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A Comparative Study of Internet Buzzwords "X Dazi" and "X You"

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Abstract. In the context of the intelligent media era, with the accelerated development of internet technology, various internet buzzwords have emerged one after another. Among them, "X Dazi" spread rapidly upon its appearance and became a strong meme with great vitality. In contrast, "X You", which emerged earlier, has not developed into a strong meme despite certain similarities with "X Dazi". Therefore, in response to this phenomenon, based on the dual perspectives of diachrony and synchrony, this paper conducts an in-depth comparison of "X Dazi" and "X You" in terms of semantic evolution and construction analysis, and speculates on their future evolution trends. On this basis, it further explores the reasons for their popularity and the advantages of "X Dazi" as a strong meme.

Keywords: internet buzzwords, "X Dazi", "X You", diachronic investigation, synchronic investigation

1. Introduction

Internet buzzwords are one of the key research objects in the current field of linguistics. Previous studies on "X Dazi" and "X You" mostly treated them as separate research objects, exploring their respective semantic origins, semantic evolution and construction features. For example, Guo Yaosheng [1] examined their construction components, semantic features, pragmatic functions, generation mechanisms and popularity drivers from sociolinguistic and cognitive linguistic perspectives, adopting descriptive linguistic methods. Wang Lihua [2] analyzed the semantic evolution of the character "you".

However, few scholars have combined the two for comparative analysis on both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Fang Yuan [3] touched upon the comparison between "X Dazi" and "X You" in her study of "X Dazi", but the discussion was limited in length. There are also comparative studies pairing "X You" with other internet buzzwords. For instance, Zhao Ju [4] compared "X zu", "X ke" and "X You" from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.

Building on previous research, this paper conducts a detailed comparative analysis of "X Dazi" and "X You" based on the BCC corpus, CCL corpus and social platforms dominated by Weibo. It focuses on the understudied area of "variable X being English words or numerals", and expands the analysis of syntactic structures to include pivotal constructions, independent elements, predicatives and prepositional-object phrases.

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2. Diachronic investigation of "X Dazi" and "X You"

2.1. Semantic composition and evolution of "Dazi"

In *Guoyu Cidian* (Mandarin Dictionary), the character "da" carries meanings such as to drape, to erect, to connect, to pull, to cooperate, to participate and to cover. The original meaning of "zi" is infant. Guo Zuofei [5] argued that "zi" underwent grammaticalization from a content word to a nominal affix in Chinese, derived from its core sense of "infant". The nominal affix "zi" emerged as early as the Pre-Qin period, and functions as an affix in the word "dazi". The meaning of "dazi" in the internet buzzword "X Dazi" may have been influenced by extended senses of "da" that denote relational connections, such as participating, chiming in and joining in.

A search returns 501 results for "dazi" in the BCC corpus and 197 in the CCL corpus. After sorting, it is found that "dazi" mostly referred to objects in ancient and early modern Chinese, for example:

1) Utensil for support and load-bearing: wooden lanterns, iron lanterns, lamp supports, candles, birch bark candles, oil. These were regularly placed on city walls to illuminate the night and guard against enemy attacks. (from BCC corpus, *Wujing Zongyao* [Essentials of Military Classics], Northern Song Dynasty)

2) Farming tool: one curtain per vehicle... ten hemp holders, twenty hemp supports in total... (from BCC corpus, *Records of Troop Training* by Qi Jiguang, Ming Dynasty)

3) A tuft of hair left on the crown of the head after shaving: Just as the main scene began, the Monkey King stepped forward, paid no heed to which family the man belonged to, grabbed him by the topknot and lifted him up. (from BCC corpus, *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en, Qing Dynasty)

4) Leather luggage bag slung over a saddle: The waiter led him to the stable, tethered the horse, and took down the leather saddlebag. (from BCC corpus, *Da Bayi* [The Eight Righteous Men], late Qing Dynasty)

5) Money pouch: Shi He took a money pouch from Wang Liu, filled it with eight strings of Beijing cash, took his leave, slung the money over his shoulder and left the inn, heading straight for Yan Boting's house. (from BCC corpus, *Cases of Judge Shi*, Qing Dynasty)

6) Cloth bag or roll for bedding: The next day, Lao Can hired a donkey, loaded a bedding roll on its back, had breakfast, and set off for the eastern road of Mount Tai. (from BCC corpus, *Travels of Lao Can* by Liu E, late Qing Dynasty)

There are also a small number of usages referring to people. For instance, Li Quan [6] explained in *Alternative Names of Things*: "Beautiful women in the capital are called dazi." *Miscellaneous Poems of the Southern Song Dynasty* contains the line "Seek not dazi by the wine cup; capital dust drifts vainly through apricot blossom winds" [7]. It can be seen that when "dazi" referred to people in ancient times, it tended to denote fixed relationships with specific referents.

In addition, "dazi" also developed usage as a measure word during its semantic evolution. The phrase "yi dazi" is used to describe stacked sheets of paper, banknotes, letters and so on, for example:

7) A young maid promptly handed over a stack of fine paper, and Qingwen took them one by one to blow her nose. (from CCL corpus, *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin, Qing Dynasty)

8) Jin San pulled a wad of banknotes from under his robe. (from BCC corpus, *Four Generations Under One Roof* by Lao She)

In modern times, the use of "dazi" to refer to people has become more widespread. *The Great Chinese Dictionary* defines it as "partner, collaborator" [8]. This usage can be roughly traced back to

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southern dialects. Bao Shijie noted in *Hangzhou Dialect Dictionary* that "dazi refers to people who gather to play cards" [9]. Qian Nairong's *Shanghai Dialect Dictionary* gives the definition: "people who play cards together, extended to mean partners" [10]. Collocations such as "(bridge) card partner" and "mahjong partner" appear frequently in literary works, for example:

9) His landlady Mrs. Gu is my mahjong partner. (from BCC corpus, *Taipei People* by Pai Hsien-yung)

10) Uncle Maomao turned around and whispered to Wang Qiyao that this man also played bridge with them, but he was not very good, so he had no regular bridge partners. (from BCC corpus, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* by Wang Anyi)

Overall, "dazi" has evolved from referring exclusively to objects to denoting both objects and people. With the growing popularity of "X Dazi" online, new forms such as "meal dazi" and "celebrity-chasing dazi" keep emerging. The expansion of usage has led to semantic generalization: "dazi" is no longer limited to card-playing groups but generally refers to companions in all kinds of shared activities. Meanwhile, "X Dazi" still widely refers to objects. For example, "dazi" in 11) can refer to sunscreen, and "emergency dazi" in 12) refers to power banks:

11) Perfect summer commute companion, step out worry-free under the sun. (@LarochePosay, June 9, 2025)

12) Charges non-stop and powers up instantly; power banks are truly the "emergency dazi" for people on the go. (from BCC corpus, *People's Daily*, June 20, 2025, Economy section, "Product recall is only the first step (Economic commentary)")

2.2. Semantic composition and evolution of "You"

A search yields 967,502 results for "you" in the BCC corpus and 1,618,578 in the CCL corpus. After sorting, it is found that "you" mainly refers to people and rarely to objects. The only object-referring term retrieved so far is "mian you" (face friend), which denotes facial care products, for example:

13) Facial protection deserves extra attention. It is a daily necessity for all women, and this "face friend" works wonders after application. (from BCC corpus, *Shen Bao*, 1934)

As for the human-referring sense of "you", it has transformed from bearing patriarchal clan connotations to denoting like-minded, emotionally connected relationships. Wang Lihua [2] verified that "you" and "peng you" (friend) appeared repeatedly in inscriptions on bronze sacrificial vessels, and that only relatives of the same surname could participate in ancestral temple sacrifices. This shows that "you" in this period referred to blood brothers and clan brothers of the same surname, and also denoted the ethical norms governing interactions among clan brothers. For example, "you" in "bu xiao bu you" (neither filial nor fraternal) in 14) refers to the ethical norm of fraternal affection among clan brothers:

14) Men who murder others for their goods, reckless and fearless of death, are universally detested. The King said: Feng, the greatest of evils is this; how much more so unfilial and unfraternal conduct. (*New Text Book of History*, Zhou Dynasty)

During the Western Zhou Dynasty, "you" was closely tied to patriarchal politics. As an early manifestation of fraternal duty, this feature led later rulers to regard "brotherly affection and younger brother's respect" as a moral tool for political control, and included it in the "Five Constant Teachings".

In the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the patriarchal political ethical connotation of "you" gradually weakened, while its family ethical nature strengthened. Frequent social exchanges and expanded interaction spaces in this era indirectly promoted the generalization of "you": its referents shifted from kinship to social relationships, denoting people without blood ties

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who interacted closely and shared interests. This gave rise to the meaning equivalent to "friend" in modern usage, for example:

15) Confucius and I are not ruler and minister, but friends in virtue. (*Zhuangzi·InnerChapters·The Sign of Virtue Complete*)

16) The four men looked at each other and smiled, their hearts in perfect accord, and became friends. (*Zhuangzi·InnerChapters·The Great Ancestral Teacher*)

Terms such as "literary friend", "poetry friend" and "sick friend" appeared in the Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties, but were not common, for example:

17) In the seventh year of Guangqi, he became poetry friends with Shi Jianwu (Xi Sheng) and Xue Neng (Da Zhuo), and both of them considered themselves inferior to him, treating him as an equal despite his younger age. (*Supplement to Tang Prose* by Lu Xinyuan, Qing Dynasty)

18) I happened to host a small drink for Senior Yang Zhenwen and one or two literary friends. (*Complete Tang Poems* by Pi Rixiu)

19) A certain official fell ill and left, leaving a draft on his seat. I looked at it, and it was a funeral oration he had written in advance. One day, he asked after a sick friend. (*Jade Hall Notes* by Wang Yun, Yuan Dynasty)

In the Qing Dynasty, terms including poetry friend, private secretary friend, church friend, painting friend, school friend, chess friend, book friend, gambling friend and fellow townsman friend emerged, for example:

20) Master Lu is my poetry friend, said Mr. Jing Lanjiang. (*The Scholars*, Qing Dynasty)

21) This will be the basis for my retirement in the future. My sick leave expires on April 25. I intend to request another extension, but all my private secretaries advise me to return to duty. What do you think? (*Zeng Guofan's Family Letters*, Qing Dynasty)

After "you" developed into an internet buzzword, it expanded into more fields, and the number of "X You" formations grew substantially, giving rise to several social circles. For example, "lü you" (donkey friend) is a homophone for "travel friend" or "travel". Zeng Yiping [11] noted that the term appeared in media around 2000, originating from online travel forums founded by outdoor self-guided travel enthusiasts. Its main functions are sharing travel information, recruiting companions and exchanging travel experiences, which fostered a "donkey friend" community. Other similar examples include:

22) Douyin friend — users of the Douyin app: Hidden Douyin friends are everywhere. (from BCC corpus)

23) Arknights friend — players of the mobile game *Arknights*: Are there any adult Arknights friends who can chat about the game, play Defense Protocol together and go to offline comic conventions? (Weibo user, March 24, 2026)

Evidently, the types of "X You" keep multiplying, and the meaning of "you" has generalized to denote social circles with shared connections, showing a trend of quasi-affixation. Beyond semantic generalization, the appellation of friends has also changed due to the openness of the internet age. In ancient Chinese, early modern Chinese and literary works, terms such as "virtuous friend" and "beloved friend" were commonly used to describe close friendship, for example:

24) **Virtuous friend:** The Master said, "To find pleasure in regulating oneself by rites and music, to delight in speaking of others' good points, and to have many virtuous friends — these are beneficial." (*The Analects*)

25) **Beloved friend:** My beloved friend Sanlang, take great care. What my younger sister said is not true; in fact, people say that young lady is seriously ill in spring. (from BCC corpus, *Notes of a Lonely Swan* by Su Manshu)

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26) **Close friend:** Before Lady Bo married, she had been sworn intimate friends with Lady Guan and Lady Zhao. (from CCL corpus, *Unofficial History of the Qin Dynasty* by Huang Shiheng)

Modern appellations for good friends have also changed. For instance, the term "ji you" (gay friend / base friend) emerged. By analogy with "golden wedding" and "diamond wedding", terms like "gold friend" and "diamond friend" are used to symbolize lasting friendship:

27) I have the best, best, best good buddy in the world. (Xiaohongshu user, January 28, 2025)

28) When we reach the "gold friend, silver friend, diamond friend" stage, we have to do something proper. (Weibo user, May 11, 2015)

In summary, "you" is an associative character. Its oracle bone form depicts two hands crossing, with the original meaning of mutual help and support, relating to interpersonal relationships. Building on this core sense, its connotation has gradually generalized from concrete intimate relationships to circle groups with shared bonds, conforming to the internal laws of semantic evolution. Fundamentally, from the oracle bone era to the present, the semantic development of "you" has always centered on the notion of connection and relationship. Therefore, in internet language, when netizens need to define social bonds based on shared hobbies, they naturally extend the traditional semantics of "you" to form new expressions, driving the emergence of the "X You" construction.

2.3. Comparative summary

By tracing the semantic evolution of "dazi" and "you", we can identify their common features and differences in semantic development.

Their commonalities are mainly reflected in three aspects. First, both have undergone obvious semantic generalization, and their generalized meanings share the semantic feature [+ having specific common interests or demands]. This means both can refer to groups with shared needs or preferences in specific fields or scenarios, and can be applied to a wide range of detailed domains as semantic symbols connecting particular groups.

Second, both can refer to romantic and kinship relationships. "You" forms words such as "boyfriend", "girlfriend" and "relatives and friends", naturally expressing romantic and kinship ties. Although "dazi" carries a strong temporary connotation, with the growing popularity of online communication, some netizens also use it to refer to romantic partners and family members, for example:

29) Happy birthday, my life partner. (romantic relationship) (Weibo user, March 4, 2026)

30) I gave birth to a companion who never spoils my fun — how wonderful. (mother-daughter relationship) (Weibo user, March 29, 2026)

Third, both show a tendency of semantic bleaching. Specifically, their lexical nature has shifted from content words with clear lexical meanings toward quasi-affixation, giving rise to the "X Dazi" and "X You" constructions. They have ultimately become high-frequency buzzwords in contemporary online discourse, with their semantic connotation and scope further enriched and expanded through internet communication.

Naturally, there are also many differences in semantic features between "dazi" and "you", stemming from their distinct evolutionary paths. "Dazi" evolved from referring only to objects to denoting both objects and people, and the sense of interpersonal relationship only became widespread in later stages. In contrast, "you" has always primarily referred to people, with its core sense of connected relationship preserved throughout history. As a result, "you" conveys a stronger degree of intimacy than "dazi", and leans more toward stability and emotional depth.

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For "dazi", as the usage expanded from card-playing partners to other fields, the trend of "finding dazi" has become popular in modern life. Generally speaking, such "dazi" relationships are temporarily formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific activity, emphasizing functional companionship with relatively low interpersonal intimacy.

3. Synchronic investigation of "X Dazi" and "X You"

3.1. Construction comparison of the variable "X"

3.1.1. Syllable comparison of the variable "X"

Retrievals from the BCC corpus, CCL corpus and social platforms (mainly Weibo) show that "X" in both "X You" and "X Dazi" can be monosyllabic, disyllabic or polysyllabic, and there is overlap where the same "X" appears in both constructions. The table below summarizes their similarities and differences in syllable features:

Table 1. Syllable comparison of the variable "X" in "X Dazi" and "X You"

	Overall Features	Word-formation Tendency	Monosyllabic "X" Examples	Disyllabic "X" Examples	Polysyllabic "X" Examples	Shared "X" Cases
"X" in "X You"	Monosyllabic forms are absolutely dominant	Pursues conciseness, conforms to disyllabic word norms	poetry friend, private secretary friend, Douyin friend, roommate, filial friend, teacher-student friend, stock friend, comrade-in-arms, ally, flower friend, boat friend, exam friend, opera fan, wine friend, dance friend, song friend, meal friend, meeting friend, snap-up friend, running friend, card friend, ball friend, chat friend, sick friend, bed friend, shopping friend...	music friend, art friend, photo friend, enthusiast, fever friend, world friend, diamond friend, penguin friend...	Catholic friend, Jewish friend	running, meal, wine, card, car, chat, ball, good, opera, old, new, bed, tea, book, exam, sick, photo, music...
"X" in "X Dazi"	Disyllabic forms dominate; monosyllabic and polysyllabic forms are also common	Pursues explicit meaning, more flexible in form	meal dazi, wine dazi, broke dazi, car dazi, ball dazi, chat dazi, running dazi, card dazi,shopping dazi, bed dazi,	study dazi, travel dazi, chat dazi, tea-tasting dazi,celebrity-chasing dazi, drama-watching dazi, dream-supporting dazi, hot pot dazi,	concert dazi, script kill dazi, graduate student dazi, group-buying shopping dazi, movie-watching dazi,	

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Table 1. (continued)

"X" in "X Dazi"	Disyllabic forms dominate; monosyllabic and polysyllabic forms are also common	Pursues explicit meaning, more flexible in form	tea dazi, book dazi, exam dazi, pen dazi, sick dazi...	fitness dazi, exercise dazi, moon-gazing dazi, gossip dazi, shop-opening dazi, reading dazi, growth dazi, on-duty dazi, insomnia dazi, Spring Festival dazi...	badminton-playing dazi, playoff dazi, Delta dazi, girls-only dazi, afternoon tea dazi...

As shown in the table, monosyllabic "X" is overwhelmingly dominant in the "X You" construction. The author attributes this to the semantic evolution of "you": as traced above, "you" was mostly combined with monosyllabic roots in ancient Chinese, such as in "poetry friend" and "private secretary friend". Moreover, monosyllabic "X" plus "you" forms disyllabic words, which aligns with the predominance of disyllabic words in modern Chinese.

In "X Dazi", disyllabic "X" is the most common, but monosyllabic and polysyllabic formations are also numerous. This indicates that "dazi" is less constrained by syllable count and form, offering greater combinatorial freedom and higher word productivity. Notably, syllable abbreviation occurs in "X Dazi": for example, "movie-watching dazi" is shortened to "movie dazi", and "group-buying shopping dazi" to "group-buying dazi". This makes the overall structure more systematic, consistent with the economic principle of language.

3.1.2. Part-of-speech comparison of the variable "X"

Retrievals from the BCC corpus, CCL corpus and social platforms (mainly Weibo) show that "X" in both "X You" and "X Dazi" generally functions as a noun, verb or adjective, with special cases of English words and numerals.

"X You" is a well-established construction in Chinese, referring to people united by a common trait. Compared with "X Dazi", it has a clearer part-of-speech preference for "X". Noun "X" is the core and most typical usage, usually indicating shared interests, identity or belonging, such as "donkey friend", "stock friend" and "penguin friend".

Verb and adjective "X" are less common. Verb "X" appears in two patterns: first, "V + you" denoting a group, such as "study friend", "running friend", "snap-up friend", "trash-picking friend" and "dance friend"; second, "V + O + you" structure, such as "photo friend" and "enthusiast". Adjective "X" mostly expresses attributes and features, such as "close friend", "true friend", "honorable friend", "good friend" and "old friend". Representative examples for each part of speech are given below:

(1) N + you

31) Good morning, car friends. In the first ray of morning light, we have prepared fuel and hot drinks to accompany you on every journey. (@Sinopec, Weibo, March 27, 2026)

32) Took my meal friend out for dinner for the first time. (Xiaohongshu user, February 24, 2025)

(2) V + you

· "V + you" denoting groups:

33) I'll affectionately call you trash-picking friend from now on. Did you pick up trash today? (from BCC corpus)

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34) Haidilao friends, assemble! (Weibo user, September 2, 2023)

These examples all refer to groups in a shared domain. "Trash-picking friend" in 33) denotes people who participate in garbage cleanup activities, and "Haidilao friend" in 34) refers to fans of the Haidilao hot pot chain. This shows that V + you can refer to a category of people.

· V + O + you:

35) I really want to take nice photos. I miss my photo friend zrrr so much. (Weibo user, September 1, 2024)

36) JD.com 618 enthusiast surprise day — big moves coming! (Weibo user, May 22, 2025)

Clearly, "taking photos" and "enthusiastic" here are verb-object compounds. Combined with "you", they refer to groups or companions.

(3) Adj + you

37) I thought of my old friend again. When I first moved into the high school dorm, all I felt for her was resentment. (Xiaohongshu user, March 20, 2026)

38) My awkward friend and I will never walk the awkward path together. Keep it up. (Weibo user, December 21, 2023)

Besides nouns, verbs and adjectives, "X" also has special usages with English words and numerals, some derived from homophones. For example, Chinese netizens call "roommate" "4 you" (homophone for "shi you") in 39) , and roller skating enthusiasts "6 you" (homophone for "liu", meaning to slide) in 40):

39) Dishes made by my 4 you. (Weibo user, August 26, 2022)

40) First time visiting a museum and going roller skating since coming to Australia two months ago. Met so many Chinese 6 friends. (Weibo user, November 18, 2019)

Overall, however, forms with English or numeral "X" are limited to individual use and have not gained widespread popularity, so they cannot be regarded as a major part-of-speech feature of "X You". Below are a few more widely used examples:

(1) Numeral + you

41) **9 friends — players of the mobile game *Reverse: 1999***: Fellow 9 friends, please help me decide which 5-star Insight Voices to upgrade, or save them for the free 5-star from the collaboration? (Weibo user, Reverse: 1999 super topic, August 11, 2025)

(2) English + you

42) **Q friends — QQ users:** All Q friends! Your exclusive New Year's Eve program is now live! (@QQ Treasure, December 26, 2025)

Similarly, "X" in "dazi" generally functions as a noun, verb, adjective or verb-object phrase. Noun and verb "X" are the most frequent. Noun "X" falls into two categories: nouns indicating locations, and nouns indicating activity content. There are also special collocations with numerals and English words. A detailed analysis with examples follows:

(1) N1 + dazi (N1 indicates location): library dazi, restroom dazi, canteen dazi, etc., for example:

43) Is anyone going to the library together? I need a library dazi! (Douyin user, October 15, 2025)

(2) N2 + dazi (N2 indicates activity content, i.e. the object of the action): meal dazi, game dazi, nap dazi, bridge dazi, script kill dazi, movie dazi, milk tea/coffee dazi, concert dazi, ball dazi, etc., for example:

44) Went to another worker-friendly cafeteria with my meal dazi. (Douyin user, March 15, 2026)

(3) V + dazi (V indicates action process): study dazi, exercise dazi, travel dazi, chat dazi, gossip dazi, walking dazi, check-in dazi, etc., for example:

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45) May the internet grant me a study dazi. (Xiaohongshu user, February 22, 2026)

(4) V + object + dazi: eating dazi, shop-exploring dazi, movie-watching dazi, milk tea/coffee-drinking dazi, badminton-playing dazi, mountain-climbing dazi, nail-doing dazi, mahjong-playing dazi, photo-taking dazi, weight-loss dazi, drama-chasing dazi, shopping dazi, exam-preparation dazi, etc., for example:

46) I'm going to the Joker Xue concert in Xuzhou on June 22, section 59. Please, I need a photo-taking dazi. (Xiaohongshu user, June 21, 2024)

Notably, when the meaning remains clear and unambiguous, some "V + object + dazi" forms omit the verb in actual use, converting to the "N2 + dazi" pattern above. For example, "eating dazi" is simplified to "meal dazi", "nail-doing dazi" to "nail dazi", and "carpooling dazi" to "car dazi". This also reflects the economic principle of language.

(5) Adj + dazi: broke dazi, slacking-off dazi, old/new dazi, humorous dazi, perfect dazi, etc., for example:

47) Can the heavens send me a broke dazi who's just as poor as me? (Weibo user, June 18, 2024)

(6) English/numeral + dazi: emo dazi, PPT dazi, 30+ dazi, city walk dazi; KTV dazi, etc., for example:

· **English:**

48) Sharing my playlist, mostly ballads. Wanna get rained on together, my late-night emo dazi? (Weibo user, October 19, 2023)

· **Numeral:**

49) Recently — my 520 dazi changed from Lawyer Li to Leilei. (Weibo user, May 23, 2024)

In summary, from the comparative analysis, "X" in both constructions can be a noun, verb or adjective, with nouns being the dominant category. However, "X" in "X Dazi" demonstrates stronger productivity. In addition, although both have special cases of English or numeral "X", such usages are only individual instances in "X You" and have not spread widely, while English "X" is relatively common in "X Dazi", partly influenced by English abbreviations in gaming.

3.1.3. Semantic classification comparison of the variable "X"

As mentioned earlier, "you" has always primarily referred to people throughout its semantic evolution, so there are fewer categories for the internet buzzword "X You". According to the semantic nature of "X", it can be mainly divided into two categories: activity-based and relationship-based, as shown in the figure below:

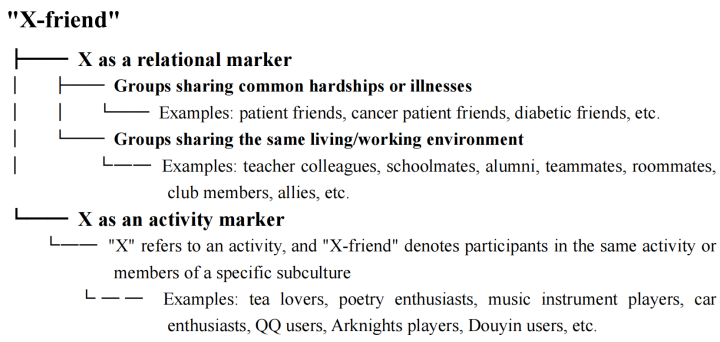

Figure 1. Semantic classification of "X You"

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For the internet buzzword "X Dazi", its high productivity and flexibility make functional companionship its core meaning, emphasizing "doing something together". It thus has more semantic categories than "X You". Based on the semantic nature of "X", it is divided into four main types: identity-based, time-space-based, activity-based and attribute-based, as shown in the figure below:

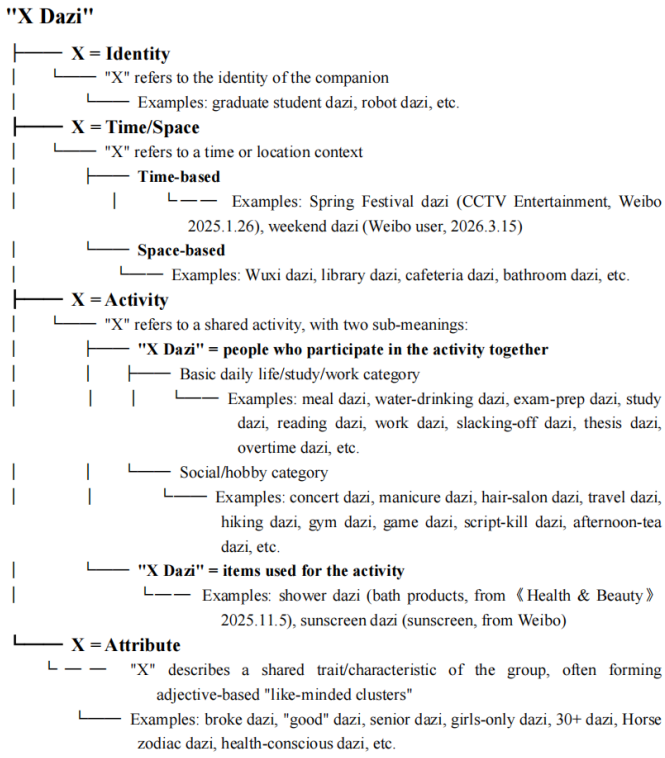

Figure 2. Semantic classification of "X Dazi"

The author adopts a relatively detailed classification system here. However, considering the semantic evolution and current corpus of both constructions, there is a notable binary difference between "X You" and "X Dazi" in semantic and pragmatic functions: the former emphasizes "relationship belonging", while the latter focuses on "functional companionship".

"X You" has distinct relational characteristics, with the core function of defining "what group one belongs to". Therefore, the activity-based category of "X You" can essentially be subsumed under the relationship-based category. In contrast, "X Dazi" mostly denotes functional companionship, centered on "what activity is shared together". The relationship between dazi partners is not close; even when referring to a social circle, the focus remains on "what they do". For this reason, tokens expressing relational meaning in "X Dazi" are not listed as a separate category here but included in the activity-based category. This is the main difference in how the two constructions are semantically categorized.

3.2. Construction comparison of the constant items "Dazi" and "You"

3.2.1. Semantic feature comparison of "Dazi" and "You"

As analyzed above, both constructions can refer to specific groups in different domains, sharing the semantic feature [+ having specific common interests or demands]. The core of group interaction

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lies in relationship and emotion: relationship involves duration, and emotion relates to the degree of investment. Therefore, the author compares their semantic differences across five dimensions: relationship essence, emotional depth, duration, degree of dedication, and maintenance cost, as detailed in the table below:

Table 2. Semantic feature comparison of "X You" and "X Dazi"

	Feature Dimension	"You"	"Dazi"
Differences	Relationship Essence	Emotional bond: based on shared interests, experiences or identities, emphasizing spiritual resonance and emotional recognition between people.	Functional bond: based on a specific activity or need, emphasizing a cooperative relationship of "partnering to get things done".
	Emotional Depth	Deep	Shallow
	Duration	Stable and sustainable; relationship can extend beyond the shared activity.	Temporary and flexible; "can end at any time".
	Degree of Dedication	Involves active care and concern.	Dedication is limited to the scope of the shared activity, with clear boundaries.
	Maintenance Cost	Relatively high	Relatively low
Similarities	Have specific common interests or demands	Have specific common interests or demands	Have specific common interests or demands

Influenced by its long semantic heritage, "you" carries emotional connection and moral obligation. It thus sustains long-term, deep relationships but also requires higher investment and maintenance costs. As analyzed earlier, "dazi" emphasizes functional companionship. Partners may be strangers before the activity, resulting in clear relationship boundaries, light responsibilities and an unstable, terminable nature. Accordingly, the core distinguishing features of "dazi" and "you" can be formulated as follows:

Dazi: [+ functional] [− emotional] [− stable] [+ temporary] [− obligatory]. A shallow partnership based on a specific, temporary, single activity, emphasizing functional companionship with the freedom to disengage at any time.

You: [− functional] [+ emotional] [+ stable] [− temporary] [+ obligatory]. A deep interpersonal relationship based on shared interests, friendship and long-term identification, valuing emotional connection with generally stable and lasting bonds.

3.2.2. Syntactic function comparison of "Dazi" and "You"

"Dazi" is a disyllabic compound word composed of the root "da" and the suffix "zi". It can stand alone as an independent word. In contrast, "you" is a monosyllabic nominal morpheme that must attach to other elements and cannot be used independently. For example, one can say "find a dazi" but not "find a you".

Therefore, in terms of syntactic function, "dazi" is more versatile and can serve as multiple sentence components: subject, object, attributive, and the head of a nominal phrase. "You" cannot function as a syntactic component on its own; it must form "X You" first. Representative examples of "dazi" in different syntactic roles are given below:

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(1) As subject

50) My dazi just disappeared. We chatted for over 10 days, got along fine — why did they block me? (Xiaohongshu user, May 26, 2025)

(2) As object

51) Looking for dazi. Want to make friends; we can eat together on days off. (Xiaohongshu user, March 20, 2026)

(3) As attributive

52) Finally understand why some people like dazi-style socializing. (Weibo user, August 14, 2025)

(4) As head of a nominal phrase

53) Light and shadow are the best dazi. (Weibo user, March 29, 2026)

As noted in the semantic evolution analysis, both "dazi" and "you" show signs of semantic bleaching, but differ in semantic contribution. Yin Hailiang [12] proposed the concept of "semantic contribution degree", defined as "the amount of semantic content a word-forming component provides to the new word it constructs". Semantic bleaching is inversely proportional to semantic contribution: the higher the degree of bleaching, the lower the semantic contribution. Influenced by its continuous semantic tradition, "you" still carries significant semantic weight in "X You", conveying stable and lasting emotional relationships. In contrast, due to the established suffix "zi", "dazi" has a higher degree of semantic bleaching and contributes less core meaning to "X Dazi". Therefore, "you" has a lower degree of bleaching and higher semantic contribution in use.

To sum up, "you" is a monosyllabic morpheme that cannot form sentences independently. It has a low degree of semantic bleaching and high semantic contribution within "X You". "Dazi", by contrast, is an independent word that can function as subject, object, attributive and other syntactic components. It has a high degree of semantic bleaching and low semantic contribution within "X Dazi".

3.3. Overall comparison of "X Dazi" and "X You"

3.3.1. Syntactic structure comparison of "X Dazi" and "X You"

The sentence components and syntactic structures that "X Dazi" and "X You" can form are largely identical. First, both are basically attributive-head structures. Second, both can be modified by quantitative phrases (e.g. "two meal friends", "a chat dazi") and take the plural marker "men". Third, they generally function as subject, object, independent element, pivotal element, and head of an attributive-head structure. In rare cases, they can also serve as attributive or predicative, and form prepositional-object phrases. Representative examples are listed below:

(1) "X Dazi" and "X You" as subjects

54) Shopping dazi @Wang Hedi and @Bai Lu went grocery shopping together and were mistaken for siblings — their reactions were so different! (@Hunan TV, Weibo, March 25, 2026)

55) Did the Joker Xue fans already get back to Guangdong after the Beijing concert? (Weibo user, March 27, 2026)

(2) "X Dazi" and "X You" as objects

56) Looking for game dazi for Honor of Kings. Casual or ranked matches are fine. Anyone want to play together? (Douyin user, January 6, 2026)

57) So grateful to all my veteran debate friends. (Weibo user, January 26, 2026)

(3) "X Dazi" and "X You" as independent elements

58) Chat dazi — the lowest-cost spiritual comfort food. (Xiaohongshu user, March 25, 2025)

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59) Good morning, blogger friends. (Weibo user, March 29, 2026)

(4) "X Dazi" and "X You" as pivotal elements

60) Huang Xiaoming revealed his exercise dazi include Huang Jingyu, Wang Hedi and Liu Yaowen. (Weibo user, March 28, 2026)

61) Advice to all cycling friends: never try to cycle around Chongming Island at night. (Weibo user, October 10, 2025)

(5) "X Dazi" and "X You" as heads of attributive-head structures

62) Two years after graduation, I finally met my best walking dazi in Hong Kong. (Weibo user, March 15, 2026)

63) Thank you to all the discerning studio friends who spoke up for me. (Weibo user, February 1, 2026)

(6) "X Dazi" and "X You" as attributives

64) A boss with an unsportsmanlike dazi. (Guo Yaosheng. Construction Research on Internet Buzzword "X Dazi" from the Perspective of Linguistics [J]. *Zhongyuan Literature*, 2025, (01): 186-188.)

65) Feedback on "Osmanthus Longjing" from tea friends. (Weibo user, November 18, 2025)

(7) "X Dazi" and "X You" as predicatives

66) Gong Jun is the perfect travel dazi — attentive, thoughtful and neat. (Douban user, July 2, 2025)

67) Old Kuang: You guys are such terrible friends. (Weibo user, September 3, 2025)

(8) "X Dazi" and "X You" forming prepositional-object phrases

68) From coffee dazi and meal dazi to photo dazi and travel dazi... (*Chengdu Business Daily* e-newspaper, November 4, 2023)

69) Thumbs up for all car friends. (Weibo user, December 24, 2025)

3.3.2. Pragmatic function comparison of "X Dazi" and "X You"

In terms of contextual distribution, both are used in online socializing, daily conversation and news media, conveying comfort and friendliness while resonating with youth culture. "X You" has a wider range of application scenarios. Some basic collocations such as "good friend", "relatives and friends" and "close friend" carry a formal tone and can be used in speeches and other formal occasions. They also appear in fixed titles and community names, such as "car enthusiasts association" and "alumni association".

In terms of stylistic coloring, "dazi" is neutral in itself but can take on commendatory or derogatory tones in specific contexts. For example, the following usage carries an obvious critical connotation:

70) Finding "dazi" online — don't let yourself get dragged into trouble. (*Beijing Evening News*, September 25, 2025)

Guo Yaosheng [1] pointed out that as an internet buzzword, "X Dazi" aligns with netizens' expressive habits and exhibits distinct affinity and playfulness. Using "X Dazi" implicitly narrows the psychological distance with the audience and creates a relaxed, pleasant communication atmosphere. At the same time, "X Dazi" often carries self-deprecating and teasing undertones, which are important means of reducing interpersonal distance and enlivening conversation.

In contrast, "you" is generally commendatory, as in "friend" and "close friend", emphasizing cooperative and amicable relations. Its stylistic coloring can also shift in specific contexts, for example:

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71) Keep your eyes open and choose friends carefully! Stay far away from "toxic friends". (@Longyuan Politics and Law, Weibo, July 8, 2024)

Overall, in actual usage, "dazi" is colloquial in tone. "You" historically had a formal, literary quality with a long history and stable word formation, but in contemporary internet buzzword usage, both are colloquial, youth-oriented, and infused with humor and approachability.

3.3.3. Prediction of future evolution trends

The two constructions differ in productivity. The flexibility of "X Dazi" allows it to maintain high productivity, generating new forms as society evolves. For example, following the viral popularity of the game *Eggy Party* in 2022, looking for "egg dazi" in the game became a trending topic on social media. The "X You" construction, by contrast, tends toward solidification: it is highly stable but its productivity is gradually saturating, with declining innovative capacity.

A shared trend is that both may undergo further semantic generalization. For "X You", the growing demand for shallow social interaction in fast-paced society may further dilute its emotional intensity. For "dazi", given its high flexibility and the existing small number of usages referring to intimate relationships, "X Dazi" may in the future carry both shallow social and intimate relational meanings — in effect, taking over the semantic functions of "X You". There is thus a possibility that "X You" will be replaced by "X Dazi". In addition, the application scenarios of "X Dazi" may become more refined, with increasingly nuanced semantics.

4. Reasons for the popularity of "X Dazi" and "X You"

The author compared social platform data for the two constructions. For "X Dazi", there is a dedicated super topic on Weibo, as well as WeChat mini-programs such as "Real Dazi" and "Find a Dazi in the Same City". As of 19:00 on March 31, 2026, the Dazi super topic on Weibo has 1,382 posts, 2,548 dazi friends and 2.856 million reads. On Xiaohongshu, the hashtag #dazi has 2.34 billion views and 77.928 million discussions. On Douyin, the hashtag #dazi has 10.96 billion plays and 1.145 million participants. For "you", there is no comparable dedicated community on Weibo. No standalone #you hashtag has been found on Xiaohongshu. On Douyin, the hashtag #you has 150 million plays and 72,000 participants. The comparison shows that "X Dazi" has significantly greater influence and has become a strong meme.

In addition, a survey conducted by the Social Survey Center of *China Youth Daily* in partnership with Wenjuan.com found that 72.6% of respondents have "dazi" in their lives, and 20% express willingness to find one even if they do not currently have one [3]. On December 4, 2023, "dazi" was selected as one of the "Top Ten Buzzwords of 2023" by the editorial department of *Yaowen Jiaozi* [13]. These figures attest to the strong influence of "X Dazi".

Against this backdrop, the author explores the reasons for the popularity of both constructions and the gap in their influence, combined with the preceding construction analysis.

4.1. Internal mechanisms

As noted earlier, both constructions conform to the economic principle of language in their spread. Xu Xiaoxue [14] defined the economic principle of language as the optimal balance between quantity and effect in the language system and language use. Compared with traditional terms like "partner" and "friend", the internet buzzwords "X Dazi" and "X You" can refer to an entire group with a single word, covering a broader scope. Moreover, both reuse existing words through

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metaphor, leveraging the familiar concepts of "da", "dazi" and "you" to convey new meanings more efficiently than coining entirely new terms. This aligns with the economic principle of language, meets the demand for efficiency in modern society, and drives their dissemination. The difference in actual influence can be explained by internal factors as follows:

From a structural perspective, "X You" typically takes a two-character form, requiring "X" to encapsulate meaning concisely and precisely. This raises the barrier to creation and limits innovation. In contrast, "X" in "X Dazi" enjoys greater freedom, unconstrained by character count, allowing people to coin new forms as needed.

From a semantic perspective, "X You" emphasizes group identity and circle belonging, while "X Dazi" centers on activities, referring to one or a few partners who engage in shared actions. Fang Yuan noted that this relatively "minimal" social mode better matches contemporary social patterns: people usually have one or two fixed companions for outings, preferring "pairing up" over "joining a group" [3].

From a construction openness perspective, "you" carries emotional meaning and long-term stability. Its long-established semantic constraints make it difficult for new "X You" formations to break free from traditional connotations, resulting in low openness. "X Dazi", by contrast, does not carry a continuous semantic heritage and is free from heavy traditional semantic baggage. As analyzed earlier, "dazi" has a higher degree of semantic bleaching and lower semantic contribution, imposing fewer restrictions on "X". The variable "X" is thus highly open and can flexibly adapt to diverse scenarios of daily life, study and entertainment.

4.2. External mechanisms

First is the promotion of internet media. The emergence and spread of "X Dazi" and "X You" rely on internet platforms, where netizens continuously replicate and analogize the patterns, increasing their frequency of use. Furthermore, internet media provides a broad social platform: the act of "looking for X You" and "looking for X Dazi" itself generates more new combinations, gradually establishing both as internet buzzwords.

Second is the influence of social psychology. In a fast-paced, mobile society, people have less time for socializing but more individualized needs. "X You" and "X Dazi" effectively resolve this contradiction: both provide targeted companionship in shared interest areas, adapting to modern lifestyles and saving time and energy. Additionally, as social beings, humans naturally crave companionship and seek identity recognition, while also suffering from social anxiety. This makes "X Dazi" more suitable than "X You". As analyzed earlier, "X You" still carries heavy emotional weight and high maintenance costs, whereas "X Dazi" emphasizes functional companionship with freedom and casualness, reducing social burden. Social psychology is thus one of the key reasons why "X Dazi" wields greater influence than "X You".

5. Conclusion

This paper presents a comparative study of the internet buzzwords "X Dazi" and "X You". It analyzes their semantic origins and evolution, conducts a detailed comparison from three dimensions — the variable "X", the constant items, and the overall construction — and finally examines the reasons for their popularity and the gap in their influence. From this analysis, we can infer favorable conditions for internet buzzwords to develop into strong memes. As internet buzzwords, "X Dazi" and "X You" not only enrich expressive forms and enhance the creative vitality of language, but also reflect the diverse and complex social psychology of contemporary people.

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