is sometimes used to address a favorite male or female idol or any male or female with excellent qualities, showing the adoration and idealization. On the other hand, “husband” and “wife” can be used as a friendly or intimate term of address for others (e.g., (5) (6) (7)), and often the times “老婆” is used as a joke or intimate term of address between women.

“Mommy” is a term of endearment for a mommy, usually used within the family. However, “mommy” is sometimes used to refer to someone with maternal qualities or a caring and warm feeling, regardless of their real identity or gender. The term “mommy” can transcend blood relations and become a way of expressing affection and care.

“Teacher” is used to refer to a person who is engaged in teaching or imparting knowledge and skills. On Xiaohongshu, “teacher” can refer to anyone who has specialized knowledge or skills in a particular field and can provide guidance or assistance. Particularly, in the ACGN circle, teacher is generalized to mean anyone who socializes here, as in example (8). With the emergence of new professions and social identities, such as those who produce secondary creations in the ACGN community, the need for applicable titles increases. As a generalized address, “teacher” can make up for the lack of titles and meet the needs of social communication. Meanwhile, Chinese culture has a tradition of respecting teachers, and this cultural psychology has led to the widespread use and acceptance of the title “teacher” in social communication.

INTIMACY	CASE NUMBER
Familiar	6
Stranger	174

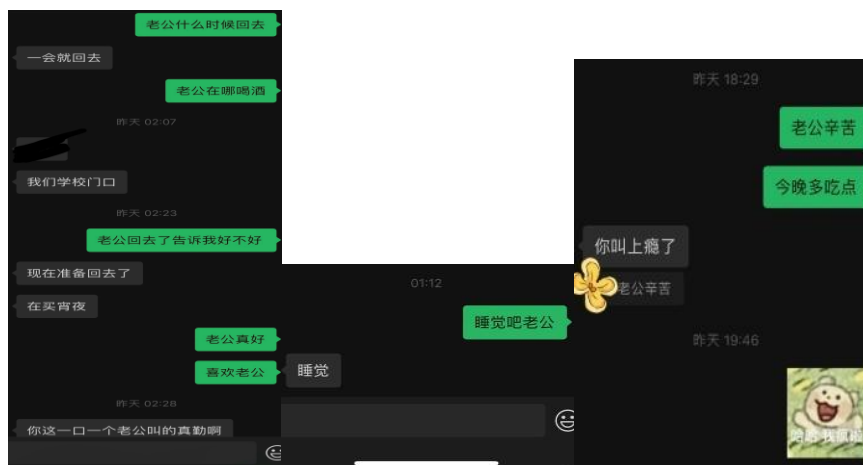
Table 2: Statistics on affinity between recipients and speakers

(9) 坚持每天叫 crush 老公☐

Call crush the husband everyday ☐

咱们追人主打一个先斩后奏，坚持每天叫 crush 老公，相信总有一天他会习惯然后真的觉得自己是我老公。👉👉#和 crush 聊天 #关于我的 crush #年下小奶狗#聊天记录 #crush #女追男#坚持喊 crush 老公

Let's daily call crush the husband, believe that one day he get used to it and then really think he is my husband. // # Chat with crush # About my crush # young cute boy # Chat history #crush # girl chasing guy # Insist on calling crush husband



(10)_Skuld : 无法和老婆合照 陷入 emo

It makes me sad that I can't take a picture with my wife

霧島 A_桑作者 : 我我我错了! 下次一定给你远集 🏠🏠🏠❤❤❤

I-i-i was wrong! Next time I will give you a distant group photo 🏠🏠🏠❤❤❤

The statistics show that the vast majority of people using research address are targeting strangers (Maalej, 2010). Very few, as in (9) and (10), use it with people they know or are familiar with in real life. This may be due to the nature of the platform. Xiaohongshu users share life experiences, tutorials and tips on the platform more than personal relationships. Xiaohongshu users are predominantly young people, who may be more accustomed to informal, personalized terms of address rather than traditional titles. In addition, young people focus on privacy protection and will avoid using titles on social platforms that may reveal personal relationships.

4.2 Functions of the generalized address terms

FUNCTION	CASE NUMBER
Strategic function	69
Cultural function	51
Affective and social function	96

Table 3: Statistics on the functions of address terms

The use of research appellations in the Little Red Book combines both Strategic function, Cultural function and Affective and Social function, and their percentages are similar due to the overlap of functions.

(11) 小鱼 : 有没有老公能告诉我这个软件是什么!! 麻烦了.....

Can any husband tell me what this software is? thank you

momo : talkmaker

小鱼 : 回复 momo: 谢谢老公.....!!

Thank you, husband...!!

(12) 窗棂斜映枝桠 : 老婆蹲个眼珠子 🤪 (置顶评论)

Wifey, I want to know what brand of contact lenses you have 🤪! (Pinned comment)

苏我入鹿作者 : 拉拜诗 甜蜜复兴

(The brand name of the contact lenses)

(13) 神里奈機子:老婆好萌 , 可以扩列吗 🤪

Wife you are so cute, can I have your contact information 🤪?

小痛_ItamiChan 作者:宝宝我只有□和 wb 发东西 , 但是可以扩!

Babe, I only post on little Red book and Weibo, but I can add your friends!

神里奈機子回复 小痛_ItamiChan: 老婆可以发一下 vx 号吗 🥰

Wifey, can you send me your WeChat number 🥰

小痛_ItamiChan 作者回复 神里奈機子: itamichan

(WeChat number)

神里奈機子回复 小痛_ItamiChan: 老婆发了交友请求，别忘了通过一下，叫 mine 🥰

Wife, I made a friend request, don't forget to pass it, my WeChat name is mine

(14) 林淮 (社畜版) : 老师请问这个娃娃叫什么呀

Teacher, what's the name of this doll

Kylie 作者 : 山口忠三丽鸥努努

(Name of the doll)

林淮 (社畜版) 回复 Kylie: 谢谢老师 🥰

Thank you, teacher

Kylie 作者回复 林淮 (社畜版) : 没事啾

You are welcome.

The strategic meanings of address words in communication are multidimensional, and they also carry a rich set of pragmatic functions. The strategic significance involved in the study mainly consists of the degree of completion for two speech acts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

Inquiry. Addressers serve as conversation starters in the act of inquiry. The notes of Xiaohongshu are mostly focused on fashion, and in inquiries about fashion items, such as contact lens or clothing brands, address terms can be used as a strategy to demonstrate the speaker's interest in the topic and his or her expectation of the response. (e.g. (11), (12), (14)). The addressers involved in the study can also be used to modulate the directness of the questioning by using more euphemistic or intimate terms of address to moderate the offense or discomfort that direct questioning may cause.

Request. In the act of requesting can express a social intention, such as a desire to make a connection or deepen a relationship. As shown in example (13), requesting to get to know the other person in reality, the use of “老婆” can convey a sense of closeness, which can help to break down the barrier of the initial communication and increase the success rate of the request.

With the regarding of the strategic function face theory, the use of terms of endearment such as “husband”, “wife” and “mommy” can enhance the emotional connection between each other and satisfy the need for positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Calling the other person “teacher” may express recognition of the other person and satisfy the other person's positive face. The use of honorifics is a process of face negotiation. Through the choice of address, the speaker expresses respect for the listener and at the same time seeks the listener's respect and recognition. Choosing to use or avoiding the use of certain epithets in situations that may cause controversy or discomfort can be a face-saving strategy. For example, avoiding the use of epithets that may be controversial in terms of sexism preserves face for both the speaker and the listener.

(15) inwinter(好运版): **崔秀彬是老公中的老公**

Cui Xiubin is the husband of the husband

崔秀彬是老公。丈夫。男力帝王。男力泥石流。完全暴力的优质 alpha。男人中的男人。雄性中的雄性。男人中的支配者。男人中的统治者。男人中的王。#TXT #崔秀彬 #txt #txt 崔秀彬 #TXT 崔秀彬

Cui Xiubin is my husband. Male power emperor. Male force mudslide. A quality alpha of total violence. A man's man. The male of males. Dominant among men. Ruler among men. The king of men. #TXT # Choi Soo-bin #txt # Choi Soo-bin #TXT Choi Soo-bin

(16) 今天追 Kpop 了吗: **女神，宝宝，老公随意切换的姜海粼**


Goddess, baby, the husband, Jiang Hailin

又要说了，丈夫的美貌，妻子的荣耀 □ □ #姜海粼 #壁纸 #头像 #newjeans #女团 #kpop

Again I say, her husband's beauty and the glory of his wife □ □ # Jiang Hailin # wallpaper # image # newjeans convent # # kpop

(17) Chanyl: 混卡圈也大半年了, 依旧不知道收卡姐妹叫我老公我该怎么回复

I have been socializing in the card circle for more than half a year, and I still don't know how to reply when my sister calls me husband

(18) 秋和饱饱: 出现了, 90 后和 00 后乃至 95 后的代沟  , 因为老婆这个词是年轻一代的追星女带火的, 就是叫自己很喜欢的女明星老婆, 是一种捧场的方式, 然后慢慢在美化圈, 或者一些手作圈开始流行, 一些二次元的圈子甚至互称“妈咪”, 我妹第一次叫我“妈咪”的时候吓我一跳, 后面才知道是二次元圈里面女生之间的尊称, 后面听久了就习惯了, 甚至我有时候买徽章也会叫人家妈咪哈哈...

This is the generation gap between the post-90s and post-00s and even post-95s. Because the word “wife” is a young generation of star-chasing women with fire. They call their favorite female star wife, is a way to raise the audience. Slowly taking off in ACGN circles. When my sister called me “mommy” for the first time, I was shocked, and later I realized that it was a respectful name between girls in the second Yuan circle. You get used to it after a long time, and even when I buy badges, I call people mommy...

The four address terms involved in the study can map different subcultural elements of the stargazing fan community and the ACGN community.

By addressing their idols as “husband”, “wife”, and “mommy”, fans establish a psychologically close relationship, as in (15), (16). In the fan community, the use of such terms of endearment helps to establish and strengthen the sense of identity and belonging among community members (Sandel, et al. 2019). As a meme, this kind of address is highly infectious and spreadable, and can become popular and widely accepted in a relatively short period of time.


The term “mommy” originated as a term of endearment used by ACGN creators for their creations, indicating the creators’ devotion and emotion to their works. The term “mommy” has evolved into a term of respect and recognition from fans, and the ACGN community calls each other “husband”, “wife”, “teacher” or “mommy”. These specific names are part of the culture of the secondary community, helping to establish a special bond and identity between members, and facilitating communication and interaction within the community (Chen, 2022).




(19) **Husband, I came to compliment you**

(20) 呪薊: 老婆我眼睛里嗓子里嘴巴里的都是你

Honey, I miss you in every part of my body

(21) 赵露思: 老婆越做越强!  我永远相随

My wife becomes stronger and stronger!  I'll always be with you

赵露思: 喜欢老婆的每一面!! 日抛又日更的正能量博主谁不爱呢!!! 跟着老婆一起做福宝小熊 

Love every side of you, my wife!! Who won't love a positive blogger who gets better every day !

!!! Be a Fubao bear with your wife 

(22) 崽崽: 我并不觉得这样就是好看的。在互联网上说些似是而非的文案去撩拨涉世未深的姑娘就是好的, 在这个 5G 生活里, 一切都是快速的, 没有谁会停下来去等一个人, 也不会有人为了看一张图专门去发一些不知羞的评论, 我认为这违反了互联网建立的初衷。你认为这就是美的吗? 引流就是对的吗? 是的, 下次多发点, 别人我不敢说, 我是真喜欢你, 哪怕他们封建守旧, 我嘴里这声老婆也永远为你而留

I don't think it's pretty. It is good to say some specious copywriting on the Internet to tease girls who are not yet familiar with the world, in this 5G life, everything is fast, no one will stop to wait for a person, and no one will send some shameless comments in order to see a picture. I think this violates the original intention of the Internet. Do you think this is beautiful? Is attract attention right? Yes, next time please post more, I really like you, even if they are feudal and old-fashioned, I will always call you my wife

dokidoki 作者：哈哈哈哈哈

Hahaha

(23) 無脊椎動物：老师你真的特别可爱！粉嫩少女感我觉得已经很贴合了！

Teacher, you are really cute! I think you already fit the pink girl feeling!

A large part of the use of epithets is to express feelings of fondness for the receiver, as in examples (19)-(23), and these traits might be looks, talent, or other nice qualities.

ATTITUDE	CASE NUMBER
Negative	10
Neutral	11
Positive	159

Table 4: Statistics on attitude of address terms

(24) 老婆们 表情包是我收藏在微信里的 我不知道要怎么发

Wives, memes are my collection in WeChat. I do not know how to send

(25) 龔_HONG:这个系列什么时候能结束...受不了了

When will this series end...

我真的笑死了...这个二创简直要了命

It was so funny

再编：老公们私信求图的不再回了  太多人求了发得我养胃了，喜欢的自行截图裁剪吧


Edited: Husbands, too many people send me private messages asking for pictures. Like their own screenshot cut it, I will not reply

As mentioned above, most of the use of appellatives is mostly combined with speech acts such as compliments, expressing a positive attitude. However, there are a few cases where it is used only as a generic term for all those who can see the appellation, as in (24) and (25), and this uncertainty about the recipients of the appellation gives the it a polite but neutral attitude.

(26) 开心黑色冰粉:为什么要对女人喊老公

Why do you call a woman a husband

...首先 你就定义了热情大方有本事有能力是归属于男性 还在那老公是一种态度 那为什么不喊

老婆  老婆就不是态度?? 骗骗姐们好了 别把自己也骗着了


First of all, you have defined that passion, generosity, ability and ability belong to men. When you say, "Husband is an attitude". Why not call wife/wife is not an attitude? Don't lie to yourself

(27) shbsh:真的好烦老公这个称呼

I'm so sick of the husband thing

同理还有哥哥，以及以此延伸的 lgd1 (老公点了)

The same goes for brothers, and by extension, lgd1 (showing agreement).

我顺直女□不婚主义，听到这个称呼跟被□沾上了一样难受，尤其是被叫到自己头上  认识到对面大概率也是女性...还有可能是年纪比较小的女性...又会有种无力感...所以我会偏向于认为使用这个称呼的大多是三观还没有完全形成的未成年人。然后本社科人就开始自动思考，这是大家成长必须要

经过这一个坎吗？堵不如疏，如何才能更好的引导青少年的认知发展呢？🤔以及...或许这个词在某种情况下也有好处？#哲学思考 #教育 #婚姻 #应用心理学 #未成年 #出谷 #每日分享

I am a straight woman, I am not married, hear the husband is particularly disgusting. Recognizing that the opposite side is more likely to be female... Maybe a younger woman... There will be a feeling of powerlessness... So I tend to think that most people who use this title are minors who have not yet fully formed their three views. Then the social science people began to automatically think, this is the growth of everyone must go through this hurdle? Blockage is better than thinning, how can we better guide the cognitive development of teenagers? As well as... Maybe the word is good in some situations?

(28) Emily ☐小米粒: 很不喜欢女生之间互喊“老婆”怎么办

I don't like girls calling each other "wife"

就非常不喜欢直播间里买东西，或者不是很熟的女生叫老婆来老婆去的...本来就是直的，总觉得人与人之间还是要有些边界感的🤔

I do not like to buy things in the broadcast room, or the girl who is not very familiar with the wife to call the wife to go... I'm straight, the sense of boundaries is good for us...

也不喜欢女生之间太过暧昧的玩笑，除非关系真的特别好，老闺蜜那种，不然真的没有边界感，有点点恶心.....【不要喷，没有厌女的意思

I don't like the girl joke overly, unless relationship really very good, otherwise really feel a bit sick... .. (No misogynistic meaning

(29) 千秋：只叫“咪”而不是“妈咪”的话适应良好。单“咪”一个字可以看成是什么“摩尔”一样的化学单位

看待，“妈咪”这种就很难受了。😭

Just "Mi" instead of "Mommy" fits in well. A single word "mi" can be regarded as a chemical unit like "mole", and "mommy" is very uncomfortable.

对不起我是儿宝女: 我也是，每次都是咪，这已经是我的极限了...都是同龄人相互叫妈我不太能想这样...虽然我不建议别人喊我妈咪但是我自己的话是只喊咪，老师，老大这样

Me, too... Though the peers are calling each other "mom", I don't really want to do that... I don't recommend calling me "Mommy" but I could accept being called teacher or boss

An interesting phenomenon is the emergence of the receiver's negative emotions towards address, which are manifested as aversion, resistance, etc. This resistance stems from gender role stereotypes. In traditional gender roles, "husband" usually refers to the male spouse, which reflects the inherent impression of gender roles (Kolay & Thomas, 2022). The use of the term "husband" implies an inequality of power in traditional gender roles, and may be interpreted as an underestimation of women's abilities, while ignoring women's right to choose their own identity as independent individuals. Feminism advocates gender equality and opposes gender role stereotyping, so girls may not like this traditional gender-based term of endearment. It's worth noting that most people don't accept the term wife simply because they feel there is not enough emphasis on a sense of personal boundaries.

As for the term "mommy", there is a simplification of personal identity and role, ignoring the age and status of the recipient, and at the same time associating women mainly with family and motherhood (Du, 2017). Being called "mommy" may be accompanied by certain social expectations of women, such as tenderness, thoughtfulness, and caring for the family, etc., and these expectations may bring additional pressure on women. These expectations may put additional pressure on women. In addition, because of the traditional attachment to the family role of mother in China (Ren & Chen, 2019), calling someone "mommy" is an invasion of personal space, as it suggests a close blood relationship that does not actually exist.

Finally, the self-constructed corpus did not show any negative attitude towards teacher (Chen & Ren, 2020). The most important point is that teacher is classified as a social title, whereas husband, wife, and mom are classified as kinship titles, which require a higher sense of privacy and family boundaries. In traditional Chinese culture, "teacher" is an honorific title for a person who teaches and learns, representing respect and esteem. When unsure of how to address someone appropriately, "teacher" is a safe and polite choice for many social situations. As a very successfully generalized term of endearment, recipients generally perceive teacher as a polite, egalitarian, flexible and controllable term of endearment.

Overall, the methodology of this study combines qualitative analysis and quantitative data collection through systematic keyword searches and NVivo's data analysis to provide a new perspective to deeply understand user interactions on social media platforms.

V. CONCLUSION

This study delves into the use of the four predicates “老公”, “老婆”, “妈咪”, and “老师”, and their pragmatic functions, in a specific social context on Xiaohongshu are used and their pragmatic functions. By comprehensively considering the four dimensions of recipients, intimacy, function and attitude, this paper draws the following conclusions. The use of the address reflects the identification of the receiver’s identity and role. In online social networking, these epithets often go beyond their traditional meanings and are used in a generalized way to fit a wider range of social scenarios and build diverse social relationships. Then, the use of terms of endearment is an indicator of intimacy conveys the closeness of the relationship. For example, “husband” and “wife” are used to enhance intimacy or express special attention to the other person. Address carries a variety of functions in communication, including, but not limited to, opening a dialog, requesting help, and expressing respect. Lastly, the majority of Xiaohongshu users have positive attitudes toward these epithets, believing that they convey good emotions. However, there are also some users who believe that they do not respect gender equality, violate personal space, etc., and have negative resistance to them.

This study argues that the generalized use of predicates is a product of the development of social media culture, and that their functions and meanings in online environments differ from those in traditional contexts. Pronouns serve not only as a component of language, but also as a vehicle for cultural and social interactions, reflecting a new understanding of gender roles, intimacy and social etiquette in modern society. This study provides a new perspective for understanding the use of appellatives on online social platforms, and has important theoretical and practical value for research in the fields of linguistics, social psychology and cross-cultural communication. It helps to reveal the characteristics of online language, promotes a deeper understanding of online social behavior, and provides guidance for communication on social platforms. With this study, we expect to provide a deeper understanding of the use of appellative language and to support the promotion of effective communication in online social environments.

Although this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the use of appellative language, there are still some limitations. For example, the study mainly focused on one specific platform, Xiaohongshu, and may fail to cover the use of appellatives on all social platforms. In addition, the study relied mainly on qualitative descriptions in terms of sentiment analysis, and future research could adopt a more quantitative approach to measure the intensity and nature of the emotions conveyed by appellatives. Future research could expand the sample to include more social platforms and cultural contexts to further validate and enrich the findings of this study.

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