

---

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Analyzing Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Cognition and Emotion

Yu Yanling<sup>1</sup> and Tan Siyu<sup>2</sup> ✉

<sup>1</sup>Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan University of Technology, China; Exchanged Scholar at LSE, UK

<sup>2</sup>Master of Wuhan University of Technology, China

**Corresponding Author:** TAN Siyu, **E-mail:** 1109809084@qq.com

---

| ABSTRACT

Recently, as a language variant, internet buzzwords have gradually come into people's vision. The spread of buzzwords has injected fresh elements and emotions into society and enriched people's spiritual life. Translation has a dual purpose: one is to accurately convey the meaning of the source text, and the other is to share the experience and atmosphere created by the source text. (Keiran J.Dunne. et al., 2017) Therefore, this paper will take the "Top Ten Internet Buzzwords" released by YAOWEN JIAOZI from 2015 to 2021 as the corpus, analyze the impact on the spread and development of internet buzzwords in terms of classification, cultural value, and communication from the perspective of emotional relevance, and explore the influence of internet buzzwords on the ideological and political education of contemporary teenagers to further guide the internet buzzwords to normalize, strengthen the explanatory power and expression effect of Chinese.

| KEYWORDS

Internet Buzzwords; Cognition and Emotion; Ideological and Political Education

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

**ACCEPTED:** 26 August 2022

**PUBLISHED:** 02 September 2022

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijels.2022.4.3.12

---

### 1. Introduction

Since 2001, China has been conducting research on cyber language, and the initial research mainly focuses on the negative impact of cyber language on Chinese and how to regulate it. With the emergence of social media platforms, the research on cyber language has been further expanded in breadth and depth, and more relevant research papers have been published. Therefore, this paper will study the spread and development of internet buzzwords based on the perspective of emotional relevance, mainly analyzing them from two aspects. On the one hand, it comprehensively deciphers the classification, cultural value, communicative and other functions of internet buzzwords. On the other hand, it analyzes the emotional meaning implied by internet buzzwords themselves. It can elaborate on the factors of the influence of internet buzzwords on youth ideological and political education from the perspective of emotion. This, to the correct use of internet buzzwords, has specific practical significance.

### 2. Literature Review

Wang Ying, in her article, called this kind of "buzzwords" that occur almost synchronously on the network with the occurrence of real social hotspots. These words also became popular rapidly on and off the internet (Wang Ying, 2009). Since 2004, the National Language Monitoring and Research Center has ranked the top ten internet buzzwords according to their popularity and frequency of use. Scholars' research on cyber language has shifted to internet buzzwords. Wang Shiyong believes that internet buzzwords are the most active language symbols with fermentation function and special meaning, which are mainly used spontaneously by netizens in the network field in a certain period, time and often have an impact on social reality (Wang Shiyong, 2014). The first domestic research paper on internet buzzwords was written by Zheng Danniang and published in China Youth Studies in 2001. This paper focused on how the emergence of internet buzzwords makes adolescents and adults, and especially that outside cyberspace, create a "discourse gap", thus triggering an insoluble conflict between adults and adolescents (Zheng Danniang, 2001).

Subsequently, scholars have expanded their research perspectives and conducted extensive studies on internet buzzwords from different perspectives, such as linguistics, sociology, translation, communication, education, psychology, and ecology.

The study of cyber language and buzzwords in foreign countries started relatively early. In 1997, the World Language Research and Resource Center at the University of Hartford hosted a symposium about the Internet and Language. Schanze, in the study of internet language, the language in the process of change and development, says it will present a certain regularity. With the continuous development of society, the development of internet buzzwords has also gradually become common around the world; the netizens will pass to the use of abbreviations and symbols to generate internet buzzwords with unique national characteristics (Schanze, 2017). Bent G once stated in relevant studies that the communication of social network language mainly depends on the communication density between people in network communication, as well as the authority of the communicator (Bent G, 2018). Kivikuru analyzed the impact of internet buzzwords on the public from multiple perspectives and found that the rapid development of internet buzzwords further created a more pleasant atmosphere for people to communicate online and was also conducive to the catharsis and release of people's emotions. It is an inevitable outcome under the current social background (Kivikuru U, 2017). In 2002 and 2003, papers and book reviews on the study of Internet Language and Buzzwords frequently appeared in Language and ELT Journal. Linguist David Crystal, the editor of *the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Languages*, has become a leading researcher studying online languages in the English-speaking world with his latest book, *Language and the Internet*, published in 2001 (David Crystal, 2001). There is a wide range of studies on internet language and buzzwords in foreign countries. The main contents of the studies include the variation of speech and elements of internet language, the reasons for the generation of internet language and symbols, the relationship between internet language and culture, etc. However, there are few studies on internet buzzwords as separate content. And the paper about internet buzzwords published in foreign journals is all from the hands of domestic authors.

### **3. Classifications of the Internet Buzzwords**

Zhang Nan and Gao Xiaomei, in 2021, claim that from the perspective of sociolinguistics, internet buzzwords can be divided into three major categories: old words with new meanings, simplified harmonic words, intentional creation of new words, and other types of words (Zhang Nan, 2021).

#### (1) Old words with new meanings

As the name implies, old words represent new meaning. These kinds of words are mainly caused by linguistic variation from the perspective of sociolinguistics. So, people can see social change in words like this.

Example 1: 破防

Overwhelmed

Example 2: 躺平

Couch potato

Example 3: 逆行者

Heroes in harm's way

The example “破防” originally referred to the game's ability to break through an opponent's defenses and render them defenseless. But now, it refers to the emotional shock of encountering something or seeing some information. Furthermore, the example “躺平” originally referred to the state of lying on one's back but now refers to a state of submission in which no matter what other people respond to it, one's mind remains undisturbed. The example “逆行者” originally referred to someone who walks backward. But now refers to someone who works backward in the face of difficulties. The spirit of the phrase is evident in the countless heroes who have emerged during the pandemic.

#### (2) Simplified harmonic words

Simplified homophonic words mainly come from two aspects; on the one hand, loanwords, which are actually the result of the communication of various languages, which are not only limited to the languages of multiple countries but also the dialects of different regions. In today's Internet era, borrowed words phenomenon is also common.

Example 4: 打 Call

Cheer for someone

Example 5: 蓝瘦，香菇

Feel very blue

The example “打 Call” combines Chinese and English words. This form does not conform to our conventional language expression form, and it breaks the rigid influence of traditional characters and increases the flexibility of communication. On the other hand, it comes from dialects, which are the most popular internet buzzwords, such as videos or live broadcasts shared by people from

different regions. “蓝瘦，香菇”，for example, is a dialect of the sad, tearful mood made famous by a video posted by a man after his brokenhearted love affair. Therefore, simplified homophonic words are the collision of various languages, thus improving the expression and effect.

(3) Intentional creation of new words

Language development can reflect social changes, so internet buzzwords can also focus on reflecting social phenomena and people’s ideological differences in the new era.

Example 6: 百年未有之大变局

Profound changes unseen in a century

Example 7: 小康

Moderately prosperous society

Example 8: 文明互鉴

Mutual learning between civilizations

Example 9: 打工人

Wage-earners

Examples, “百年未有之大变局”, “小康” and “文明互鉴” all reflect the great leap of the Chinese nation from standing up, getting rich to getting strong in the new era. In the new generation and journey, the Chinese people are showing new progress and recent aspiration. Then there is the example “打工人” which is a self-proclaimed term for today’s working people, with a touch of self-irony.

(4) Other types of words

Example 10: 996

The 996-work schedule (from 9:00 a.m.to 9:00 p.m.,6 days a week)

In addition to the above categories, there are many other types of internet buzzwords, such as the well-known use of simple numbers to represent the exact meaning. “996” refers to an overtime system prevalent at internet companies, where people start work at 9:00 a.m. and leave at 9:00 p.m., 6 days a week.

#### 4. Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Emotion Relevance

##### 4.1 An Overview of the Concepts of Emotion and Relevance

Johnston and Olson advocated those emotions are a most appealing and fascinating field of research. Part of this charisma arises from the pervasiveness of emotions in human affairs, and a part of it originates in their mysterious nature. People regard emotions as central to our lives. And yet our understanding of them still lags behind our knowledge of seemingly more complex human matters. People have learned to split the atom and chart a genetic map, but they are still far from fathoming or controlling our reactions to stirring situations. Although there are still different opinions as to how emotions interact with cognitive processes to direct behavior, current research in psychology and neuroscience suggests that emotions can no longer be regarded as separate from cognitive processes. Instead, brain functions, such as attention, perception, memory, or decision-making, are ineludibly instilled with emotional assessments and feelings (Johnston and Olson, 2015). Without emotions, intellectual functions lack purpose; without rational thinking, emotions can lead to troublesome behavior.

Sperber and Wilson first proposed the Relevance theory in 1986 in their book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Relevance theory explains and revises Grice’s conversational theory from a cognitive perspective and holds that communication is not only a simple process of encoding and decoding process but also an “explicit to reasoning” process. The speaker expresses their communicative intention, and the listener reasoned with the relevant contextual information to search for the association. Therefore, in the daily expression of information intention, the speaker needs to provide the hearer with sufficient contextual information to meet the hearer’s reasoning needs so that the hearer can deduce the information intention with little effort (Sperber and Wilson, 2001). Of course, sometimes, the speaker fails to provide enough contextual information to achieve some artistic effects. However, after the hearer’s reasoning and analysis, the amount of information worthy of the hearer’s efforts is finally obtained, and the optimal relevance is still achieved.

##### 4.2 Emotional Relevance in Internet Buzzwords

Relevance is seen as a characteristic of words, thoughts, actions, situations, etc., which are input into the cognitive process. Internet buzzwords convey the inner meaning, cultural connotation, and emotion of internet buzzwords to the audience. Therefore, the communicator and the audience need to establish an emotional association. This emotional connection must be combined with

different cultural backgrounds, cognitive habits, and social customs (Lv Huifen, 2020). The establishment of an emotional connection can help spread the emotion of internet buzzwords so that others can better understand the feeling you want to express. In the Internet era, internet buzzwords can help people express their emotions in a humorous way and also generate emotional connections with others.

### **4.3 Cognitive Context in Internet Buzzwords**

According to relevance theory, relevance principles include the cognitive principle that human cognition tends to coincide with the maximum degree of relevance. The context assumptions are the cognitive hypothesis. The hearer makes contextual assumptions by virtue of the logical, comprehensive, and linguistic information in the cognitive context. To find the best correlation between the other discourse and the context hypothesis, infer the context implication through reasoning, achieve the context effect and achieve the success of communication. There are also examples of internet buzzwords that express different emotions in different contexts (GUTT A, 2008). For instance, the example “打工” is a general term for all people engaged in manual or technical work and is also the self-described term of many office workers, with a slightly self-sarcastic meaning. But now, it also symbolizes the down-to-earth and cheerful workers. Therefore, in different contexts, people’s cognition of internet buzzwords will also change accordingly. Consequently, it is necessary to combine cognitive context to experience the emotion of internet buzzwords to achieve emotional correlation and facilitate readers’ acceptance in two cognitive contexts.

“Good morning, hardworking Wage-earners woken up by the biological clock”	The “Wage-earners” has a slightly self-sarcastic meaning
“Relying on others is the princess, rely on their own is the glorious Wage-earners”	The “Wage-earners” symbolizes the down-to-earth and positive workers

“Wage-earners” in two cognitive contexts

### **4.4 The Communicative Nature of Internet Buzzwords**

Relevance theory holds that communication is not based on the principle of cooperation. In order to make communication successful, the only common goal of the speaker and hearer is to understand and be understood by the other. The relevance principle also includes the communicative principle; that is, every discourse (or other act of reasoning communication) should be conceived as having optimal relevance for the discourse or act itself (Ungere, F&Schmidt, H.J., 2008). Internet buzzwords are initially popular among the people, especially among the youth group, as a more regular language expression. Therefore, internet buzzwords themselves are communicative. Through such brief, humorous, and culturally rich language, people communicate not only the meaning expressed by the internet buzzwords but also the life attitude, social demands, and livelihood issues reflected behind the internet buzzwords, which in a way, brings people closer to each other. Through internet buzzwords, people can discuss related hot events, which also increases the contact between people. Internet buzzwords are communication activities involving many people, so if people cannot understand internet buzzwords, there will be barriers to communication, so the correct use of internet buzzwords will promote emotional touch between people.

### **4.5 The Cultural Value of Internet Buzzwords**

Hu Yunwan claims that cultural value orientation affects people’s cultural behavior. Influenced by value orientations and their characteristics, the Internet has changed people’s living environment and behavior patterns, making the traditional single monolithic behavior pattern become diversified and multi-quality. New words on the Internet follow the changes, showing strong adaptability and vitality. The value of Internet buzzwords lies in their inherent cultural connotation (Hu Yunwan, 2009). Due to the objective existence of cultural differences, famous words in different countries will have different cultural backgrounds. When the internet buzzwords spread, people will gradually focus on the relevant hot events. Internet buzzwords contain a lot of cultural, technological, and economic information, which can directly reflect the spiritual and material civilization of human beings. Therefore, the spread of internet buzzwords can help spread the national culture and also arouse the interest of foreign friends, thus widening the scope of the reach of internet buzzwords. People from different countries can experience the emotions conveyed by internet buzzwords with Chinese characteristics and culture through the cultural dimension.

## **5. Reflection on the Ideological and Political Education of Contemporary Youth from the Emotional Transmission of Internet Buzzwords**

Yang Xin states that internet buzzwords are a kind of linguistic variation that occurs after language contact and are a reflection of the reality of social and cultural life in the Internet era. Social reports, online topics, and popular dramas have become hot spots for Internet users to discuss and are the primary sources of internet buzzwords. Popular culture is a stratum culture, commercial consumption culture, entertainment culture, symbolic media culture, and value deconstruction culture. These features of the times

of popular culture inherently express the values it aims to spread (Yang Xin, 2008). Buzzwords reflect people's aspirations for a better life and their reflections on the pressure release of energy. It is because of the values, positive and negative emotions, and cultural values conveyed by internet buzzwords that the public must consider the valuable guidance of such words for youth thinking and political education.

#### (1) Positive effects of the spread of internet buzzwords

On the one hand, teachers can raise students' attention to hotspots, enhance their thinking ability and cultivate their critical thinking by outlining internet buzzwords. On the other hand, internet buzzwords can help teenagers express their emotions in witty words and gain others' emotional connections in the process of communication, thus achieving the purpose of stress relief.

#### (2) Negative effects of the spread of internet buzzwords

If the internet buzzwords are not correctly identified and used, it is bound to affect the values of teenagers. For example, some uncivilized words and phrases can affect the communication environment of the youth. As Huang Anjing of the *Chinese Journal of Literature* says, "Internet buzzwords are filled with a large number of negative components that do not conform to the structural characteristics of Chinese and the norms of social civilization, bringing a certain degree of impact to language and society."

## 6. Conclusion

This paper mainly analyzes internet buzzwords from the perspective of cognition and emotion. This will help the spread of internet buzzwords at home and abroad so that foreign readers can better understand the network buzzwords and their emotions, communicative nature, and cultural value. Besides, by analyzing the emotion of the internet buzzword, the public can realize that it is important to regulate the governance of internet buzzwords. Firstly, a positive, healthy, and energetic network environment should be built. Secondly, teachers need to guide young people to use appropriate internet buzzwords in their daily teaching to enrich the teaching content and enhance the fun of the teaching process so as to stimulate students' interest in learning. Finally, as teenagers in the new era, they should set up correct values, keep socialist core values in mind, and clarify their attitude and position so as to truly promote the standardized use of internet buzzwords. However, this paper only collects the internet buzzwords of the past seven years and uses them as a corpus. It is hoped that future researchers can collect more internet buzzwords as a corpus and analyze internet buzzwords from multiple perspectives.

**Funding:** This research was funded by a project with grant number W2019135 from the Wuhan University of Technology,

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Author Biography:** **Yu Yanling**, a professor of Translation Studies at the Wuhan University of Technology, China. Her research interests include translation principles and practice & foreign language acquisition. She also is an Exchanged Scholar at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She was the co-translator of *Translation and Localization Project Management*.

**Tan Siyu**, MTI Student of the Wuhan University of Technology, Majors in interpreting.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations or those of the publisher, the editors, and the reviewers.

## References

- [1] Bent G. (2018). Introduction: Social Investment: A Buzzword-but Has It Reached the Stakeholders? *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, (02),126-126.
- [2] Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*, New Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 142-144.
- [3] GUTT A. (2004). *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [4] Hu Y. (2009). Cultural Value Orientation and Cultural Behavior of Internet Neologisms. *Journal of Jiangnan Forum*, (12), 127-130.
- [5] Johnston, E.& Olson, L. (2015). *The Feeling Brain: The Biology and Psychology of Emotions*, New York and London, W. W. Norton & Company.
- [6] Keiran J.D, Elena S.D., Wang H and Yu Y, (2017). *Translation and Localization Project Management*. Intellectual Property Publishing Press.
- [7] Kivikuru U. (2017). Ideals, Buzzwords, and True Trying: ICT and Communication Policies in Kenya. *Journal of African Media Studies*, (02), 307-321.
- [8] Lv H. (2020). *The Depth of the Emotional Dimension of the Emotional Connection Model*, Taiyuan University of Technology, Shanxi Province.
- [9] Schanze, J. (2017). Nature-based Solutions in Flood Risk Management-Buzzword or Innovation? *Journal of Flood Risk Management*, (03), 281-282.
- [10] Sperber D. D. (2001). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [11] The Top Ten Buzzwords, (2022). *Chinese Journal of Literature*, (02),4-6.
- [12] Ungere, F & Schmidt, H.J. (2008). *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*, Beijing, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [13] Wang S. (2014). Concept and Feature Analysis of Internet Buzzwords. *Journal of Exploration*, (04), 186-192.
- [14] Wang Y. (2009). Analysis on The Phenomenon of Internet Buzzwords, *Journal of News Front*, (08),87-89.
- [15] Yang X. (2008). On the Characteristics of Pop Culture and Its Ethical Implications, *Journal of Tianfu New Theory*, (02), 128-
- [16] Zhang N. (2021). GAO Xiaomei. Analysis of Internet Buzzwords Based on Sociolinguistic Perspective. *Journal of China Economist*, (12), 238-239.
- [17] Zheng D. (2001). "Internet Buzzwords" with Teenagers "Self- talk", *Journal of China Youth Research*, (04), 21-23.

Appendix 1 :

2015	1. Sense of fulfillment. 2. Internet plus. 3. Face score. 4. Me. 5. Maker. 6. Blow your mind. 7. Do whatever you want without any consideration. 8. Shopholic. 9. Online celebrity. 10. It's style that matters.
2016	1. Prehistoric power. 2. Onlookers. 3. Spirit of craftsman. 4. Set a small goal. 5. Whenever you disagree with each other. 6. Friendship sinks easily. 7. Supply-side. 8. Beijing slouch. 9. Trick. 10. Feel very blue.
2017	1. Remain stay true to the original aspiration. 2. Strive ahead. 3. Share. 4. Make people feel warm. 5. With huge fan base. 6. Something has unprecedented results. 7. Greasy. 8. Embarrassed. 9. Diss. 10. Cheer for someone.
2018	1. A community with a shared future. 2. Koi fish. 3. Inn attendant. 4. Classic or typical. 5. Official announcement. 6. Soul gaze. 7. Exit from a group. 8. Buddha-like youngsters. 9. Adult baby. 10. The bicker.
2019	1. Mutual learning between civilizations. 2. Blockchain. 3. Hardcore. 4. Plagiarism. 5. Sth leads among millions the same. 6. Green-eyed monster. 7. The 996-work schedule. 8. I'm frustrated. 9. It's not how you but how I feel that counts. 10. Bullying.
2020	1. To put people and life above everything else. 2. Heroes in harm's way. 3. Spirited. 4. Houlang, refer to today's younger generation. 5. Shenshou, to refer to naughty children. 6. Live streaming commerce. 7. Domestic and international circulations. 8. Wage-earners. 9. Involution. 10. Versailles literature.
2021	1. Profound changes unseen in a century. 2. Moderately prosperous society. 3. Stand the test of time. 4. Double reduction. 5. Carbon peaking and carbon neutrality. 6. Shopping spree. 7. Overwhelmed. 8. Tiger parenting. 9. Couch potato. 10. Metaverse.

From YAOWEN JIAOZI

Appendix 2:

2015	获得感、互联网+、颜值、宝宝、创客、脑洞大开、任性、剁手党、网红、主要看气质
2016	洪荒之力、吃瓜群众、工匠精神、小目标、一言不合就xx、友谊的小船、说翻就翻、供给侧、葛优躺、套路、蓝瘦，香菇
2017	不忘初心、砥砺前行、共享、有温度、流量、可能xxx假xxx、油腻、尬、怼、打call
2018	命运共同体、锦鲤、店小二、教科书式、官宣、确认过眼神、退群、佛系、巨婴、杠精
2019	文明互鉴、区块链、硬核、融梗、xx千万条，xx第一条、柠檬精、996、我太难了、我不要你觉得，我要我觉得、霸凌主义
2020	人民至上，生命至上、逆行者、飒、后浪、神兽、直播带货、双循环、打工人、内卷、凡尔赛文学
2021	百年之未有大变革、小康、赶考、双减、碳达峰，碳中和、野性消费、破防、鸡娃、躺平、元宇宙

(资料来源于《咬文嚼字》)