The Study of Internet Hot Words from the Perspective of Linguistics

Meiqian Li[1,a,*]

[1]College of Literature, University of Jinan, Jinan, 250022, China
a. 2995418617@qq.com
*corresponding author

Abstract: In the era of new media, with the popularization of the Internet, there are many Internet buzzwords and hot phrases in daily life, which reflect the characteristics of the times and the development of language in the ever-changing changes. The recent popularity of talk shows and the popularity of buzzwords such as "C, Cow, Horse, O", "Oi, Kid" and "You Logo" have once again highlighted the importance of "language". This paper will examine the sociolinguistic, cognitive and linguistic aspects of language. In this paper, the author will study the above mentioned Internet buzzwords from the perspectives of sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics, and discuss their causes and variations. It is found that the variation phenomenon is embodied in three aspects: phonology, semantics and syntax, and the reasons for the variation phenomenon are found to be the arbitrariness of the combination of phonology and semantics, the aggregation of linguistic symbols, the cultural background, the diversity of communication media and the time factor; finally, the reasons for the emergence of Internet buzzwords are studied in terms of both internal and external aspects. Regulating the development trend of the Internet language phenomenon is also necessary.

Keywords: Linguistics, Internet buzzwords, Causes, Variants

1. Introduction

Internet buzzwords refer to emerging words that are mainly circulated on the Internet and are given the meaning of a specific era and linguistic environment with a high frequency of use. [1] Internet buzzwords are the inevitable products of the development of the times and network communication. It is the "superstructure" that responds to the characteristics of the times and the dynamic changes in the thinking and mentality of contemporary people, especially young people; at the same time, it is a manifestation of the profoundness of the Chinese language and its continuous development and enrichment. Beginning in the early 1980s, cognitive linguistics has developed into an influential branch in the field of linguistics over the past 40 years. Its research methodology has evolved from traditional introspection to the current state of interdisciplinary coexistence and complementarity of various methods[2].. Sociolinguistics is characterized by a multidisciplinary cross-disciplinary approach, with Franz Boas, Edward Sa-pir, Benjamin Lee Whorf and others of the North American school observing the phenomenon of language use from a sociological perspective. [3] Social phenomena are the externalization of people's cognitive concepts. This paper will focus on Internet buzzwords from two aspects: cognitive linguistics and sociolinguistics.

2. Causes of Internet buzzwords

2.1. Internal Causes

2.1.1. The communicative role of language

Language is the most important communication tool, and its communicative function is its most basic feature and its vitality. Internet buzzwords have gained popularity due to their widespread use in communication. The emergence of many new words in the new media era has made human interaction simpler and the social atmosphere more relaxed and harmonious, so these new words have replaced the old, stiff and even embarrassing social words, and network buzzwords have been created as a result. For example, the recent popularity of a new way of greeting: oi, kid, called high intelligence politely refused to reply to the "you nagged", has become a common social statement in the network and even in reality.

2.1.2. Language is a tool for thinking

Human thinking is inseparable from language, language is the concrete manifestation of human abstract thinking. Language as a medium to link objective things and human cognition, needs to be constantly adjusted with the change of objective things. [4] In this fast-paced era, filled with ever-changing amounts of information, people's thinking is also changing with the times. As a result, in order to catch up with the trend of the times and better integrate into the "social circle", people unconsciously create new words on the Internet, and Internet buzzwords are born in the high-frequency use of the words, no matter in the work negotiation or daily friendship.

2.2. External causes

2.2.1. language is a social phenomenon

Philosopher Kondiak said in his onomatopoeia about the origin of language: "language yard human emotional impulse triggered by a variety of shouting". Language can show a great deal of subjective initiative, network buzzwords are a kind of people based on real-life emotional experience through the processing of their own language system and the formation of a unique way of expression that can make people produce emotional resonance. For example, the word "CEO" is borrowed to describe the leader in the working class, who has an important labor role in the company, "Ciu Ma O", which is an image of the hard work and difficulty of the "working class" in today's society. Network buzzwords often arise from hot events, reflecting the overall social values and emotions, and are a mirror of social phenomena, a new culture prevails and contributes to the generation of new vocabulary.

2.2.2. The emergence of new media platforms and the popularization of the Internet

With the development of politics, economy, culture, science and technology, especially the rapid development of information technology, the iteration of technology has physically changed the way people communicate, and people in the Internet era are more inclined to use concise information to express their thoughts. Internet buzzwords with very concise generalizations, such as "0 frame start", "screenshot life" and "cut leeks", are readily available.

3.   The Mutation Phenomenon of Internet Hot Words

3.1.   Types of variation

Semantic variation refers to the change in the relationship between the original symbolic form of a word and the connotation of the thing it refers to, and the symbolic form is given a new referential meaning. [5]

First, certain popular words may undergo phonetic changes in the process of spreading, and users may simplify or adapt the words for convenience or fun. For example, "太棒了" is often simplified to "棒棒哒" in the Internet. It is called phonological variation. Second, ...

Internet users like to use homophones or puns to create new words to add fun and humor, which is called variation of harmonization and Puns. For example, "666" is a number on the surface, but it is actually used to express the praise of "awesome". "Red Warm". Last but not least, there are variations in pitch and accent. Changes in tone (e.g. emphasizing a certain word) may affect the spreading effect of a buzzword and enhance the emotional color of its expression. For example, the "oi" in "oi, kid" not only exists as an accent, but also has a very strong emotional color of mischievousness and activity. It is because of its free tone and pleasant emotional connotation that it has become a new way for young people to greet or attract attention.

3.2.   Semantic aspects

The expansion of lexical meaning is an interesting aspect of buzzwords. The semantics of these words often change with the variations in the usage scene and social culture. Take, for instance, the term "Buddhist". Originally linked to Buddhism, the term now denotes a non-contentious, non-hurried attitude towards life.   Another example is "southern small potatoes", which doesn't mean "southern varieties of potatoes", but specifically refers to southern tourists traveling to the Northeast in winter.

Many buzzwords also utilize the technique of reversal to impart new, frequently ironic, semantics to traditional words. "Tuhao", for example, initially referred to rich people, but later it was used to mock those who show off their wealth yet lack taste. Similarly, "living father" expands the meaning of the word "father". It is used to flirt with people or things that one dislikes but cannot afford to deal with or avoid, expressing an ambivalent and submissive mentality.

The meaning of buzzwords is frequently linked to specific cultural and social backgrounds. The emergence of particular events or phenomena can cause a mutation in these words. For instance, "involution" describes the intensification of social competition and reflects a specific social phenomenon. Terms like "bricklayer" and "cow and horse", which are used to denote workers in the new era, also stem from the "self-deprecation" of employees under the pressure of heavy workloads in modern society.

3.3.   Grammatical aspects

Popular words exhibit various changes in their usage. Firstly, syntactic variation occurs when these words undergo changes in their syntactic structure to suit different contexts. For instance, "I'm too hard" has become a common Internet expression to convey exhaustion and helplessness.

Word Class Conversion is also a notable phenomenon. For example, "Citty" in "Citty not Citty" originally meant the noun "city", but it has been transformed into an adjective in the phrase "Citty, fashionable, stylish". Another example is the verb "to call", which can later be used as a noun to express a supportive behavior or attitude. Additionally, "套路", originally indicating a martial arts style as a noun, is now often used as a verb followed by a personal pronoun. [6]The phenomenon of lexical change, especially noun conjugation, raises questions about its reasons in the modern era with

a rich language system; is it merely for brevity? Simplification and Abbreviation are common in online communication. Users often simplify or abbreviate words for convenience, like using "LOL" instead of "laugh out loud", making the expression more rapid and efficient.

Furthermore, the mixed use of English and Chinese is becoming increasingly prevalent. English-Chinese mixed use involves combining English words or phrases with Chinese words to create new expressions. With the popularization of language and internationalization, this phenomenon is more common in Internet buzzwords. For example, "Barbie Q" is the phonetic translation of the English word "barbecue", which is often used to indicate a certain meaning.

3.4. Causes of variation

3.4.1. Arbitrariness of the combination of phonetics and meaning

Human language is a kind of phonetic combination of symbol systems, one of its characteristics is arbitrariness. The so-called arbitrariness refers to the fact that the combination of phonology and meaning of language symbols is arbitrary, that is to say, there is no necessary and essential connection between phonology and meaning, and the combination between them is irrefutable, completely agreed upon by social conventions, and there is no reason to speak of. This is the fundamental reason for the diversity of the world's languages. However, it should be noted that the arbitrariness of the combination of phonology and meaning of linguistic symbols is different from the rationale of word formation - when people name a certain thing or phenomenon, it is always necessary to name it on the basis of the law of language formation and a certain feature of the thing or phenomenon, that is, it is usually said that "the name is obtained from it. This is what is commonly known as "being named from". This also coincides with the theory of arbitrariness that "there is an interconnection between the combination of phonetic form and meaning and the phenomenon he represents". Internet buzzwords arise from the creative expression of Internet users, with the characteristics of personalization and humor and playfulness. When using buzzwords, users will adapt and innovate them according to their own understanding and situation, and in order to increase the fun and attraction, they will deform them in a humorous way to form new expressions.

Therefore, due to the difference of human subjective initiative, the lack of knowledge of the rationale of word formation and the arbitrariness of the combination of linguistic sound and meaning, the phenomenon of mutation of Internet buzzwords has been caused.

3.4.2. The aggregation relationship of linguistic symbols

The aggregation relationship, also known as the association relationship, describes the natural aggregation of symbols that have the same function and can replace each other in a specific link of the language chain. The aggregation relationship is like a chain of interlocking rings, a ring can be replaced by another ring and become a new chain. For example, "C, Cow, Horse, O" is derived from the word formation of "CEO". The full name of "CEO" is Chief Executive Officer, executive means executive officer, and "Cow and Horse" refers to the hard-working ordinary staff. In this phrase, "CEO" is a chain connected by three rings, and "E" as one of the replaceable elements is replaced by the same attribute of "Cow and Horse" to form a new chain --C, Cow and Horse O.

Compared with the combination relationship, the aggregation relationship is non-sequential, uncountable, and generated by association, so the generation of Internet buzzwords is also continuous and ever-changing.

3.4.3. Influence of cultural background

The appropriate social and cultural context generates the spread of Internet buzzwords, but the social and cultural environment also limits their formation and spread. At the same time, the social and cultural environment also restricts the formation and spread of buzzwords. [7] Language is not class-based, but has different stylistic variations. When different subcultural groups use buzzwords, they may vary according to their common characteristics. The integration of foreign cultures and dialects accelerates the evolution of buzzwords. Furthermore, certain buzzwords frequently align with particular social events and trending topics, evolving as these events unfold. With the popularization of the Internet and the rapid evolution of the information age, people rely more and more on the Internet. Communication frequency and simplification inevitably lead to formal variations in certain conventional languages, which in turn influence the output and transmission of traditional languages. Social media, such as microblogging, WeChat, Shake Tone and other platforms accelerate the dissemination of information, so that buzzwords can quickly spread across the network; short and concise content makes buzzwords easier to be accepted and imitated in videos.

Besides, time is also an important factor that cannot be ignored. Cyclical updating: the life cycle of Internet buzzwords tends to be short; as time goes by, new buzzwords keep emerging and old ones may be reinterpreted or adapted.

4. Conclusion

The emergence of Internet buzzwords stems from their unique linguistic characteristics and the development of social networks. The phenomenon of their variable multiple mutations dynamically reflects social movements, cultural interactions, and the evolutionary laws of people's thinking and cognition during communication. With the advent of the information age, the content and direction of online public opinion are two of the most important factors in determining the good, bad and direction of social morale. Therefore, we should strengthen the constraints and controls on the normativity of Internet buzzwords. On the basis of respecting the dynamic evolution law of language itself, we should view the development of Internet popular language with a scientific and macroscopic attitude. In addition, due to the differences in different language systems and cultural backgrounds, there are still limitations in the study of the translatability problem of Internet buzzwords. In the future, it is an innovative idea to   start from the perspective of comparative literature and the commonality of world languages, and conduct research on the language translatability problem of Internet buzzwords by means of online media platforms, examining data, questionnaire surveys and exchanges with foreign friends.

References

[1] Li Yingchao. Discussion on the change of Chinese language and the causes of its change - the formation of new media network buzzwords as an example under the perspective of sociolinguistics[J]. Chinese Character Culture, 2018, (20):103-105.DOI:10.14014/j.cnki.cn11-2597/g2.2018.20.027.

[2] Shuang Dingfang;. Cognitive Linguistics Research Methods, Research Status, Objectives and Contents[J]. Journal of Xihua University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition), 2013(03).

[3] YANG Yonglin, SI Jianguo. Sociolinguistic Research-Reflection and Prospect[J]. Modern Foreign Languages, 2003(04).

[4] Zhang Wenjing, Cui Jianjian. Exploration of Internet Hot Words from the Perspective of Cognitive Sociolinguistics[J]. Journal of Baicheng Normal College, 2024, 38(03):50-54.

[5] Wang Limeng. The semantic variation of the buzzword "nanie" from the perspective of cognitive linguistics[J]. Chinese Character Culture, 2023, (22):23-25.DOI:10.14014/j.cnki.cn11-2597/g2.2023.22.006.

[6] wang xinyang, jiang tao. A study on the variation characteristics of Internet buzzwords from the perspective of sociolinguistics[J]. Journal of Harbin Institute, 2022, 43(07):115-119.

[7] Ruan Xianyu. Socio-cultural interpretation of the phenomenon of network buzzword modal[J]. Social Scientist, 2016, (08):156-160.