

A Study on the Main Characteristics of English Internet Terms and Chinese Translation Strategies

Xinhui Qiao^{1,a,*}

¹Foreign Language Academy, Normal University of Yunnan, Kunming, Yunnan, 650000, China
a. Lucia1209@163.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Nowadays, globalization and informatization are deepening through social media, and the way people communicate with each other has also changed dramatically. Thus, many Internet expressions were born. The study of network language plays an important role in communicating with the world, recognizing the diversity of the world and language learning. In daily life, people often use it directly, but if more words are not translated and understood, their scope of use will have great limitations. There are three topics discussed in this paper: the main characteristics of Internet slang and phrases and abbreviations of modern society, the corresponding spoken phenomenon, and Chinese Translation Strategies for Internet Terms. It involves analysis of word meanings, vocabulary statistics, collection and classification and synchronic research using main social media Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. It could be seen that no matter whether people think internet slang vitalizes or destroys language, there's no denying how revealing it is of the culture that invents and uses it -- and the ease with which people adapt their language to new technologies and concepts.

Keywords: Social media, Translation, Internet, Slang

1. Introduction

Internet words are divided into two parts, one is slang phrases and words and another is abbreviations. Nowadays, Gen Z people have busy lives and want to save time by using shortcuts when communicating. The term "Generation Z" first became popular in Europe and the United States, referring to the generation born between 1995 and 2009. Gen-Z is the main consumer standing in the center of the stage, they have strong spending power, are Internet natives, willing to try and accept new things, at the same time, they are still a blank sheet of paper, investors and brands are more willing to carry out consumer education for them. According to globalization and the quick transmission of social media, more and more Internet slang is produced and they affect the English communication skills for the employability potential of college students and the need to address the issue of reading and writing practices with slang phrases and words and abbreviations. Besides, they give students a sense of identity and belonging by using a shared language. Using slang, hashtags and acronyms is a great way to get more likes and followers. Social media sites also auto-correct users on their slang as they type or suggest a new term that might help the user better convey what they are trying to communicate.

Three topics are discussed in this paper: the main characteristics of Internet slang and phrases and abbreviations, the written form of Internet Language corresponding to the spoken phenomenon, and

three Chinese Translation Strategies for Internet Terms. It discusses the translation methods of word meanings, Chinese translation of English network language and synchronic research. This paper provides insights for people to study the Gen Z network expressions on different foreign social media in the context of the Internet generation and globalization.

2. The Main Characteristics of Internet Slang Words and Phrases and Abbreviations

Social media platforms help students increase brand awareness and reach and gather valuable customer and competitor insights. The most used social media platform in the world is Facebook, with 2.9 billion monthly active users (MAUs) [1]. After Facebook, the most popular social platforms are Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok (according to Statista, the most popular social media platforms in the United Kingdom as of the third quarter of 2022, by usage reach). By reshaping the social order and the ways we interact with one another, the digital inevitably transforms language. At the same time, language, as a way of making meaning, shapes our lived experiences [2]. As a result, the Internet slang phrases, words and abbreviations from these four social media sites are selected in this paper.

2.1. Simplicity

More and more Internet terms reflect the phenomenon that people are accustomed to using abbreviations to call things. It also reflects how people communicate in Gen Z.

There are many abbreviated words that are shortened to express concisely and are easy to translate because there are fewer derived meanings and special cultural backgrounds to understand them, such as Acct (short for account), BC (stands for because), W (stands for win, and it's used when someone has won something, or something good has happened, like "How was your game last night?" "It was great we got the W!"), L (stands for loss), totes (totally), K (means okay, but is also used when someone is frustrated and is putting an end to a conversation.).

There are also many abbreviated phrases, such as BTW (stands for by the way), FYI (stands for your information.), IMHO (stands for in my honest opinion or in my humble opinion), IRL (stands for in real life), JK (stands for just kidding.), LMK (stands for let me know.), TBH (stands for to be honest.), TMI (stands for too much information.), ASAP (stands for as soon as possible.), OMG (oh my god), IDC (I don't care), IDK (I don't know), BRB (stands for be right back) [3].

2.2. Historicity

A new word is spread to people's phones all over the world in a short period of time through social media. In this way, a foreign culture can more easily create a copycat effect among the locals. There is no denying that new social media applications have played a key role, every netizen could put a hot hashtag on social media according to the content. For example, there are many abbreviations to describe new things such as Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG) and Twitter (TW).

2.3. Interestingness

The spread of Internet slang depends on audience interest because by this way it could be imitated and spread by netizens easily. More and more Internet slang is showing resonance, recognized and accepted by most people. For example, If something is "living rent-free" in people's heads, that means you can't stop thinking about it. Rent-free refers to when you obsessively think about someone or something, usually when it's random or unimportant. The idea is that the thought lives in your head, rent-free, with no real reason to be there. "The song from that ad has been living rent-free in my head all week". It could be translated as "洗脑" in Chinese. Through this translation, it can be seen that similar interesting expressions could be found from all over the world.

2.4. The Written Form of Internet Language Corresponded to the Spoken Phenomenon

There are many sounds that have the same sound as numbers, which are directly written as numbers, such as G2G (stands for got to go.), B2B (stands for business to business.), F4F (Follow for follow. Someone will follow you if other people follow them), L4L (Like for like), ELI5 (Explain like I'm 5. Used to request a simple explanation for something). It could be found another example that includes symbolic meaning. In this phrase "Caught in 4K" (means to catch someone red-handed.) 4K is not only a number, it stands for high definition.

There is another homophonic meme that reflects the humor of netizens. When people share it, it's called "Spilling the tea," or people may say, "What's the tea?". But the degree of influence from Internet slangs toward English language learning was very weak, especially homophones [4]. So it is a more likely being a gossip, not a way of getting access to English learning.

3. Chinese Translation Strategies for Internet Terms

3.1. Amplification

The augmented translation method is an important translation method that can help readers better understand the meaning and intent of the original text. In the process of translation, care needs to be taken to maintain the accuracy and completeness of the original text, to take into account the grammar and expressions of the target language, to avoid over-translation or under-translation, and to take into account cultural backgrounds and language differences. 'Vibe' is a clipping of the noun word 'vibration' but it is used to mean specifically a feeling or a sensation, a reaction of one person to another person or an event or a place perhaps. It could be translated as "氛围感" in Chinese. Vibe is also a verb that means to like someone or something and feel comfortable and happy with them (according to Cambridge Dictionary). According to researcher Ryan Taylor, the word "vibe" is the most popular slang term in Arkansas for 2022, and slang use, in general, is most popular in the southern and eastern states of the US. It is similar to "舒适感" in Chinese.

3.2. Conversion

Conversion is a translation technique that refers to the process of converting words, grammatical structures or expressions in the source language into their corresponding words, grammatical structures or expressions in the target language [5]. This translation technique helps the translator to better convey the information and intention in the source language while maintaining the accuracy and fluency of the target language. For example, enter the E-Girl and E-Boy, an evolution of emo boys and scene queens, influenced by anime and reborn on TikTok and Twitch. It's pretty easy to pick out an e-boy or e-girl in your TikTok feed – they usually have dyed pink, white, or red hair, heavy eye-liner, and may be wearing chains with some attire fresh off Depop. Many of the signature looks are inspired by anime-tropes and Japanese culture and their TikTok content itself is likely to include mouthing along to K-pop tracks or alternative hip-hop. People may see them performing questionable dance moves that you'd probably be too self-conscious to do yourself. This group of people could be called "非主流" on the Chinese Internet.

3.2.1. Lexical Conversion

Lexical conversion refers to converting words in the source language into their counterparts in the target language but keeping their lexical properties intact. For example, a noun in English is converted into a verb in Chinese or a verb in English is converted into a noun in Chinese. For example, CEO means when someone says that someone is the CEO of (something), they mean that the person in

question is considered the best at what they do. People sometimes use this ironically, but sometimes they actually mean it. It is similar to another slang GOAT(greatest of all time), which means you can always believe in one person who can get things done in his area of expertise. In Chinese there is also an abbreviated word of Chinese characters “永远的神(yong yuan de shen)”, which is written as YYDS that could express reverence for someone or something, and it will be used as an adjective and placed directly after the noun it modifies, such as “The coffee sold in this store YYDS”. The method conversion is also used because the direct expression of CEO is the boss in a company, which is not the correct expression in this context.

Another example is Highkey. It is also an Internet slang phrase and words that have been widely circulated on the Internet. It describes something glaringly obvious and true that doesn't need to be hidden. It's the opposite of lowkey.; For example, “That was highkey the best meal I've ever had,” or “I highkey need tickets to the show.” It means in Chinese mandarin 超(super), used before verbs or adjectives.

There is also a word. Troll means that one person leaves an insulting or offensive message on the internet in order to upset someone, or to get attention or to cause trouble (according to the Cambridge Dictionary). It can be expanded to a verb in Chinese mandarin. In Chinese it means “引战”.

3.2.2.Expression Conversion

Expression conversion refers to the conversion of expressions in the source language into corresponding expressions in the target language. For example, a metaphor in English is converted into a personification in Chinese, or an abstract concept in English is converted into a concrete image in Chinese. For example, POS means parent over shoulder, you can use it to refer to parents who are watching their children closely, such as when their children are surfing the internet. It uses the conversion method, which means 父母监视(fu mu jian shi), which translates the meaning of monitor.

Another example is MIRL. It means meeting in real life. There are two translations according to the real context, one is called 面基(mian ji), which means a person chooses to meet in a public place, have a simple chat and have something to drink, and if the conversation comes up, have a meal or watch a movie together. This term is the earliest commonly used term for manga friends. It refers to friends who meet online and have common hobbies. For example, they both like games, animation and other interests and meet offline. This is called "face-to-face". Another translation is 奔现 (ben xian), which refers to the development of two people who met on the Internet from virtual to real. It is mainly used by online lovers.

3.2.3.Linguistic Style Conversion

Linguistic style conversion refers to converting the linguistic style in the source language to the corresponding linguistic style in the target language. For example, to convert spoken expressions in English to written expressions in Chinese, or to convert formal terms in English to informal terms in Chinese. For example, “TFW” is often used in the context of social media posts or memes to express a common sentiment or feeling. For example, a social media post may begin with "That feeling when you finally finish a big project" or "That feeling when you see your favorite band live for the first time." By starting a post with "That feeling when...", the writer is indicating that they are about to share a relatable experience or emotion that many people can identify with. In Chinese mandarin it could be translated to a question that is popular in Chinese social media: 家人们谁懂啊(jia ren men shui dong a), which means who knows this feeling. The conversion method is used in this phrase that converts English nouns to Chinese verbs, which is converting words in the source language into corresponding words in the target language.

3.3. Back-Translation

Back-translation is a method of checking the accuracy of a translation, i.e., translating the translated text back into the source language to check whether it matches the original meaning of the source language. For example, Iykyk in social media sites is shown as a hashtag phrase at the end of the post. This term is an abbreviation - IYKYK of If You Know You Know, to describe a piece of information that all other persons participating in the activity or in that environment know that the opinion posted is true. They are informed of this due to experience. If people express it in a phrase, It cannot be translated directly, as a consequence it uses conversion to express understanding that comes from experience using the word “赞同(zan tong) or 没错(meí cuò)”. However, after back-translation, people can not immediately make a connection between the two translations. As a consequence, in Chinese, it could be seen as a similar Internet slang expression in the Chinese net world like “+ 1” (stands for I also agree, count me in).

4. Conclusion

This paper discusses the key features of Internet slang, phrases, and abbreviations; the written manifestation of Internet Language in relation to spoken language; and three Chinese translation strategies for Internet terms. It covers methods for translating word meanings, the Chinese translation of the English network language, and synchronic research. It is concluded that people could use conversion in most Internet terms translations, meanwhile, amplification and back-translation could be used less. In abbreviations, people could translate directly word by word but on the Internet phrases and words it is necessary to translate according to the background and social environment, and language habits of the target language. This paper lacks scientific detailed statistics, which could be supplemented in future studies. In the future, the translation of words could also be combined with the translation results of artificial intelligence, and predictive research can be conducted based on the characteristics of people creating new expressions on the Internet.

References

- [1] Rebecca Merrett (CIO). *OMG, Facebook's new patent to detect Internet slang*. 09 March, 2016. <https://www2.cio.com.au/article/595542/omg-facebook-new-patent-detect-internet-slang/>
- [2] Ron Darwin. *Language and identity in the digital age*. January 2016. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303838217>.
- [3] Flori Needle. *Internet Slang: 81 Terms To Know About*. August 28, 2023. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-internet-changes-language>.
- [4] Wan Adzrie Indera Wan Adremy Indera, Al Amirul Eimer Ramdzan Ali. *The Relationship between Internet Slang and English Language Learning*. *Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*. Vol 4, Issue 2, 1-6 (2021).
- [5] Rufeí Zhang. *Research on the Main Features and the Translation of Network Neologisms—Taking the Neologisms of the Past Five Years as a Case Study*. May 26th, 2022. DOI: 10.12677/ml.2022.105133.