

Exploring Internet Buzzwords in social media: An Autoethnography as a Bilingual and Female Internet User

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Abstract. This study examines the utilization of Internet buzzwords in social media platforms by a bilingual female netizen. Autoethnography is used to collect data through the diary and interviews with other bilingual and Internet users. The results reveal disparities in the usage of Internet buzzwords between women and men, as well as variances in the adoption of Chinese and Western buzzwords. These findings contribute to the comprehension of Internet buzzword usage in social media, shedding light on its impact on communication and culture.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Internet Buzzwords, Communication.

1. Introduction

Even though China's netizen population is rapidly expanding every year, previous research on Internet buzzwords has primarily focused on how they are translated or relate to culture. Network language, which is important to a new language, is the essential part of communication in the information age. It is crucial to be very careful with how it is used. Additionally, ethnographic research is a technique used in autoethnography, which emphasizes the cultural connection between the self and others who are representing the society (Chang, 2008). It was once discovered that it is advantageous to use this technique to connect one's own experience with their cultural background.

In this study, the focus is on exploring the utilization of Internet buzzwords in social media applications from the perspective of a bilingual and female netizen. The study aims to address two key research questions: 1) What are the differences between the way women and men use the Internet Buzzwords? 2) What are the differences between Chinese and Western Year's Internet Buzzwords?

2. Literature Review of Internet Buzzwords

Terms used primarily on the Internet are known as "internet buzzwords" (Sun, 2022). The majority of Internet Buzzwords have distinct interpretations and meanings. According to recent research, many studies are more interested in translating or interpreting Internet Buzzwords. Sun (2022), who gathers information from official translation results provided by Google Translate, Youdao Translate, and Baidu Translate, divides the various translation types into three categories. Since some of them only convey their superficial meaning, many Internet Buzzwords are insufficiently translated. It is only possible to interpret the meanings of Internet buzzwords correctly when the appropriate functional equivalence theory is used (Sun, 2022). However, the author did not collect data from posts or comments made on social media and only associated the translation of Internet buzzwords with one translation strategy.

Meanwhile, in 2022, Luo conducted a study exploring Internet buzzwords as a form of popular culture. The rise in popularity of Internet buzzwords can be attributed to advancements in technology, and some of these buzzwords embody humanistic compassion, which can contribute to individuals' well-being and growth (Luo, 2022). The extensive range of Internet buzzwords available can effectively capture the emotions and perspectives of their users (Luo, 2022). Tang (2022) also acknowledged the connection between the meanings conveyed through Internet language and individuals' emotional states. The increasing prevalence of Internet buzzwords raises various issues that warrant further investigation.

Young people are better at using the Internet than their parents because of their environments of growth (Luo, 2022; Tang, 2022). Additionally, the emergence of Internet Buzzwords has caused word misunderstandings, particularly among the elderly. Intergenerational communication will most likely be influenced in this situation (Luo, 2022).

Tang (2022) gives innovative connotations to the four sociolinguistics functions of youth culture, stratification, informational sign, and emotional communication. Internet buzzwords that are used in fan communities frequently contain words and phrases from other languages. However, due to their informality and lack of regulation, they can occasionally conflict with the objective of cultural construction (Tang, 2022).

3. Methodology

Autoethnography is the simultaneous integration of autobiography and ethnography, with an emphasis on the cultural relationship between the self and others who are intended to represent the society (Chang, 2008). In contrast to conventional research methods, autoethnography places a greater emphasis on the individual's self-experience and cultural influences, according to Canagarajah (2012). In addition to self-written artifacts, conversations with others, and autoethnography data can also be collected; however, the focus here is on the creative writing resources of writing, such as analyzing it in relevant code procedures (Canagarajah, 2012; Zhang-Wu, 2022). Therefore, the author of an autoethnography must describe or share his own experience while addressing the cultural context's effects. However, Canagarajah (2012) argues that this approach has drawbacks because narratives involve and imply a self-experience analysis. Regarding this problem, Zhang-Wu states, "This study's subjectivity, small sample size, and highly contextualized nature are its limitations." (Zhang-Wu, 2022, page 44).

In this study, the author draws upon the identity as a bilingual and female Internet user to explore the use of Internet buzzwords in social media. By using autoethnography, the essay collects data from author's own experiences, including personal diary, social media posts and comments, and interviews with friends and family.

4. The Differences between the Way Women and Men Use the Internet Buzzwords

Gender differences in communication styles, both offline and online, have been extensively studied. Karima (2012) asserts that the dissimilarity in communication styles between men and women stems from their divergent perspectives on the purpose of conversations. Psychological studies on gender differences have indicated that men tend to utilize language autonomously to accomplish specific objectives, while women often employ communication as a means to foster social connections and establish relationships (Leaper, 1991; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1996; Mason, 1994).

In my personal case, since I was a young child, I have been aware of the differences in communication styles between men and women. My father tended to use imperative sentences to remind and order my family members because he was constantly focused on his work. He also did not always patiently listen to me when I tried to tell him about various things from school. By contrast, I would much more likely to discuss those topics with her. I documented my dissatisfaction with my father. Such dissatisfaction and the relationship with my father also played a significant part in shaping my attitude towards men as I grew older.

From an internet perspective, men tend to employ a communicative style that is dominant and authoritative. For instance, in a televised variety show in 2019, Chinese actor Huang Xiaoming popularized the the Internet Buzzword "I don't want what you think, I want what I think." This phrase conveys the expectation of unwavering compliance regardless of one's personal thoughts or opinions.

This buzzword has evolved into one of my friends' most frequently used expressions since it first appeared, with 72% of the users being male.

Furthermore, during my brief period as an internet user, I have encountered numerous instances where both my male friends and complete strangers exhibit a preference for using directive internet buzzwords. Examples of such phrases include "Really? Are you kidding me?". Additionally, some male internet users even engage in negative evaluations and comments targeting women. In contrast, the voices of women on the internet tend to be more nuanced and restrained.

5. The Differences between Chinese and Western Year's Internet Buzzwords

Since 2019, I have begun concentrating on the top Internet buzzwords in China and Western countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States. Each of these three countries publishes its annual review in an effort to catch internet users' attention. Every December, a host of reviews of the internet buzzwords from the previous year can be found online. These yearly summaries are genuinely entertaining to read.

After I read articles from China and some other countries, some differences were found through my observation. Firstly, the annual number of Chinese words has remained constant at 10 since 2012. Of the ten of them, two to three must be politically active. For instance, the phrase "We are ready to build a powerful China" appears as the tenth word on the 2021 Words of the Year list. It is possible that many people who did not watch this recitation might be confused about this buzzword. Every year's word review is published by an official institution called National language resources monitoring and Research Center, which is totally different from Western countries. Conversely, the Word of the Year is published in Western nations by dictionaries or websites like Cambridge Dictionary and Google Research. Additionally, the public searches determine the year of the word for them rather than researchers. As they search for them, it might more accurately reflect people's centers of attention.

6. Discussion

One of the key findings of this study is the role of gender in the use of Internet buzzwords. Through the analysis of my own social media posts and comments, as well as those of my friends and family, I found that there were some differences in the way women and men used these buzzwords. Men are more inclined to use directive language, while women's discourse has a less aggressive tone to it. Another key finding of this study is the role of cultural background in the use of internet buzzwords. As a bilingual netizen with experience in both Chinese and Western cultures, I found that there were some differences in the internet buzzwords used in these two contexts. For example, the informality and lack of regulation in online communication may lead to more creative language use in Chinese contexts, while the popularity of technology in Western contexts may lead to more functional language use. This may be a result of differences in language use due to differences in online communication and social media environments, as people have different communication priorities in different cultural contexts

7. Conclusion

This study aims to delve into the disparities observed in the utilization of Internet buzzwords between women and men, as well as the distinctions between Chinese and Western Year's Internet buzzwords. The exploration offers valuable insights into pertinent issues associated with Internet buzzwords. Autoethnography served as the research methodology, wherein data collection involved analysing the personal diary and conducting interviews with bilingual individuals engaged in online activities. The findings from this study indicate discernible distinctions in the patterns of Internet buzzword usage between genders and variations in the adoption of Chinese and Western buzzwords. Although many studies use autoethnography to tell their own stories, to address the limitations of

autoethnography, future studies will aim to increase the sample size by including more objective data and improve the procedures for material selection and analysis.

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