Linguistic analysis of Chinese neologisms from 2017 to 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language mirrors changes in society, characterized by what Bright (1966) describes as a "systematic covariance of linguistic structure and social structure" (p.11). Among the components of language, the lexicon stands out as the most sensitive and dynamic part, undergoing noticeable and rapid changes in response to societal developments (Sun et al., 2018). With the significant development of society and globalization of the world, new concepts and phenomena constantly emerge, leading to dramatic changes in languages across the globe (Aikhenvald, Dixon, Jarkey 2021).

China, in particular, has witnessed profound social transformation and continuous cultural and intellectual development since the Reform and opening up in 1978. This evolution has given rise to a multitude of neologisms, coined to express fresh ideas, refer to novel entities, describe emerging phenomena, and establish new identities. These neologisms serve as mirrors reflecting the rapid societal transformation. In essence, through the lens of Chinese neologisms, we can observe the Zeitgeist, the passions and the fashions of this era and perceive the psychology of language users (Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019). Chen (2000) indicates that Chinese neologisms serve as pioneers in reflecting the evolving social landscape in China. These new words and expressions not only broaden people's horizons but also enrich and expand their language proficiency.

Research on neologisms, from an internal point of view, can "contribute to a better understanding of the lexical system of a given language" and help observe its evolutions; while from an external point of view, it can provide rich "information about the linguistic communities in their material lives and social representations" (Sablayrolles, 2019, p.7). As Tao (2017) points out, investigating Chinese neologisms reveals the ongoing societal changes and evolving attitudes among the populace. Furthermore, the study of neologisms holds great significance in the context of language teaching and learning (Rets, 2016; Cheng, 2018; Sun et al., 2018).

In order to monitor the variation in the Chinese language and enhance a better understanding of its development, the Chinese State Language Commission released the first edition of *Language Situation in China in 2006*（《中国语言生活状况报告(2006)》） (henceforth LSC) in 2007 and since then the report has been published annually. The LSC serves as a vital resource, not only providing valuable insights into the usage of the Chinese language but also serving as the most comprehensive annual compendium of research on the state of the Chinese language. It covers a wide range of fields, including language use in politics, the economy, culture social life etc. Additionally, it collects data on media neologisms and internet buzzwords.

This study investigates the neologisms collected by LSC from 2017 to 2021, discussing their origins, analyzing their characteristics, and exploring the creation approaches of these neologisms through a linguistic perspective. Section 2 delves into the definitions of neologisms. Section 3 provides an overview of linguistic research on Chinese neologisms. In section 4, I delve into the origins of Chinese neologisms. Following that, I discuss the characteristics of Chinese neologisms, considering phonetic features and semantic domains. Finally, in Section 6, I analyze the creation methods of neologisms through the phonetic, morphological and semantic layers of the language.

2. Definition

The word "neologism" itself was a brand-new coinage in the second half of the 18th century, borrowed by English speakers from the French term *néologisme*. However, the roots of the word can be traced back to ancient Greek "*neos*", meaning "new", and "*logos*", meaning "word" (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). There is no consensus about the definition of neologisms in academia, as it depends on the linguistic theory held by researchers (Rets, 2016). Here I focus solely on definitions provided by lexicographers. Baayen (2010) defines a neologism as "a newly coined word or expression, or a new meaning for an existing word or expression, that has not yet become widely accepted in the language community" (p. 900). Newmark (2001) describes "neologism" as "newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense" (p.140). Wang (1992) refers to neologisms as "newly created or borrowed words from other languages, from the national language of dialect words, archaisms and industry language, and also refer to existing words with new meanings and new usages" (p.16). Fromkin et al. (2013) suggest that a neologism is a newly created word or phrase that has not yet been fully integrated into the lexicon of a language community. Such terms may be used in a specialized context or by a specific group of people, and their meanings may not be widely recognized or accepted by the general public. Neologisms can originate from a variety of sources, including technological advances, cultural trends, and changes in social norms.

While some neologisms may eventually become widely adopted and become part of the standard language, others may remain limited to specific groups or contexts. It can be concluded that the creation of new words and new meanings for existing words are two fundamental aspects of neologisms. Additionally, some scholars also emphasize that loanwords from other languages or dialects constitute another key feature of neologisms (Wang, 1992; Yu, 2001a; Fan,2015; Tao, 2017).

Based on the above definitions, Chinese neologisms in this study refer to newly created words or phrases, new meanings for existing words or phrases, and loanwords borrowed from other languages or dialects. These terms express new things, concepts, ideas, experiences, or social issues in Chinese society and culture that have not yet gained widespread acceptance in the Chinese language.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistics studies on Chinese neologisms began in the mid-20th century. The research by Gao and Liu (1958) on loanwords marked the first systematic exploration of the field. However, the study of Chinese neologisms did not attract considerable attention until 1984 when two influential Chinese linguists, Lü Shuxiang and Chen Yuan, published two groundbreaking articles (Liu, et al. 2011; Liu and Zeng, 2017). In Lü work (1984), he examined the origin and formation of neologisms, as well as the phenomenon of new meanings emerging from existing words. Chen (1984), on the other hand, astutely observed the constant emergence of neologisms in everyday languages, such as '超级市场' (chāojíshìchǎng, meaning 'supermarket'), and discussed the generation of neologisms from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Liu and Zeng (2017) conducted a quantitative analysis of research papers on Chinese neologisms over different periods, leading to the division of the research development into three distinct phases. The first phase, the pre-1980s era, marked the gestation period of neologism research. During this time, there were only a few studies on new words and expressions, alongside some empirical discussions. The second phase, spanning from the 1980s to the early 21st century, witnessed a substantial increase in both the quantity and quality of neologism research. Topics expanded to include the production, formation, and linguistic elements of neologisms, as well as sociolinguistic perspectives on language contact, cultural influence, and social development (Masini, 1993; Zhou, 1994; Chen, 1999; Lackner et al., 2001; Tian, 2003). The third phase commenced in 2005 with the publication of The *Language Situation in China* and continues to the present day. This phase is characterized by a rapid increase in research papers and the application of new approaches and innovative technologies. Internet neologisms have emerged as a particularly popular topic within this phase (Wang, 2011; Yang et al., 2015; Tao, 2017; Wang, 2020).

The World Wide Web landed in China in 1994 and soon gained momentum in 2008 when China, surpassing the United States, became the country with the largest number of Internet users in the world. Nowadays the Internet, with its sustainable technological innovations and growth, has become an indispensable and ubiquitous part of daily life for Chinese people. Consequently, a multitude of new words and expressions have emerged to reflect emerging social phenomena and convey fresh ideas.

Tao (2017) investigated Chinese internet neologisms, examining their definitions, classifications, characteristics, and social and cultural connotations. She found that, in comparison to traditional Chinese neologisms, internet neologisms are more flexible, as they can incorporate numbers, English letters, and various linguistic elements. Moreover, internet-based neologisms, unlike traditional ones, readily incorporate not only Chinese dialects but also various other languages such as English, Korean, and Japanese, illustrating the creativity and individuality of Chinese internet users.

Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh (2019) argued that Chinese netspeak "put an end to the absence of inflection in Chinese" (p. 518). Wang (2020) took a rhetorical perspective to explore internet neologisms in the realm of fandom and argued that fandom neologisms may involve conceptual metaphor and metonymy and demonstrate an upward transmission into mainstream media.

Internet neologisms exhibit distinctive features. Firstly, they originate from the creativity of Chinese netizens, rather than being initiated by intellectual elites or ideological authorities. Secondly, the direction of transmission switches from the traditional top-down route through religious beliefs, by institutional means such as mass education and political propaganda, to the horizontal route, spreading in networked grassroots communication, with some items even transmitting upwards utilizing entering mainstreaming media. Thirdly, digital lexical innovations offer insight into everyday life, social realities, and the mindset of ordinary people, as opposed to representing cultural, ideological, or political priorities as seen in earlier neologisms. Last but not least, internet neologisms provide a discursive space for ordinary netizens, whereas previous lexical innovations played a creative and transformative role in driving social change (Castells, 2009, 2012; Crystal, 2011; Tao, 2017; Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019; Wang, 2020).

The research on dictionaries of Chinese neologisms began in the middle of the 1980s, including the loanword dictionaries. Zhou (1994) suggested that the compilation of neologism dictionaries should consider both connotative and denotative meaning, as well as the consideration of socio-psychological factors and social acceptance. This approach differs from treating neologisms as common words, aiming to establish a standard for selecting new terms.

Since the 1980s, several neologism dictionaries have been published, such as the *Dictionary of Modern Chinese Neologism* (《现代汉语新词词典》), as well as some loanword dictionaries, the *Dictionary of Chinese Loanwords* (《汉语外来词词典》). The publication of these dictionaries signifies the growing interest in Chinese neologisms from both linguistic and social perspectives. The *Dictionary of 100 Years of Chinese Neologisms 1912-2011* (《100年汉语新词新语大辞典（1912-2011）》) comprises more than 11,000 Chinese neologisms that emerged from 1912 to 2011, revealing a historical perspective on neologism lexicography. It is noteworthy that the constant creation of new words attracts attention not only from the academia but also from institutions, as demonstrated by the aforementioned *Language Situation in China* (《中国语言生活报告》).

4. THE ORIGINS OF CHINESE NEOLOGISMS

In order to discuss the origins of neologisms, it is necessary to introduce the corpus of the current study.

4.1. The corpus of Chinese neologisms of the current study

Since its inaugural edition in 2007, compiled by the Chinese State Language Commission, *LSC* has been issued annually for 16 consecutive years. Each yearly edition of this report includes a crucial section devoted to neologisms, with a particular focus on the top ten frequently used neologisms in media and the top ten internet buzzwords. The compilation process of this neologism list involves a combination of computer-aided extraction and manual verification methods, leveraging extensive text data from the National Language Monitoring Corpus for the respective year. For instance, in the case of *LSC 2021*, word frequencies and text counts were based on data from the 21.9 billion characters of text in the National Language Monitoring Corpus for the year 2020. As a result, the *LSC* neologism list serves not only as an invaluable resource for understanding Chinese language usage but also as the most authentic and representative annual collection of research on the dynamics of the Chinese language. It provides an ideal foundation for the study of neologisms. The corpus of neologisms used in the current study is exclusively composed of words collected by *LSC* between 2017 and 2021. In total, there are 1,495 new words and phrases, with nouns comprising the majority, followed by verbs and adjectives.

4.2. The sources of Chinese neologisms

The creation of Chinese neologisms can be attributed to several reasons. First, as Cheng (2018) suggested, neologisms primarily stem from developments in science, shifts in politics and the economy, and the evolving facets of people's lives. Additionally, in the era of globalization, cultural exchanges and language contact serve as catalysts for the generation of neologisms (wang, 2011; Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019). Lastly, since the introduction of the World Wide Web in China in 1994, the Chinese Internet has integrated into the global digital network and has now become an integral part of people's daily lives. The easy access to online networks allows Chinese netizens, especially the younger generation, to unleash their individual creativity, resulting in myriads of internet neologisms emerging regularly (Tao, 2017; Wang, 2020).

However, there is no consensus regarding the origins of Chinese neologisms. For example, Li (1987) categorized Chinese neologisms into seven main groups: 1) words and expressions referring to novel concepts; 2) new meanings of existing words; 3) words and expressions reflecting a deeper understanding of the objective world; 4) neologisms formed from existing words and affixes; 5) words originating from dialects and minority languages; 6) loanwords from other languages and 7) abbreviations. In contrast, Xu (2007) proposed eight sources of Chinese neologisms: 1) new coinages; 2) derivative words; 3) words adopted from media; 4) internet neologisms; 5) words from specialized fields; 6) abbreviations; 7) terms from dialects, including those from Hongkong and Taiwan; and 8) borrowed words from other languages. Conversely, some researchers consider derivation, abbreviation and loanwords as methods of word formation (Wang, 1992; Yu, 2001a; Fan, 2015; Tao, 2017; Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019). This research conflated the processes of word formation and word origins. In the present study, it is proposed that borrowed words from dialects and other languages are a source of

Chinese neologisms, whereas derivation and abbreviation are distinct methods of word formation.

Therefore, the origins of Chinese neologisms in the corpus of this study were classified into three categories and six subcategories. The first category refers to new things, new phenomena and new ideas, etc. which contains two subcategories: 1) new coinages referring to new things, new ideas and emerging phenomena, such as 鸿蒙 hóngméng "Harmony (a smartphone operational system cultivated by Huawei)", 新冠xīnguàn "coronavirus"; 2) existing words with new meanings, such as 后浪 hòulàng "originally means the waves behind, but now predominantly used to describe the youth". The second category is related to some concrete sources, such as textual genres, which could be divided into two subcategories: 1) words created and popularized by medias, magazines and news agencies, etc., such as 夜间经济yèjiānjīngjì "night economy"; 2) words originated from the internet, such as 斑竹 bānzhú "moderator",酱紫 jiàngzǐ "look like this", etc. The third category pertains to these new words generated for the sake of language contact and culture exchange which can also be subcategorized into two sections: 1) words borrowed from regional dialects, such as 忽悠hūyōu and 磨叽 mòjì, both originating from the northeastern dialects, conveying meanings related to "cheat someone" and "dilly-dally"; and 2) loanwords from other languages. Modern Chinese neologisms have integrated a significant number of words and expressions from various languages, including English, 血拼xuěpīn "shopping", 狗带 gǒudài "go die"; Japanese, such as 纳尼 nàní "なに/what", 米娜桑 mǐnàsāng "みなさん/everyone"; Korean, such as 欧巴 ōubā "오빠/brother", 思密达 sīmìdá "습니다/seumnida"; and Italian, such as 拿铁nátiě "Latte", 披萨 pīsà "pizza", etc.

5. The characteristics of Chinese neologisms
5.1. Phonetic characteristics of Chinese neologisms

A syllable is a fundamental structural unit of speech sounds, and the majority of modern Chinese words are disyllabic. According to the statistics of *the Modern Chinese Frequency Dictionary*, among the 9,000 most frequently used words, 6,285 are disyllabic (Shao, 2016). However, recent research has observed a trend towards multi-syllabic Chinese neologisms (Tian, 2003; Liu, 2004; Che, 2017; Meng, 2019). Tian (2003) points out that two-syllable words no longer play a dominant role in Chinese neologisms, as they are increasingly being overtaken by multi-syllable words. To investigate this trend, I have examined the size of Chinese neologisms in the corpus. In the following statistics, each Chinese character, number, Roman letter, and punctuation mark is considered a syllable. For example, 绿码 lǜmǎ "green code" is a two-syllable word, while 5G+ is viewed as a three-syllable word.

Table 1.1 presents the statistics for the number of syllables of Chinese neologisms selected by LSC and their corresponding percentages between 2017 and 2021.

Table 1.1 The statistics of the number of syllables of Chinese neologisms and their percentage

Syllable / Year		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	13	total
2017	Number (words)	1	111	165	121	18	7	1	0	0	0	0	424
	Percentage	0.24	26.18	38.92	28.54	4.25	1.65	0.24	0	0	0	0	100
2018	Number (words)	1	40	86	92	15	4	2	0	1	0	1	242
	Percentage	0.41	16.53	35.54	38.02	6.19	1.65	0.83	0	0.41	0	0.41	100
2019	Number (words)	3	58	83	119	36	13	7	1	0	0	0	320
	Percentage	0.94	18.13	25.94	37.19	11.25	4.06	2.19	0.31	0	0	0	100
2020	Number (words)	1	36	72	96	36	4	2	0	0	0	0	247
	Percentage	0.40	14.57	29.15	38.87	14.57	1.62	0.81	0	0	0	0	100
2021	Number (words)	3	48	74	92	30	5	7	1	0	1	1	262
	Percentage	1.14	18.32	28.24	35.11	11.45	1.91	2.67	0.38	0	0.38	0.38	100
2017-2021	Number (words)	9	293	480	520	135	33	19	2	1	1	2	1495
	Percentage	0.60	19.60	32.11	34.78	11.04	2.21	1.27	0.13	0.07	0.07	0.13	100

As can be seen in Table 1.1, trisyllabic and quadrisyllabic words play a more prominent role than disyllabic words in Chinese neologisms across the years considered. For instance, when I examine the statistics over the five years, trisyllabic words and quadrisyllabic words collectively constitute approximately 66.89% of the total, with trisyllabic words accounting for around 32.11% and quadrisyllabic words for about 34.78%. In contrast, disyllabic words make up only 19.60% of the total, while five-syllable words represent 11.04%. While there are instances of monosyllabic words and those with more than five syllables, their combined total is less than 5%. These findings confirm the emergence of multi-syllabic words as the prevailing trend in Chinese neologisms.

5.2. Semantic domains of Chinese neologisms

Neologisms, perhaps more than any other linguistic elements, swiftly reflect the significant social events, changes and the prevailing spirit of the times, offering insights into the psychology of language users. The Chinese neologisms in the corpus cover a wide range of fields, including politics, economics, culture and social life, among others.

In China, political narratives hold a significant presence in media and news coverage. Consequently, neologisms that reflect political events play a pivotal role, for instance, 雄安新区 Xióng'ān xīnqū "Xióng'ān New District", 乡村振兴战略 xiāngcūn zhènxīng zhànlüè "the strategy of rural vitalization". Xióng'ān New District, established in April 2017, is a national-level new area located in Hebei province, China. The Rural Revitalization Strategy was first introduced by President Xi Jinping in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 18, 2017.

The economy is not only central to national development but also a key concern in people's daily lives, giving rise to numerous Chinese neologisms. For instance, 数字经济 shùzì jīngjì "digital economy", also known as online or internet economy, plays a robust role in China's current economic landscape. It encompasses economic activities stemming from the billions of online connections among businesses and individuals.

Internet neologisms form an essential part of the corpus. For example, 洪荒之力 hónghuāngzhīlì "primordial powers" gained popularity during a heartfelt interview with Chinese swimmer Fu Yuanhui after winning a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Similarly, 凡尔赛 fán'ěrsài "humblebrag" references Versailles and became well-known due to a blogger's humblebrag posts showcasing her luxurious life in 2020.

The continuous evolution of technology and science is reflected in the language through the mass production of neologisms, such as 5G时代 wǔ G shídài "five G era" and 折叠屏幕 zhédié píngmù "folding screen". Many neologisms also mirror changes and improvements in education, culture and daily life, like 停课不停学 tíngkè bù tíngxué "classes suspended but learning continues", 无人超市 wúrén chāoshì "self-service supermarket". A fascinating example is 吒男吒女 zhānán zhānǚ "boys and girls who admire the movie protagonist, Nezha". This term emerged from the immense success of the cartoon movie 'Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child,' released in July 2019. It gained particular popularity among the youth, leading to the creation of a new word to describe fans of the movie's protagonist, Nezha.

6. The formation of Chinese neologisms

While acknowledging the arbitrariness of linguistic notations, Ullmann (1962) posits the existence of motivations for words within each language and categorizes these motivations into three distinct categories: phonetic motivation, morphological motivation, and semantic motivation. Phonetic motivation pertains to the intrinsic relationship between the phonetic form of a word and its meaning. Zheng (2015), through an examination of Chinese neologisms over the past decade, has observed that many new words with phonetic motivation are formed through homophony. Homophonic neologisms involve the creation of new words by utilizing homophones with similar pronunciation but distinct meanings. Morphological motivation allows us to understand a word's meaning by analyzing its morphological components. It pertains to the morphological structure of words. There are many ways for the creation of new words in Chinese, but the most important one is to create new words by compounding and derivation (Zhang, 2009). Semantic motivation refers to the inherent connection between a

word's meaning and its form. It involves psychological associations, connecting rational meaning with associative meaning through methods such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and analogy (Zheng, 2015; Che, 2017; Wang, 2020).

Extensive research has explored the formation of Chinese neologisms (Yu 2001a, 2001b; Hui, 2006; Liu et al., 2011; Tao, 2017; Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019;). However, no consensus has been reached yet. According to Yu (2001b), Chinese internet neologisms can be divided into five categories: paraphrase, transliteration, combination of paraphrase and transliteration, acronym and homophony. Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh (2019) propose five major morphological processes underlying the formation of Chinese neologisms: compounding, derivative formation, homophony, loanwords and alphabetic words. Tao (2017) divided Chinese internet neologisms into four categories: abbreviated formation, homophony, loanwords and derivational words.

These studies have conflated the word-formation processes of language across phonetic, morphological and semantic levels. For instance, all of the above studies consider homophony as a morphological word-formation process. In addition, Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh (2019) and Tao (2017) consider loanwords as a morphological way of formation. However, in this context, loanwords are regarded as an origin of Chinese neologisms rather than a method of formation.

Building on these studies, I conducted a linguistic analysis of the corpus to identify the formation of new words from the phonetic, morphological and semantic levels. As a result, I propose six categories of word-formation: homophony, compounding, abbreviation, derivative words, words with letters/numbers, and **rhetorical words**.

At the phonetic level, **homophony** serves as the primary means for creating Chinese neologisms. it enjoys its popularity for its playful and satirical potential, especially within the realm of the internet. For example, 沙雕 shādiāo which means "sand sculpture", has transformed into 傻屌 shǎdiǎo "stupid guy"; 集美 jíměi, "a district governed by Xiamen, Fujian Province", is humorously turned into 姐妹 jiěmèi "sisters", by a webcast celebrity who intentionally pronounces it with a dialect accent, leading to its viral use; and 雨女无瓜 yǔnǚwúguā, which literally refers to "rainy girl with no melon", cleverly sounds like 与你无关 yǔnǐwúguān, meaning "nothing to do with you". Wang (2020) discovers that internet neologisms may undergo an upwards transmission and enter mainstream media. Given the productivity of homophony, it is easy to find homophonic neologisms on official media. For instance, 智治力 zhìzhìlì, referring to the urban governance capabilities that use intelligent technologies to improve efficiency, playfully imitates 自制力 zhìzhìlì "self-control". 毕业寄 bìyèjì, originally denoting the use of express delivery for sending luggage when graduates leave school, now extends to luggage packing, delivery and storage services for graduates unable to return to campus during the pandemic. It is a homonym of 毕业季 bìyèjì "graduation season".

青和力 qīnghélì, which describes a city's appeal to young people, stems from 亲和力 qīnhélì "likeable and friendly". Additionally, homophonic words can also be found from other languages or Chinese dialects. For example, 耐撕 nàisī, signifies someone with good

disposition or something with good quality, originating from English word "nice". 八困bākùn, describes people surrounded by surprising occurences every day, transliterating from the English phrase "bug queen". 猴赛雷hóusàiléi, is derived from a homonym in Cantonese used as an adjective, meaning "great, excellent". it becames popular in the Year of Monkey in 2016, primarily due to the first character "猴 hóu" referring to "monkey".

Four morphological methods in generating Chinese neologisms have been identified in this study, including compounding, abbreviation, derivative words, and words with letters/numbers**.**

Compounding is a highly productive method for creating Chinese neologisms across various parts of speech. Zhang (2009) asserts that "about 80% of Chinese vocabulary is compound words" (p.20). **Compound nouns** represent the largest part of this type of new words. Examples include disyllabic words like 超话chāohuà, "super topics on the Chinese social platform Weibo" and座霸zuòbà, "someone who rudely occupies other's seats"; trisyllabic words, such as 香蕉词 xiāngjiāocí, denoting "words that seem like traditional Chinese words but are borrowed from other languages, made them 'yellow' outside and 'white' inside, similar to a banana"; and 快奢品 kuàishēpǐn, "products with a high price and high consumption frequency". Additionally, quadrisyllabic words like钢铁直男gāngtiězhínán, referring to "males with straightforward personalities who communicate directly with girls"; and 光想青年guāngxiǎngqīngnián, describing "young people who only keep their thoughts in the head without taking action in reality". There are even instances of words with five or more syllables, such as 报复性消费 bàofùxìngxiāofèi, signifying "the social phenomenon where people restrain their normal consumption during the pandemic and then engage in excessive spending after the restrictions are removed"; and 数字化管理师shùzìhuàguǎnlǐshī, which denotes "a job position requiring the use of a digital office software platform", etc.

In addition to compound nouns, there are also **compound verbs** that reflect personal or social phenomena. For example, 撒狗粮sǎgǒuliáng, literally meaning sprinkling dog food, is used to describe the public display of affection between couples. This is because single individuals are often humorously referred to as "single dogs". Another example is割韭菜 gējiǔcài, which refers to the practice of institutions, funds and major players in the stock market selling stocks, to drive down prices and then repurchasing them at lower prices to open new positions.

Furthermore, this category includes existing words or expressions with new meanings, such as 后浪hòulàng and内卷nèijuǎn. 后浪hòulàng originally means younger generations and became popular after the release of a short video titled "hòulàng" on the eve of Youth Day on May Fourth in 2020, where it was used to refer to those who are born after 1990s and 2000s. 内卷nèijuǎ initially referred to the phenomenon where a social or cultural model stagnates after a certain stage of development or cannot transform into a more advanced model. However, it now refers to the irrational competition in various industries.

Abbreviation is another productive way for creating neologisms, including abbreviation of Chinese phrases or sentences, abbreviation of English words, abbreviation of numbers, and more.

In the realm of Chinese expressions, numerous abbreviated words have emerged. For instance, 新冠 xīnguàn is short for 新型冠状病毒 xīnxíng guànzhuàng bìngdú which means "coronavirus" and was one of the most frequently-used new word in 2020. 尬聊 gàliáo, an abbreviation of 尴尬的聊天 gāngà de liáotiān, is an internet neologism describing awkward and reluctant chatting in specific situations. 爷青回 yéqīnghuí is an the abbreviation of the playful internet sentence 爷的青春回来了 yé de qīngchūn huílái le, meaning "my youth comes back", often used when a vedio or TV series evokes a sense of nostalgia. 打伞破网 dǎsǎnpòwǎng refers to 打掉保护伞，破除关系网 dǎdiào bǎohùsǎn pòchú guānxìwǎng, which means "to dismantle the protective umbrella (of the underworld) and break their network". This has become frequent in recent years due to government anticriminal actions.

In the globalized era, Chinese neologisms are undoubtedly influenced by other languages, leading to abbreviations of English and other languages. For instance, *ICO* is a blockchain industry term, an acronym of "Initial Coin Offering" in English. *NOPEC* is an acronym for "No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act" in English. *GDPR* stands for "General Data Protection Regulation". Some words from Japanese have also made their way into Chinese neologisms, such as *awsl* derived from the Japanese phrase "A Watashiwa Shintei Lu" and coincidentally matching the acronym of Pinyin of its Chinese meaning "ā, wǒ sǐ le" which shows someone's excitement when encountering something beloved.

Moreover, it is common to abbreviate parallel sentences or phrases using Chinese numbers, such as 四个伟大 sìgè wěidà "four greats", referring to "great struggle, great project, great cause, and great dream"; 四个定力 sìgè dìnglì "four determinations", referring to "Political determination, discipline determination, moral determination, anti-corruption determination", and so on.

Derivation is not a traditional approach for creating Chinese words, and research indicates that the appearance of derivational words has filled the void left by the absence of inflection in Chinese (Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019). The corpus of this study contains numerous derivational words, which can be categorized based on the position of the affix into two categories: prefixes and suffixes.

Prefixes, such as 云 yún "cloud", 尬 gà "embarrassing, awkward", and 微 wēi "micro", has gained significance in the context of the internet's growing role in people's daily lives, especially during the pandemic when many activities have been moved online. New words featuring the prefix 云 yún are associated with online activities, including 云课 yúnkè "online class", 云外交 yúnwàijiāo "cloud diplomacy", and 云毕业照 yúnbìyèzhào "online graduation photo". The internet has become a major platform to interact with others, giving rise to a 云文

化yúnwénhuà "online culture". The prefix 尬gà is frequently followed by verbs, resulting in words like 尬聊 gàliáo "embarrassing chat", 尬笑gàxiào "awkward laughter", 尬舞gàwǔ "embarrassing dance", collectively forming a 尬文化gàwénhuà "embarrassing culture". The English acronym AI serves as a productive prefix in Chinese neologisms, leading to terms like AI医生 yīshēng "AI doctor", AI 教师 jiàoshī "AI teacher", etc.

In addition, numerous neologisms incorporate suffixes, including 码mǎ "code", 门mén "gate", 粉fěn "fan", 族zú "group", etc. Taking the first two suffixes as examples, 码mǎ "code" is used for online businesses with QR codes, such as 收钱码shōuqiánmǎ "payment code" and 企业码qǐyèmǎ "enterprise code" that allows people to learn more about services provided by the enterprises. During the pandemic, various 码mǎ "codes" have become essential for travel, with only a 绿码lùmǎ "green code", granting unrestricted movement while a 黄码 huángmǎ "yellow code" or 红码hóngmǎ "red code" led to quarantines at home for 7 days or 14 days respectively in 2020.

The suffix 门mén is borrowed from English, where scandals are often associated with "gate", as in Watergate with Nixon or Sexygate with Clinton. Therefore, "门" is often used to describe political affairs, such as 邮件门yóujiànmèn "Email Gate", referring to the incident of secret leakage caused by the use of private emails by former U.S. Secretary of State and Democrat Hillary Clinton; 通俄门 tōng'é mén "Russia Gate", referring to the accusation of "collaborating with Russia" of Trump's campaign team; 干政门 gānzhèngmén "Park Geun-hye–Choi Soon-sil gate", referring to the South Korean political scandal in 2016, etc.

Another particular case has been observed, featuring a " + " mark as a suffix, as seenin智能+ zhìnéng+"artificial intelligent plus (traditional industries)", 旅游+ lǚyóu+ "tourism plus (other industries)", 金砖+ jīnzhuān+ "the five BRICS countries plus (other countries)".

Chinese characters combined with letters or numbers are a growing trend in Chinese neologisms. Examples includes 打*call dǎ call* "make a call" to encourage, cheer, or show support for someone or something; *C位 C wèi* "the centre position"; *diss文化 diss wénhuà* "diss culture", where "diss" is the short form for disrespect and disparage, referring to the rebellious and defiant attitude of young people; *714高炮 714 gāopào,* referring to those illegal online loans with extraodinarily high interest rates of 7 days or 14 days; *A4腰 A4yāo* "A4 waist", describing those females with an extremely slim waist like A4 paper. Furthermore, some words are composed entirely of Roman letters and/or numbers, such as Vtuber, short for Virtual YouTuber; *9102,* the inverted version of "2019", expressing people's dissatisfaction with unbelievable issues occurring specifically in that year, denoting that "I can't imagine that such problem still exists in 2019"; *996ICU*, where 996 represents the system of working from

9:00 am to 9:00 pm, 6 days a week and ICU stands for Intensive Care Unit. The whole phrase can be paraphrased as 996 working and ICU waiting. In addition, one blended word with Pinyin in the corpus is *qiou*, a combination of qióng "poor" and chǒu "ugly", used to describe someone with both features.

At the semantic level**, Rhetorical words** are used to present neologisms created through various **rhetorical devices**, including metaphors, metonymy, and hyperbole. **Metaphor,** a powerful linguistic tool, can be defined as "a conceptual mapping between a more concrete 'source domain' frame and a conceptual 'target domain' frame it aims to build, so as to communicate ideas via language" (Wang, 2020, p.2). During the epidemic, many neologisms emerged with metaphors drawn from the language of warfare, such as战贫zhànpín "war against poverty", signifying efforts to eradicate poverty; 杀雏shāchú "kill chicks", describing the deceptive practices in the livestreaming e-commerce targeting new customers; and 数字战疫shùzìzhànyì "digital battle against epidemic" referring to contrasting the coronavirus in 2020.

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one entity is substituted for another with which it is closely associated. Some examples of this type are as follows: 神兽shénshòu "mythical beast", humorously referring to the mischievous kids at home; 小粉红xiǎofěnhóng "little light red", playfully denoting those young individuals who ardently express their patriotism, with red being a symbolic color in China).

Hyperbole, characterized by exaggerated language, is also harnessed in creating neologisms. Examples include 卷王juǎnwáng "king of involution", bestowed on those who excel in navigating the challenges of modern life, and 神仙打架 shénxiāndǎjià "fight between fairies", which humorously characterizes intense competition among highly skilled individuals as a 'fight between fairies.

7. CONCLUSION

The Chinese neologisms collected by LSC from 2017 to 2021 were analyzed through the lens of their linguistic research history, origins, characteristics and morphological processes of formation. Overall, the field of linguistic research on Chinese neologisms is a relatively new topic since the founding of the PRC, emerging in recent decades. Regarding the origins of Chinese neologisms, there is no consensus in the existing literature. However, through an extensive review of literature and corpus analysis, this paper suggests six principal origins for Chinese neologisms, namely 1) new coinages; 2) existing words used with new meanings; 3) new words created by media, magazines and news agencies; 4) internet neologisms; 5) words from dialects; 6) loanwords from other languages. In terms of the characteristics of Chinese neologisms, a notable shift from the dominance of disyllabic words in traditional Chinese to the prevalence of multi-syllabic words has been observed. Lastly, the methods of forming Chinese neologisms were explored and classified into six categories: homophony,

compounding, abbreviation, derivative words, rhetorical words, and words containing letters and/or numbers.

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