

## Analysis of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Sociolinguistics

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### Abstract

As the Internet expands rapidly in the era of information technology, numerous Internet buzzwords emerge and vanish swiftly. In China, it has been an annual tradition to post the top Internet buzzwords or hot words, which spark heated discussions among Internet users regarding their meanings and usage. However, there is often a lack of clear distinction between buzzwords and hot words, and the overall characteristics and value of Internet language based on the top Internet buzzwords remain largely unexplored. The change of language is, to some extent, interconnected with the change of society. Consequently, with the aim of examining the features and functions of Chinese top Internet buzzwords from the perspective of sociolinguistics, this research specifically focuses on the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords released by *Language and Character Weekly* from 2019 to 2023 in terms of word formation, topic, and emotion. It could be found that the Internet fosters a virtual speech community that spans across regions among Internet users. The spread of popular dialects and English words contributes to the variation and change of Chinese Internet buzzwords. Moreover, these buzzwords convey diverse emotional meanings. The meaning and usage of Internet buzzwords vary in different periods of society. In conclusion, Internet buzzwords are the product of Internet development, carrying information about the characteristics of society and individuals. There is a need to be more discerning about the Chinese Internet buzzwords from the sociolinguistic perspective, which holds significant implications for understanding the trends of the annual Internet buzzwords in the future.

*Keywords:* Chinese Internet buzzwords, Internet language, speech community, sociolinguistics

### 1 Introduction

In contemporary society, the Internet has been an enduring presence, firmly establishing itself as an indispensable component in our daily lives. Crystal (2017) states that if the Internet is a revolution, it is likely to be a linguistic revolution. The rapid development of technology enables individuals to engage in online communication, thereby catalysing the appearance of a unique form of language—the Internet language.

How is Internet usage faring in China? As stated in the 51<sup>st</sup> report on China's Internet Development by the *China Internet Network Information Centre* (CNNIC, 2023), China counted a staggering 1,067 million netizens as of December 2022, representing a demographic encompassing more than 75% of the Chinese who use the Internet. Besides, the report reveals that individuals aged between 20 and 59 constitute the predominant cohort among Internet users, comprising 67% in total. Furthermore, among the different kinds of personal Internet applications such as online video, instant messaging, live streaming, online payment, etc., instant messaging commands a paramount position, claiming a remarkable 97.2% share in the year 2022.

Significantly, the Internet frequently serves as a platform for the incorporation of Internet buzzwords into people's instant messages or interpersonal communication, in other words.

Indeed, buzzwords emerge as a linguistically potent vehicle for articulating opinions and emotions, not solely within online environments but also within the broader landscape of daily life among the Chinese. Hence, conducting an investigation into the utilisation of Internet buzzwords by the Chinese assumes great significance.

In China, it is a common occurrence to encounter a detailed analysis of some hot Internet buzzwords. The 2021 top ten Internet buzzwords were used to study the spectacle effect of these buzzwords in the context of new media (Jie, 2022). Yanling and Siyu (2022) selected some examples from the list of top Internet buzzwords posted by a publication in China named *YAOWENJIAOZI* to examine the linguistic phenomenon solely from the perspective of emotional relevance. It is acknowledged that, however, the characterization of Chinese Internet buzzwords cannot be ascertained more clearly or convincingly in a certain year. In addition, Internet language can express ideology, culture, emotion, and so on; thus, it is not so persuasive to undertake the features and functions of Internet buzzwords solely from one aspect; that is to say, there is a dearth of comprehensive investigations of different aspects of the characteristics of Internet buzzwords. Consequently, this study endeavours to bridge these gaps by undertaking an analysis of lists compiled by *Language and Character Weekly* from 2019 to 2023, with the following research objectives:

- (1) To examine the characteristics of the top ten Chinese internet buzzwords during the period from 2019 to 2023;
- (2) To analyse the functions of the internet language used by Internet users;
- (3) To propose suggestions on the relationship between language and society on the basis of this investigation.

The following are the corresponding questions in the research:

- (1) What are the characteristics of the top ten Chinese internet buzzwords in recent years?
- (2) What are the functions of the internet language in the virtual speech community?
- (3) What's the relationship between language and society on the basis of this investigation?

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Speech Community in Sociolinguistics

The speech community is an important concept in the field of sociolinguistics. Bloomfield (1994) states that a speech community refers to a group of people who use the same set of speech signals. These shared signals serve as the linguistic glue that binds individuals within the community, distinguishing them from others who employ distinct linguistic repertoires.

Rickford (1986) suggests that, within one speech community, not only conflict but also consensus can occur. Rickford's explanation expanded upon its concept by highlighting not only the potential for conflict within these linguistic collectives but also the capacity for consensus. The variability found in speech communities is also extensive because of the rapid and constant changes in time and space. They lead to the constant evolution of speech communities, resulting in the variation and change of language.

With the assistance of the Internet, the way people communicate has shifted, with individuals converging in a virtual space as members of one or more speech communities. Danet and Herring (2007) illustrate that online users are members of one or more speech communities who bring to their online encounters shared knowledge, values, and expectations for linguistic interaction. The freedom of the Internet has enabled individuals to connect with existing communities while also forming new communities of interlocutors who have altered our

concepts of education, sharing, communication, and so on (Morgan, 2014). In essence, the swift development of the Internet has substantively facilitated the establishment of a distinct virtual speech community among its user base in China.

## 2.2 Internet Language and Buzzwords

It has been observed that the Internet fosters a virtual speech community and a sense of belonging among its online users. The subsequent emergence of social media platforms in the 2000s further accelerated the evolution of the Internet language (Herring, 2013). Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, notable for their imposition of character limits, have notably incentivized concise and inventive forms of linguistic expression.

Similarly, various online social media platforms in China like Weibo, Boke, WeChat, and so on have broken the traditional mode of media communication, which subtly changed the existing individuals' language communication methods, thereby bringing about a revolution in communication and paving the way for the emergence of a novel phenomenon recognised as the Internet language. The expeditious spread of Internet language wields a considerable influence over public discourse, as exemplified by the widespread utilisation of Internet buzzwords as a prevailing linguistic trend in contemporary China.

Buzzwords refer to voguish words or phrases (Merriam-Webster, 2023) that have become fashionable because they have been used a lot in a particular subject area (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). The buzzwords, hereby, can refer to certain words or phrases popular in a certain area, vanishing quickly sometimes. As different fields are also part of our daily affairs, Internet buzzwords are actually being used in our daily conversation and are in a state of change all the time in such a media era (Lee, 2019). According to Danet and Herring (2006), new buzzwords continuously emerge in response to shifts in online culture, technological advancements, or current events. The Internet buzzwords are the social variance of the modern language, each with its own unique value. Thus, understanding the factors that drive the creation and dissemination of Internet buzzwords is crucial for comprehending their societal impact.

## 2.3 Annual Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords

Internet buzzwords, being a pervasive feature of contemporary language use, assume a prominent role in the discourse that appears on the Internet. In recent years, this linguistic phenomenon has garnered increasing attention and discussion in China. Furthermore, a well-established tradition exists wherein several official publications undertake the task of ranking the most influential Internet buzzwords or hot words in society. *Language and Character Weekly*, for instance, recognised as one of the foremost authoritative publications in China, annually unveils the list of the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords every December.

*Language and Character Weekly* primarily centres its attention on matters pertaining to Chinese language policy, current trends within language research, and a diverse array of linguistic phenomena that permeate the fabric of daily life. Notably, this publication disseminates two distinct annual lists: *the top ten Internet hot words* and *the top ten Internet buzzwords*, each serving unique linguistic purposes. In accordance with official statements by the publication, the hot words list places a heightened emphasis on topics generating fervent discussions, whereas the buzzwords list concentrates on linguistic elements that have achieved widespread use in online discourse. *Language and Character Weekly* started the ranking of the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords in 2019, and its annual list is widely spread in society and reported in a lot of news.

The process of ranking the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords follows a multi-stage procedure, such as the recommendations of online users, online voting, and expert reviews. This procedure aligns closely with the core principle of certain interest in words and down-to-earth (Methven,

2022). Within the Chinese context, it is commonplace to encounter a detailed analysis of Internet buzzwords including their origins and the concrete meaning of each buzzword. However, within the broader framework of linguistics and sociology, there are few studies on the overarching development and characteristics of these listed top Internet buzzwords. Consequently, the present research endeavours to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the top ten Internet buzzwords, as compiled by *Language and Character Weekly* from 2019 to 2023, from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

### 3 Methodology

This study centres its investigation on Internet language with a specific focus on the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords, a selection drawn from *Language and Character Weekly's* annual releases during the years spanning from 2019 to 2023. The corpus includes 50 Internet buzzwords, as seen in Table 1 (Translation of these buzzwords are collected and listed in the appendix), which are collected as the primary dataset for conducting a rigorous, comprehensive and systematic analysis through a mixed-method approach.

年份	历年十大网络流行语名单
2023	(1) i人/e人; (2) 显眼包; (3) 特种兵旅游; (4) ×门; (5) 遥遥领先; (6) 多巴胺穿搭; (7) 孔乙己文学; (8) 公主/王子, 请××; (9) 你人还怪好的(嘞); (10) 挖呀挖呀挖;
2022	(1) 栓Q; (2) PUA; (3) 大冤种; (4) 小镇做题家; (5) 团长; (6) 退! 退! 退! (7) 嘴替; (8) 一种很新的××; (9) 服了你个老六; (10) ××刺客;
2021	(1) 卷; (2) 躺平; (3) 破防; (4) emo; (5) yyds; (6) 夺笋; (7) 赓续; (8) 社恐/社牛; (9) 一整个×住; (10) 普信男/女;
2020	(1) 逆行者; (2) 甩锅; (3) 后浪; (4) 打工人; (5) 爷青回; (6) 凡尔赛; (7) 你品, 你细品; (8) 有内味了; (9) 内卷; (10) 社会性死亡;
2019	(1) 阿中; (2) 盘它(他); (3) 上头; (4) 我酸了; (5) 我太难(南)了; (6) ××自由; (7) 咱也不知道, 咱也不敢问; (8) 上班996, 生病ICU; (9) X千万

Table 1 The corpus of top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2019 to 2022

To facilitate this analytical endeavour, the research leverages established theoretical frameworks from the field of sociolinguistics. In particular, the study draws upon the tenets of the theory of speech community, which provides valuable insights into how linguistic communities within the digital landscape engage with and shape Internet language. Additionally, the analysis is guided by foundational principles related to language variation and change, a framework that enables a nuanced exploration of the evolving linguistic landscape encapsulated by Internet buzzwords.

Examining the characteristics and development of the top ten Internet buzzwords spanning the period from 2019 to 2023 necessitates a multifaceted investigation of language variation and change within the virtual speech community. In order to delve into the domain of language variation and change, the research places significant emphasis on elucidating several key facets. Firstly, it involves a meticulous exploration of the structural features governing the formation of these buzzwords. Secondly, the study delves into the emotional and attitudinal dimensions embedded within these buzzwords across diverse contextual scenarios. Furthermore, the analysis extends to the topical utilisation of these buzzwords over distinct temporal periods.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 The Classification of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the aspect of Word Formation

Presented below are the outcomes of the top Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2019 to 2023, which have been structured in accordance with the fundamental principles of word formation within the field of linguistics, as illustrated in Table 2. These categories encompass abbreviated words, blending words, dialects, homophonic words, lettered words, monosyllabic words, neology, phrases and sentences.

Word formation	Number	Frequency
Neology	18	29%
Phrase	13	21%
Sentence	8	13%
Abbreviated words	6	10%
Dialects	5	8%
Homophonic words	4	6%
Lettered words	3	5%
Blending words	3	5%
Monosyllabic words	2	3%

Table 2 The word formation categories of the top ten Chinese buzzwords

As displayed in Table 2, neology constitutes the most prolific category, accounting for 29% (18) of the listed Internet buzzwords. Neology means the use of an established word in a new or different sense (Merriam-Webster, 2023), highlighting the proclivity for linguistic innovation and the creation of entirely new lexical entities in the new era of social media. For instance, “×|” in 2023 literally means ×gate, which is a newly created buzzword used to describe the crazy love for something. Phrases, representing multi-word constructs, constitute a substantial portion, contributing 21% (13) to the corpus. This underscores the role of multi-word expressions in encapsulating specific concepts in the Internet language. In addition to phrase, we can find that most of the buzzwords are composed of letters, numbers, symbols, etc., and some of the buzzwords belong to different categories at the same time, even if the sentences 13% (8) here are very short and brief, reflecting the inclination towards brevity and conciseness when using buzzwords online. Take “爷青回” in 2020 for example, the sentence is shorted from 7 Chinese characters to 3 characters.

Abbreviated words, consisting of shortened linguistic forms, constitute 10% (6) of the dataset. Homophonic words, lettered words, and monosyllabic words, each contributing 6% (4), 5% (3), and 3% (2), respectively, underscore the creative use of phonetic similarity and single letters as linguistic elements of Internet buzzwords. Besides, dialects account for 8% (5) of the buzzwords in Table 2, which come from some parts of China and have their own unique witty tone and sense of humour. Also, in the classification, most of the blending words, abbreviated words, homophonic words, and letter words are related to English. The appearance of dialects and English indicates the incorporation of regional and cultural linguistic variations into the digital era, revealing the diversity of language within the online community. In total, each category in the table is accompanied by a corresponding percentage value, denoting the prevalence of that specific buzzword type within the corpus.

## 4.2 The Classification of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the aspect of Emotion

There is no doubt that emotion is a central part of our lives. Language, of course, has the function of expressing the opinion or attitude of the speaker. Internet buzzwords, as a kind of language with a special form, are often used by Internet users, and it is possible to misunderstand the meaning of the user without understanding the emotional meaning correctly. Johnston and Olson (2015) suggest that brain functions such as attention, perception, memory, or decision-making are ineludibly instilled with emotional assessments and feelings. Thus, studying the emotions of these Internet buzzwords is a very alluring and exciting area of research, and the results of the classification are shown in Table 3.

Emotion	Number	Frequency
Negative	18	36%
Positive	15	30%
Both	10	20%
Neutral	7	14%

Table 3 The emotion categories of the top ten Chinese buzzwords

Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the emotions conveyed by Internet buzzwords in diverse situations, including negative, positive, context-dependent, and neutral categories. A significant portion of Internet buzzwords, constituting 36% (18) of the total buzzwords are associated with negative emotions, surpassing the proportion of positive buzzwords. Individuals aged 19 to 59 are the main users of the Internet, according to the data of CNNIC, and they are actually under great pressure and anxiety in reality. Through the medium of the Internet, they find solace in venting their dissatisfaction, unhappiness, or other negative emotions.

In contrast to the predominant negativity, approximately 30% (15) of Internet buzzwords convey positive emotions, reflecting moments of joy, satisfaction, and contentment experienced by users. Furthermore, the intriguing aspect of this category lies in its adaptability to context. Approximately 20% (10) of Internet buzzwords have the ability to swing between negative and positive emotions based on the situational context. This flexibility underscores the dynamic nature of Internet buzzwords in the Internet era, where the same term can convey divergent sentiments depending on the circumstances. A smaller yet significant proportion of Internet buzzwords, constituting 14% (7) of the total, maintain a neutral stance. These buzzwords neither convey overtly negative nor positive emotions. Instead, they often serve as humorous or satirical expressions related to events in individuals' lives or society without explicitly manifesting emotional sentiments. For instance, “社牛” in 2021 is a kind of humorous expression that refers to someone who is energetic and funny and at the centre of activity during social occasions, without clear negative or positive emotion.

### 4.3 The Feature of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the aspect of Topic

To comprehend this connection thoroughly, it is imperative to consider the intricate interplay between individuals' diverse cultural backgrounds, cognitive habits, and social customs in different periods since the topic used in the context has changed (see Table 4).

Buzzwords	Previous meaning	Current meaning
团长	Regimental commander in the army	Group-buying organiser during the lockdown period
XX刺客	A person who murders someone	Expensive goods when shopping
躺平	Lying flat of the body	Being tired of social competition
逆行者	A person who goes in a direction not allowed by traffic regulations	Chinese people defeated COVID-19
后浪	The rear wave, or young generation	Brave younger generation during covid-19
特种兵	Highly trained military forces to work on difficult missions.	A new travel style of young people who visit many attractions while spending the least time;

Table 4 The changes in meaning of the same word with different backgrounds

“刺客” in Table 4 can be translated into “assassin” which refers to a person who murders others for some reason. Actually, it is given new meaning by Internet users, describing the goods that have "killer" prices that people had to pay for at a store where the price tags were partially hidden. “逆行者” in 2020 originally meant someone who walks backwards without following the traffic regulations correctly. But now it denotes someone who fought heroically for the people during COVID-19. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that the usage patterns of these buzzwords are not static; they are subject to change, evolving in response to varying cultural backgrounds and contextual influences.

The appearance of Internet buzzwords every year shows language change (Yan, 2021), which can also represent changes in the social, economic, and political environments. Internet users are very concerned about their daily work and lives. The 50 top Internet buzzwords encompass a wide array of topics, ranging from work-related matters (“内卷” and “躺平” in 2021, “打工人” in 2020, “上班996, 生病ICU” in 2019, etc.) to shopping (“××刺客” in 2022), examinations (“小镇做题家” in 2022), social communication (“嘴替” in 2022, “社牛/社恐” in 2021, “社会性死亡” in 2020, etc.). Nearly all of them are directly related to hot topics or current events that people are particularly interested in or concerned about in their daily lives. In that vein, our data examples represent that the Internet language, therefore, can be considered a quick and accurate reflection of the reality of people's everyday lives and social hot spots. Through the investigation of top Internet buzzwords that occurred at a certain time, the change or feature of society can be recorded and presumed. Vice versa, people in different periods pay attention to different social topics in their lives, causing the appearance and popularity of various Internet buzzwords.

## 5 Discussion

The Chinese top ten Internet buzzwords collected from 2019 to 2022 are classified from the angle of word formation, emotion and topics and the results are shown in last part. Following this line of thought, the forthcoming discussion, on the basis of the results, will expound upon the questions in the research.

The results of the research indicated that the current top Chinese Internet buzzwords have

unique features. Each category of the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2019 to 2022 is accompanied by a corresponding percentage value, denoting the prevalence of that specific buzzword type within the corpus. Table 2 shows the classification from the angle of word formation, showing that Chinese Internet buzzwords meet the requirements of being straightforward and time-saving as a result of the rapid, convenient, and complicated Internet as well as the use of input methods. Brooks and Ragir (2008) support the idea that language is a cultural product of a community of practitioners. The phenomenon of dialects “大冤种”, “夺笋”, and “你人还怪好嘞” in Table 1 appearing in Internet buzzwords confirms the weakened regional limitations in the virtual speech community. The Internet provides a platform for people to create and spread buzzwords. The Internet buzzwords, thus, are actually updating all the time, appearing and disappearing rapidly. In addition, with the development of the Internet and cross-cultural interaction, the use of a foreign language in buzzwords is becoming more common. For example, “栓Q” in 2022 became a sarcastic way of saying “thank you,” consisting of a Chinese character that has the same sound as “shuān”, and the English letter Q. It is often adapted by Chinese users when they feel embarrassed or speechless. The appearance of both dialect and English in the lists of top Chinese buzzwords can reflect the dispersion and fusion of the Chinese Internet language from other groups to the entire language community. In this sense, the rapid development of these leading Chinese Internet buzzwords is closely related to the emergence of the virtual speech community in today's landscape of information technology; that is to say, the Internet buzzwords are the products of the Internet age, and the virtual speech community provides a platform for their inception and dissemination.

Besides, the Internet, especially social media, provides a platform for individuals to express themselves more freely and anonymously than in face-to-face conversations. Table 3 offers an insightful visualisation of these emotional expressions, categorising them into negative, positive, context-dependent, and neutral categories, which can assist people in expressing their feelings in a humorous way and also establish emotional connections with others. For example, the dialect from northeast China “大冤种” in 2020 means a weak person who is easily cheated or tricked, or who is forced to take the blame for something that somebody else has done wrong. It often appears when a person describes himself or others unhappily. “yyds” in 2021 is a positive expression; if I say something is “yyds,” it means it's so wonderful and I enjoy it. Those deep emotions are actually comments and reflections of society or certain things encountered by Internet citizens. Thus, as a special ideograph of Internet culture, Internet buzzwords have diversified emotional meanings, and we can judge the user's life attitude, demands, or emotions reflected behind the Internet buzzwords. This requires determining how the emotional connotations and attitudes of the user connected with each buzzword may change in response to various language contexts, hence creating their dynamic usage patterns.

Additionally, almost all the Internet buzzwords of the past five years are fresh, lively, and down-to-earth, with little repetition every year and various topics related to the daily lives of individuals. As a linguistic phenomenon, the top Chinese Internet buzzwords, as previously stated, traverse a diverse spectrum of topics and have unique functions. The same buzzwords are used on different topics to show the internal change of language in the speech community along with the change in society. For example, “团长” in 2022 means regimental commander in the army before, while as a top Internet buzzword, it can be explained as the group-buying organiser who organises the buying of food for residents during the COVID period. Internet buzzwords used in different periods have the function of reflecting the changes in society, the development of the Internet, and the characteristics of the age. For instance, “团长” in 2022 refers to the group-buying organiser during the period of the pandemic, while “特种兵” indicates young people who engage in revenge tourism consumption because of the previous pandemic restrictions. Both of the two buzzwords are related to military groups before, and the



changes show a totally different society in the new era. Through the investigation of the features and functions of these Chinese Internet buzzwords as a special linguistic phenomenon on the Internet, we can have a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and society. The possibility of describing the orderly differences in a language serving a community is the key to linguistic change. Thus, investigating how these top Internet buzzwords are employed across varying topics within the specified timeframe is essential for comprehending their adaptability and resonance in the digital era.

The old words or phrases are being employed in new settings as Internet buzzwords, demonstrating the importance of studying socially conditioned variation in language. For instance, “破防” in 2021 initially referred to the ability to break through an opponent’s defences and make them defenceless when playing computer games. However, it now refers to the emotional shock of encountering someone or witnessing something, with an active or negative emotion depending on the context. All of the examples in Table 4 represent that there is a close relationship between language and society. Sociality is the essential attribute of language, and social development and changes have an impact on language. The change of society, in this sense, determines the change of language; the change and development of language always adapts to the development of society, which could be proved by the spread of overseas culture into Internet buzzwords and the new meaning of previous words in the period of the pandemic. On the one hand, language is absolutely dependent on society; on the other hand, it is adaptable to social changes. Thus, we can say that there exists a covariance relationship between language and society.

With regard to the implications of the research, the diverse array of Chinese top Internet buzzword categories is articulated herein, offering valuable insights into the taxonomy and distribution of these linguistic phenomena within the digital landscape. Understanding how these linguistic constructs take shape offers valuable insights into their lexical evolution. The structured insights presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4 serve as a valuable resource for discerning the evolving landscape of Internet language and its typological diversity. Furthermore, the investigation of these Chinese top Internet buzzwords is a significant way of discerning contemporary societal concerns, assessing the attitudes and feelings of online users towards specific occasions, and monitoring the dynamics of societal norm change across distinct temporal epochs. The activities of human beings are closely connected with the adjustment of society, and the adjustment will affect language, invariably imparting a discernible influence on language dynamics. In other words, as society changes, so does language. On the one hand, with the further development of information technology and new media, online languages will also manifest heightened complexity and diversity. Therefore, it is imperative that more study and research be undertaken henceforth to furnish comprehensive insights into how Internet language applies and develops over time.

Taken as a whole, the Internet has infiltrated every aspect of people’s life and languages in its distinct form which has been accepted by the majority of Internet users. These Internet buzzwords, as an Internet language, go beyond merely some frequently used words or phrases associated with the Internet or computer technology, and we need to acknowledge that these top Chinese Internet buzzwords transmit to the audience their underlying meaning, cultural connotation, and emotion within the prevailing context. Emanating as emblematic manifestations of contemporary popular culture, the Internet language assumes a pivotal role in the processes of individual socialisation and is a virtual representation of psychological status and demand in realistic life. As we move forward, it is crucial to acknowledge the profound import of Internet language in contemporary communication and to continually explore its evolving role in shaping our digital interactions and cultural landscapes.

## 6 Conclusion

Through the Internet, there is a virtual speech community where people from different regions or even countries can communicate with each other. Virtual Internet space helps Internet users have the same speech community, which provides a platform for the variation and change of Internet language, revealing the development of Chinese Internet buzzwords in these years. Language is dynamic and vibrant. With the development of society and the Internet, old varieties of language are constantly vanishing and new or refurbished varieties are emerging, illustrating an ongoing and fluid process of ebb and flow.

Doing such research on the top 10 Chinese Internet buzzwords is of great significance because it tells us how the modern Chinese language evolves in the age of information technology. The fusion of distinct linguistic components to form innovative terms is clearly examined through the investigation of the top Chinese Internet buzzwords from different angles. Also, the two variables of language and society influence, interact with, and restrict each other, and language and society are in a covariant relationship. The changeable buzzwords reflect what is changing in our society and how individuals express themselves and view the world.

People's emotions, the social condition nowadays, and people's attitudes towards certain events can be reflected simply and straightforwardly through Internet buzzwords. In conclusion, Internet buzzwords are the product of Internet development and carry information about the characteristics of society and individuals. We need to be more discerning about how these popular Internet buzzwords evolve from a sociolinguistic point of view. The following annual Internet buzzwords in the future, as a media language, should be taken and analysed too.

By tracing the development of the term 'buzzword', we know how it has been understood and operated in different aspects. As social media emerges and develops rapidly, a buzzword can be proposed and adapted quickly in society or even the world within a short time. In a digital society, all social life, social events, and social relations can be revealed through it. Studying the change and development of Internet buzzwords is of great significance to understanding language and cultural trends and making a possible prediction about the development of the annual buzzwords from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

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## Appendix

### The Corpus of Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from 2019 to 2022

Year	English Translation of Chinese top ten Internet buzzwords
2023	(1) i人/e人: introversive person / extroversive person; (2) 显眼包: class clown / goof; (3) 特种兵旅游: special force-style tourism / tourist special troops; (4) ×门: × gate /× school; (5) 遥遥领先: get such a big lead; (6) 多巴胺××: dopamine ××; (7) 孔乙己文学: Kong Yiji literature; (8) 公主/王子, 请××: Prince / princess, please...; (9) 你人还怪好的嘞: You are the sweetest. (10) 挖呀挖呀挖: dig, dig, dig;
	(1) 栓Q: I have nothing to say;

2022	<p>(2) PUA: gaslight;                  (3) (大)冤种: patsy;                  (4) 小镇做题家: small-town swot / test god / quiz man;                  (5) 团长: a group-buying organizer;                  (6) 退! 退! 退! : Stay back!                  (7) 嘴替: He / She just took the words right out of my mouth!                  (8) 一种很新的××: something really new;                  (9) 服了你个老六: You are such a lame camper!                  (10) ××刺客: ×× assassin;</p>
2021	<p>(1) 内卷: involution / irrational internal competition;                  (2) 躺平: lying flat / be a couch potato;                  (3) 破防: overwhelmed / emotionally vulnerable;                  (4) emo: emotional;                  (5) yyds: greatest of all time;                  (6) 夺笋: You are so mean!                  (7) 赓续: sustain;                  (8) 社恐/社牛: social butterfly / social anxiety disorder;                  (9) 一整个×住: a strong degree of ...;                  (10) 普信男/女: He / She is full of himself / herself;</p>
2020	<p>(1) 逆行者: Hero in harm's way;                  (2) 甩锅: pass the buck;                  (3) 后浪: rising waves;                  (4) 打工人: laborers / wage-earners / office worker;                  (5) 爷青回: My youth is making a comeback;                  (6) 凡尔赛: humblebrag;                  (7) 你品, 你细品: Let that sink in. / Think about that.                  (8) 有内味了: That's the spirit.                  (9) 内卷: involution / irrational internal competition;                  (10) 社会性死亡: mortified / fall flat on one's face;</p>
2019	<p>(1) 阿中: Ah-chung (A personification of China);                  (2) 盘它(他): teach somebody a lesson/ pet him;                  (3) 上头: be under someone's spell;                  (4) 我酸了: sour grapes/ I'm so jealous.                  (5) 我太难(南)了: Life is so hard. / I am worn out.                  (6) ××自由: ×× freedom;                  (7) 咱也不知道, 咱也不敢问: We don't know and we don't dare to ask.                  (8) 上班996, 生病ICU: work by 996, sick in ICU (996 means work from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, 6 days a week);                  (9) X千万条Y第一条: There are thousands of roads to ..., and ... is the first one.                  (10) 我不要你觉得, 我要我觉得: It doesn't matter what you think, what matters is my plan. / I'm the boss, ok?</p>

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