The Integration of Chinese Internet Neologisms into Everyday Language

An Empirical Study Using Baidu Index and Online Surveys

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Abstract

The emergence of the Internet language has profoundly impacted everyday communication in China. This study examines the integration of Chinese Internet neologisms into everyday language. Through analysis of *Baidu Index* data and a questionnaire survey, the study explores the extent to which these neologisms have become part of Internet users' linguistic repertoire. The findings indicate the successful incorporation of these neologisms into daily discourse, demonstrating lexical adaptation, semantic shift, and pragmatic communication needs. One prominent finding is the strategic use of less familiar Internet buzzwords by the mass media in China. This finding suggests a complex interplay between netizens, media, and government control, as the media incorporates Chinese Internet neologisms that have penetrated everyday life while disseminating government-created neologisms for state propaganda. Future research could explore the acceptance and usage of political terms in Chinese Internet slang among the public in China. The findings also highlight the dynamic nature of language in the digital age and emphasize the importance of considering social and political factors in language research. By further exploring the complexities of Chinese Internet neologisms, we can gain a deeper understanding of language evolution and its implications for contemporary Chinese society.

Keywords: Internet neologisms, language integration, search trends, familiarity, patterns

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In the digital world we live in, our lives are overwhelmed with information and the demand for fast and seamless communication. Traditional language expressions struggle to meet the demands of concise textual output. In response, Internet language has emerged, rapidly gaining popularity and spreading throughout society with its concise nature. This phenomenon is profoundly influencing our everyday language expressions. However, the fluid environment of cyberspace leads to significant variation in user-generated Internet vocabulary. Only dynamic, unique, and socially relevant terms are assimilated as new words and phrases, while others fade into obscurity. These coined expressions transcend their online origins and integrate into our everyday language with practical meaning and distinctive characteristics.

In 2008, China had already reached a number of 253 million Internet users, surpassing the United States and becoming the country with the world's largest online population (Liu, 2010). Due to its unique combination of special governmental censorship and Great Firewall, China, with a current online population exceeding one billion, has formed a distinctive online linguistic landscape (Mckee, 2019; Xinhua News Agency, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which Internet neologisms are being used in everyday life by individuals in China. The study aims to analyze the features of these buzzwords among Chinese Internet users and the degree to which Internet language has been integrated into their daily speech.

Previous research has explored various aspects of Chinese Internet buzzwords, including the lifespan of neologisms, the causes of word formation, and cross-linguistic studies of specific buzzwords (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019). However, limited research has addressed the impact of Internet language on real-life communication and writing. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating Internet users' recognition and linguistic practice of Chinese Internet neologisms, thus providing a glimpse of the status and weight of Internet catchwords in daily communication and contributing to the field of Internet language research.

This study also aims to unveil the social factors underlying the choice and usage of these Internet neologisms and their impact on individuals. While these terms have previously been analyzed as a specific register of the Internet (Kuang & Jin, 2000), there is growing evidence to suggest that they are becoming an increasingly prevalent aspect of everyday language, as demonstrated by mainstream media's extensive use of Internet terms.

More specifically, the research questions (RQ) are posed as follows:

RQ1: How familiar are individuals with Chinese Internet neologisms?

RQ2: What kind of Chinese Internet neologisms are more likely to be integrated into an everyday lexicon?

RQ3: What are the similarities and/or differences between Chinese online buzzwords widely used by the media and those preferred by the general public?

This study utilizes methodological triangulation to explore the status and influence of Chinese Internet neologisms comprehensively. The investigation comprises two main components: a statistical analysis of the search trends of buzzwords and a questionnaire survey, which are complemented by qualitative assessments of all the obtained results. This approach allows for a robust examination of the subject matter from multiple angles, enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the findings.

The quantitative analysis involves screening annual Internet buzzwords from 2013 to 2022 and utilizing Baidu Index to observe their search volume among Internet users and the information index of media. This provides insight into the features of dissemination and lifespan of Chinese Internet neologisms and their media exposure within specific time windows. An online questionnaire survey is also conducted, incorporating cloze tests to assess participants' familiarity with Internet terms and willingness to use them in specific semantic contexts.

The study incorporates a qualitative component that involves analyzing the patterns that emerge from the responses collected from the questionnaire surveys. This qualitative analysis, combined with insights from previous studies on netspeak, aims to explore the

sociocultural and political implications of Chinese Internet language. By delving deeper into the data and literature, the study addresses the third research question about the potential impact of the Internet language in the Chinese context.

The present thesis is organized into five chapters: Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, followed by Chapter 2, which presents a comprehensive literature review. The methodology, data, results, and analysis are presented in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and results in relation to the previous studies, and finally, Chapter 6 provides the conclusion and final thoughts of the study.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Background

The widespread popularity of mobile Internet, as well as the increase in the number of Internet users and the diversity of user groups, has led to the Internet being unwittingly introduced into all aspects of people's lives. In this cyber community, Internet users use unique chatting methods to communicate and interact with each other, resulting in the emergence of Internet languages. As the country with the largest number of netizens in the world (Xinhua News Agency, 2022), China has witnessed the proliferation and prevalence of its Internet in less than three decades (1994 to present). Remarkably, the evolution of the Chinese Internet language and the creation of new terms are happening at an unprecedented pace during this time. Chinese Internet neologism has become the subject of exploration and research by numerous scholars from different disciplinary perspectives.

In this chapter, the author provides a comprehensive overview of the history and current state of development of the Chinese Internet language and its critical branch, Internet neologisms, which have played an indispensable role in the evolution of China's Internet culture. The previous research on Chinese Internet neologisms is also synthesized and evaluated.

2.1 Chinese Internet Language

2.1.1 The Language of the Internet

The language used on the Internet has undergone significant changes due to the prevalent use of electronic communication, resulting in the emergence of novel linguistic trends. Electronic discourse refers to computer-mediated communication in which individuals communicate via written language (Herring, 1996). As stated by Baron (2003, p. 60), CMC (*Computer-Mediated Communication*) implies "natural language usage conveyed via the Internet," and real-time communication, particularly during instant messaging, differs from conventional writing as it permits immediate feedback and spontaneous interaction similar to face-to-face conversation.

As stated by Crystal (2006), written language on the Internet is more akin to spoken language than written communication. Davis and Brewer (1997, p. 2) support the view mentioned above with the statement: "Electronic discourse is writing that very often reads as if it were being spoken – that is as if the sender were writing talking". Graddol (1997) adds that the increased use of innovative electronic communication has led to the emergence of new varieties of language.

A large number of terminologies have been coined to initiate a comparative study on "the variations of electronic discourse" and the unprecedented expansion of language brought about by this means of communication (AbuSa'aleek, 2015), including "electronic language" (Collot & Belmore, 1996), "electronic discourse" (Davis & Brewer, 1997), "cyberlanguage" (MacFadyen, Roche, & Doff, 2004), "netspeak" (Crystal, 2006), among others. *Netspeak* as a name with the suffix "-speak," denotes the capacity or proficiency in a particular language that includes not only speaking and writing abilities but also listening and reading skills (Jurida et al., 2016)

2.1.2 Netspeak on the Chinese Internet

Squires (2010) points out that the term "*Netspeak*" has been in public use since the mid-1990s when the Internet was considered new to everyone except for those with advanced technical knowledge. This term encompasses the vocabulary necessary for discussing Internet-related topics and is often regarded as a code that needs to be deciphered into more understandable words. As the Internet became widely accessible in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Netspeak transitioned from glossaries specific to the Internet application field to a non-standard variety of English, as mass media began to highlight the linguistic forms associated with online communication.

Similarly, the term "网络语言 *wangluo yuyan*" (Internet language or Netspeak) was initially used in modern Chinese to refer to the terminology related to electronic technology and the Internet, which were borrowed from other fields or invented by the early Internet users (Chen, 2008). For instance, "IP" is an abbreviation for "Internet protocol address, " which refers to the address or location of a connected device on the

Network, while "hypertext link" refers to a connection relationship from one webpage to a target, which can be another webpage, an image, or music, among other things. Gradually, the term is also used to imply the language applied by Internet users in interacting on network platforms. The discussion of the former mainly involves the technical issues of the Internet itself, which is essentially the domain of professional practitioners. The latter, on the other hand, is created and utilized by a growing number of users based on the Internet and is thus a more linguistic-relevant phenomenon.

According to the latest report (China Internet Network Information Center, 2022) on China's Internet Development (as of June 2022), the overall number of Internet users in China has exceeded 1.051 billion, with an overall penetration rate of 74.4%. Of these users, mobile Internet users accounted for 1.047 billion, or 99.6% of China's Internet population. The further popularization of Chinese Internet users and the high dominance of mobile Internet users not only have popularized Chinese netspeak but also made those language expressions conventionalized and enter into everyday language.

However, netspeak did not have ubiquitous usage on the Internet in China during its early development. The first Chinese network server was not established until May 1994 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2012), which resulted in a delay of several years compared to the emergence of English Netspeak (Crystal, 2011). Consequently, only a few studies focused on the Chinese Internet language before 2000, which was viewed as a challenge to Standard Chinese with a critical attitude (Li, 1998; Shan, 2000). Meanwhile, scholars have also begun to study Chinese netspeak as "a social variety in a cyber linguistic community" (Kuang & Jin, 2000, p. 21), which "expands the scholarly perspective on Chinese Internet Language" (Chen et al., 2022, p. 279).

Due to the nascent stage of Chinese Internet infrastructure and the emergence of Chinese netspeak as a novel linguistic community, research on the Chinese Internet language was scarce at the end of the 1990s. However, a transformation started at the turn of the 21st century, with the research direction of Chinese netspeak from a focus on the lexical level to discourse as well as the factors contributing to the formation of the Chinese Internet language (Chen et al., 2022).

As it broadened perspectives of research, Chinese netspeak began to be explained through culture for its underlying characteristics and causes after 2000, leading to its standardization and systematization. Contrary to those who saw netspeak as a threat to the purity of standard Chinese and called for government regulation to prevent its "contamination" of modern Chinese, Chinese scholars, influenced by Crystal (2001), took a more inclusive and open-minded approach. They regarded netspeak as a pre-existing social dialect and subjected it to cultural investigation as well, which became a prevailing research trend (Peng, 2001; Xu, 2004). Li (2006) proposed that social changes and developments provide the social foundation for the emergence of online language, while individual psychological factors such as the pursuit of fashion, humor, nostalgia, and romanticism provide objective conditions for its emergence. Zhang (2009) analyzed and examined the variation of language on the Chinese Internet, and found that it possessed unique cultural features and limitations in dissemination and functional deficiency.

In the first decade of the 21st century, as Internet chat became increasingly popular in China, the evolution of Chinese netspeak also witnessed several notable milestones. The so-called "非主流 *feizhuliu*" (non-mainstream) phenomenon known as "火星文 *huoxingwen*" (*Martian language*), which featured unique combinations of phonetic spellings and symbols, enjoyed a brief moment of notoriety before being gradually supplanted by other trends. Concurrently, young people began using "颜文字 *yanwenzi*" (*emoticons*, i.e. symbols and emojis to replace Chinese characters) in their online conversations to add emotional nuance and playful humor, thus adding another hallmark feature to the repertoire of Netspeak. During this period, cognitive linguistics perspectives played an essential role in expanding research into this sort of netspeak formation. Researchers sought to uncover the cognitive mechanisms underlying the creation of such novel expressions. For example, Dong (2008) argued that Martian language is essentially a subcultural symbol system among young people and a unique way of expressing behavior in pursuit of a special fashion; Liu and Shi, in their 2010 research, aimed to elucidate the cognitive foundation that underlies the revival of archaic Chinese characters in the realm of netspeak (e.g. "燚 *yin*," "囧 *jiong*").

As the use of Internet language became increasingly prevalent and garnered greater academic attention, the government began to view it as an extension of the Chinese

language and incorporated it into national language planning, with a set of normative frameworks being developed. The 2007 *Report on the Language Situation in China* (中国语言生活状态报告), jointly published by China's Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission, features a new chapter on popular Internet buzzwords from the previous year. (Chen et al., 2022).

Since the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the institutional recognition of China's Internet language has given rise to a more constructive approach to the study of Chinese netspeak. A further advancement is that mainstream (state-run) media in China has begun accepting Internet language, greatly facilitating its dissemination and expanding its reach to previously uncovered audiences. In November 2012, the Internet slang " 屌丝 *diaosi* " (*loser* or *underdog*) officially entered the mainstream when it was featured in the special edition of the People's Daily during the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. This has, to some extent, opened up new avenues for the study of the Chinese Internet language, resulting in more interdisciplinary research on this topic and broadening the depth and breadth of the field.

Interdisciplinary research on Chinese netspeak became an important topic in media studies. Internet language is regarded as part of media language due to its qualities of timeliness, wide reach, and orienting function. However, unlike traditional media language, Internet language is more casual and lacks proper controllability (Chu, 2016). Hu (2007) argues that the rapid and dynamic spread of Internet language has infiltrated traditional media, enriching its language, but also disrupting its normative and exemplary function for the public language. Tang Meiying (2011) suggests strengthening the management of both online and traditional media, as the growing number of netizens collectively paying attention to hot social topics has led to traditional media becoming a key channel for the dissemination of online language.

Some scholars hold a positive view on the role of Internet language in the media, as on one hand it can be used as a tool to influence public opinion (Zhang & Wei, 2011). On the other hand, the entertainment value of the Chinese Internet language can also soften the stiffness of political discourse and make it more widely circulated among the public. One of the most well-known examples is when Chinese President Xi Jinping quoted the popular Internet catchphrase "世界那么大，我想去看看 *shijie name da, wo xiang qu kankan*" (the world is so big, I want to go and see it) during his keynote speech at

the opening ceremony of the second China International Import Expo in 2019, which originated as an Internet meme in 2015（Ifeng News, 2019).

Despite the progress made in the field of media cross-disciplinary research, a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese Internet language necessitates further in-depth ontological research. Since the emergence of Chinese netspeak, it has exhibited numerous linguistic features distinct from standard Mandarin. Research on the ontological aspect of the Chinese Internet language has evolved from merely describing neologisms to exploring its underlying grammar. More widely known linguistic theories have also been applied to understand and study the specific phenomenon of the Chinese Internet language, including linguistic memetics and construction grammar theory (Chen et al., 2022). For instance, Wu (2022) examines the new passive grammatical construction of "*youbei X dao* (有 被 X 到)" in Chinese netspeak, compared it with the traditional "被 *bei*" passive sentence and "*bei* X" construction, and analyzed the pragmatic features of "*youbei X dao*" construction from the perspectives of contextual co-occurrence, evaluation, and focus. Ma (2021) uses "*fanersai wenxue* 凡尔赛文学 (can be literally translated as Versailles Literature)," one of the top ten Chinese Internet catchphrases in 2020, as an example to explore the generation and dissemination mechanism and driving force of this popular phrase from the perspective of memetics theory. The study identified different stages, including *imitation*, *replication*, *dissemination*, *diffusion*, *derivation,* and *variation*. Similarly, Yang, Liang, and Liu (2021) also adopt the memetics theory and find that the spread of the Internet buzzword "打工人 *dagong ren*" (laborer) is determined by the special cultural environment of the Internet and the self-deprecating attitude of Chinese Internet users.

In summary, the emergence of Chinese netspeak occurred later than that of the English-based Internet language over the past three decades. It has gone through a process of being regarded with "hostility" by scholars to gradually being accepted by the general public and even state-run media. Its study has also evolved from a focus on a lexical level to a discourse level and from a narrow linguistic perspective to interdisciplinary research in language and media communication.

2.2 Chinese Internet Neologisms

Since its integration into the global digital information network in 1994, the Chinese Internet has been overwhelmed with an incessant flow of newly created words, which play an important role in Chinese netspeak, particularly among young people and Internet users.

Prior to the shift in recognizing Chinese netspeak as a legitimate form of social language rather than a challenge for standard language use, research efforts were mainly directed towards the formulation of netspeak words, hereafter referred to as "*wangyu,*" (net-words) and their common rhetorical devices (Chen et al., 2022). Even as research has transited from the level of lexicon to that of discourse, Chinese Internet neologisms continue to provide vitality and innovation to Chinese netspeak.

2.2.1 Chinese Neologisms Before the Era of the Internet

The emergence of new words in Chinese did not originate from the digital information age represented by the Internet. Throughout China's history, the emergence of neologisms has undertaken different historical tasks at different historical moments. As Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh (2019, p. 514) concluded:

> Neologisms include not just new words but also new constructional patterns, morphological patterns and innovated parts of speech. Indeed, in the constant flux of cultural development, social change, and through the continuous evolution of knowledge, such innovations emerge to refer to new things, express new ideas, construct new identities and to do all of these in creative ways. Thus, neologisms are a necessary part of language if it is to be a successful tool of communication.

According to Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh (2019), neologisms in the Chinese language can be classified into four waves of origin: the introduction of Buddhism in ancient times, the importation of Western learning during early modern Chinese, the socialist movements after the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the rise of digital communication with the arising of the Internet. Neologisms from different periods often reflect the social and cultural characteristics of their respective times.

During the period of Buddhism's introduction to China, a large number of new words emerged primarily due to the spread of Buddhism in China. The transmission of

Buddhism brought with it a wealth of Buddhist culture and terminology, which needed to be accepted and expressed in Chinese. As a result, Chinese had to coin new vocabulary and approaches of expression to adapt to the influx of Buddhist culture. Most Buddhist scriptures were written in Sanskrit and Prakrit, which resulted in the creation of many new words when translated into Chinese, introducing many novel concepts (Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh, 2019). Early translations of Buddhist texts used more transliterated words than later ones, which included many specialized Buddhist terms such as "佛 *fo*," "菩萨 *pusa*," and "般若 *bore*," while other transliterated words were mostly personal and place names in Buddhist Sanskrit. However, too many transliterated words that only represent sound without conveying meaning can cause great difficulties in the dissemination and teaching of Buddhist texts. To address this issue, besides promoting knowledge of Buddhism, another effective approach is to use translated words, such as "因果 *yinguo*," "世界 *shijie*," and "现实 *xianshi*" (Wang, 2008). The infiltration of Buddhist terminology not only gave rise to many new Chinese words but also enriched Chinese expression, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and development.

Language contact has always been a significant factor in driving language change. In the history of China, there have been two instances of extensive cultural contact between Chinese culture and external cultures: the first being the introduction of Buddhist culture, and the second being the period of "西学东渐 *xixue dongjian*" (*Development of Western knowledge in the East*), which occurred in two stages: during the late Ming Dynasty and the late Qing Dynasty until the early Republic of China (Lackner et al., 2001). Both of these cultural contacts took place through extensive translation efforts (Wang, 2008). Liu and Ding (2019) pointed out that during the period of "*xixue dongjian*", modern Western languages exerted a profound impact on Chinese, manifested in lexicon (loanwords and derivational patterns) and syntax (the use of "*bei* 被" construction, adjectives as modifiers and temporal clauses).

In contrast to the previous burst of neologisms, which were created to facilitate the spread of Buddhism in the Central Plains, the emergence of Chinese coinages during this period was driven by the dissemination of knowledge, resulting in a systematic and explosive creation of a large number of Chinese neologisms. These included

terminologies in various domains such as politics, biology, mechanics, physics, and chemistry (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019).

Another source of Chinese neologisms in this cultural contact wave was the loanwords from Japanese kanji. Japan actively introduced numerous new concepts, technologies, and cultures from the West during the Meiji Reform through "massive translations of Western works into Japanese"(Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019, p. 516). These loanwords from Japanese were incorporated into Chinese texts by the Chinese intellectual elites and social reformers who had studied and lived in Japan at that time. They retained the original Japanese kanji orthography while adopting Chinese pronunciation. Modern Chinese has assimilated 844 words and terms originating from Japanese (Saneto, 1960), as cited by Sun (2015). These loanwords, which are widely used and still in circulation, include terms such as "科学 *kexue*" (science), "民主 *minzhu*" (democracy), "经济 *jingji*" (economy), "进化 *jinhua*" (evolution), "社会 *shehui*" (society), and so on (Lippert, 2001).

The third surge of an extensive influx of novel lexical items into the Chinese lexicon stemmed from the pervasive dominance of communist ideology subsequent to the formation of the People's Republic of China. During the early and mid-20th century, Chinese socialist new words influenced by Russian communism emerged as a result of ideological exchanges between China and the Soviet Union. Some of the key areas where Russian communist terminology influenced Chinese include politics, economics, society, and ideology. Neologisms related to class struggle, socialism, communism, collective ownership, revolution, and party organization were introduced into Modern Chinese discourse, for instance, "走资派 *zouzipai*" (capitalist roader), "忆苦思甜 *yiku sitian*" (remember bitterness and appreciate sweetness), "大字报 *dazibao*" (big character poster), and "接受贫下中农再教育 *jieshou pinxiazhongnong zaijiaoyu*" (accept reeducation by the poor and lower middle peasants) (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019, p. 517).

These political neologisms have been widely used in official documents, political speeches, propaganda materials, and academic writings, contributing to the development of a distinctive socialist vocabulary in Chinese. It is worth noting that while the usage and prevalence of these terms have evolved over time, and some may have become obsolete following market-oriented reforms and adjustments in the

political and ideological domains, the traces of socialist terms have never been eradicated from Modern Chinese. For instance, exemplars such as "科学发展观 *kexue fazhanguan*" (Scientific Outlook on Development), "三个代表 *sange daibiao*" (Three Represents, which defines a new relationship between the Communist Party of China and people)，and "绿水青山就是金山银山 *lüshuiqingshan jiushi jinshanyinshan*" (clear waters and green mountains are as valuable as gold and silver mountains) can be cited.

2.2.2 Neologisms in the Chinese Internet Era

According to Fang et al. (2019), the evolution of the Chinese Internet unfolds across distinct phases: the Web 1.0 era during the 1990s, the Web 2.0 era throughout the 2000s, the era of mobile Internet in the 2010s, and the burgeoning era of intelligent IoT (Internet of Things) in the 2020s. These successive stages, propelled by the forces of digitalization, have witnessed the advancement of *content digitization*, *individual digitization*, *mass digitization*, and *social digitization*, representing different levels of development.

In the era of Web 2.0, specifically during the phase of *individual digitization*, the Internet has assumed a central role as the primary conduit for the dissemination of social information and as a gauge of public sentiment. Internet users have emerged as pivotal agents within the Internet ecosystem, actively generating and shaping content. Since then, Internet neologisms flooded into the Chinese lexicon with an unstoppable force.

Unlike any previous wave of neologism advent, the innovation and peculiarities of Internet neologisms are evident in multiple aspects. Jing-Schmidt and Hsieh (2019) highlighted four aspects, namely *communication channels*, *class orientation*, *information transparency*, and *practical impact*, to delineate the differences between Chinese Internet coinages and earlier surges of new words emergence.

When discussing communication media, it is noteworthy that the creators and users of Chinese Internet neologisms are primarily the general public, based on the foundation of Chinese grassroots netizens, in contrast to the missionaries, social reformers, and central authorities mentioned in previous contexts.

Unlike the earlier dissemination of neologisms, which followed a hierarchical framework with elites and ruling classes propagating and disseminating them from the top down, contemporary Internet neologisms originate entirely from grassroots Internet users. These neologisms gradually enter mainstream media and even the official political and economic lexicon as their popularity and recognition rise. In addition, due to the top-down dissemination structure, previous neologisms often failed to reflect the attitudes and appeal of the grassroots in their respective eras (Lu & Wei, 2018). This was primarily because their lexical innovation was influenced by religious doctrines, the spread of new cultural ideas, and ideological propaganda. As a result, these neologisms were disconnected from the lived experiences of the general public. In sharp contrast, neologisms stemming from the Chinese Internet not only reflect the true social realities but also exhibit a discursive sense of creativity, often lacking specific thematic constraints (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019).

2.2.3 The Word Formation Strategies of Chinese Internet Neologisms

Among the morphological processes underlying the formation of Chinese neologisms throughout history, compounding plays a crucial role in the morphological development of Chinese neologisms. Since the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC), the Chinese language has gradually transitioned from monosyllabic words to disyllabic words, thereby facilitating the creation of compound words (Ceccagno, 2016). It is estimated that over 70% of the vocabulary in Modern Chinese is composed of compounds (Xing, 2006). However, in the process of forming Internet neologisms, deliberate efforts were made to break away from the previous compounding strategies and create new ones (Ceccagno, 2016). When we create new words online, the morphemes used are no longer limited to selecting constituents from existing words (e.g., "书评 *shuping*" for "book review") or using phonetic transliterations of loanword morphemes (e.g., "夹克 衫 *jiakeshan*" for "jacket"). Instead, direct combinations of numbers, Roman letters, and Chinese characters are employed (e.g., "*hao8*" from "好吧 *haoba*"; "*T le*" from "踢 了 *T le*"; "*y1s1*" from "有一说一 *youyishuoyi*").

Apart from compounding as a morphological strategy, Chinese Internet neologisms also exhibit other morphological features. One prominent feature is the use of additional

derivation, which involves creating new words by adding affixes or modifying existing words to derive new meanings or forms. Chinese Internet coinages often employ this strategy to generate words that are related to the original term but carry a distinct connotation. For example, the word "神反转 *shen fanzhuan*" (godly reversal) combines the prefix "神 *shen*" (god) with the word "反转 *fanzhuan*" (reversal) to describe an exceptionally incredible reversal of the plot of a story or movie. According to Chou and Hsieh (2013), the prefix demonstrates a preference for nouns that represent the formal characteristics rather than the functional aspects of objects.

Homophony, or the use of words that sound similar but have different meanings, is another prevalent feature in Chinese Internet neologisms. This technique allows for wordplay, puns, and the creation of humorous or catchy expressions. For instance, the Internet catchphrase "试试就逝世 *shishi jiu shishi*" originated from the common phrase "试试就试试 *shishi jiu shishi*." The latter phrase conveys the meaning "just try it," while the former phrase implies "you will die once you try it. "

The variety of word formation strategies contributes to the vitality of new Chinese Internet words, reflecting linguistic innovation and adaptability in the online communication environment.

2.3 Previous Study on Chinese Internet Neologism

Scholars mainly examined the neologism movement behind this digital revolution from five perspectives. The first research angle that a large number of scholars devoted to was the cross-cultural comparison of Chinese Internet neologisms, especially Chinese-English translations, but also focusing on their translation between Chinese and other languages (Yu, 2015; Wenchan & Ke, 2018; Qian, 2019; Yan et al., 2020).

A second perspective of interest to linguists was the diachronic evolution of Chinese Internet neologisms, providing a look at the temporal dimension of Chinese neologisms used based on the Internet after the rise of the digital era. New words and phrases were coined to interpret emerging technologies and cultural trends, either short-lived or integrated into the mainstream lexicon. Jiang et al. (2021) utilized popular Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2008 to 2016 to test an epidemiological model. The study

found that the model could not only effectively explain the growth patterns of Internet coinages but also predict the lifespan of buzzwords.

In addition to intercultural and chronological perspectives, researchers also explored the social and psychological implications of Chinese Internet neologisms. La (2019) revealed how the creation of new words in Chinese Internet language aligned with societal changes, including the latest news, digital social interaction, and social influence. She uncovered that the use of neologisms is associated with specific subcultures or identity groups, and understanding these associations can shed light on the impact that Internet terms play on the reconstruction of social identities.

The fourth aspect took a view from the perspective of the morphological features of Chinese Internet neologisms (Chou & Hsieh, 2013; Zhang et al., 2013; Wang & Su, 2018; Wang & Hsieh, 2019), and had been discussed in the previous section 2.2.3.

Finally, the fifth aspect probed into the question of whether Internet neologisms should be standardized or regulated, considering the perspective of language planning. Some argued that irregular use of Internet terms would lead to the decline of the Chinese language (e.g., Deng, 2009), while others maintained that the Internet language should be allowed to exert its self-regulatory capacity (e.g., Mou & Xie, 2008). This debate raised key issues related to the role of language planning in the digital age and how language norms and practices were established and maintained.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Overview

This study used the annual top ten buzzword lists published by the *National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center* and the influential journal *yaowenjiaozi* for each of the years from 2013 to 2022 as materials to build a small decade-spanning corpus of Chinese Internet buzzwords. The search trend function of *Baidu Index* was utilized to track the occurrence time, diachronic search trend, age group and gender ratio of users, and other attributes for each buzzword to present an overview of the Chinese Internet buzzwords in the past decade. In addition, the corpus was divided into six categories based on neologism construction strategies, and forty new words were randomly selected from each category for an online questionnaire, aiming to examine the usage of Chinese Internet buzzwords among individual Internet users in real life. Finally, the statistical data were correlated with the *Information and Media Index* trend data on *Baidu Index* for quantitative analysis. Based on the quantitative analysis, a targeted qualitative analysis was conducted to analyze the specific Internet buzzwords in relation to the previous research theories.

3.2 Research Question

Previous studies have already demonstrated the thriving development of Chinese Internet neologisms. However, the increasing frequency of people using these new words in their daily lives and the phenomenon of Chinese mainstream media continuously incorporating Chinese Internet neologisms into their news coverage have prompted the author to pose the following questions:

RQ1: How familiar are individuals with Chinese Internet neologisms?

RQ2: What kind of Chinese Internet neologisms are more likely to be integrated into an everyday lexicon?

RQ3: What are the similarities and/or differences between Chinese online buzzwords widely used by the media and those preferred by the general public?

Below are the corresponding hypotheses for the research questions:

H1: The majority of individuals are familiar with Chinese Internet neologisms due to their widespread usage and exposure to online platforms.

H2: Chinese Internet neologisms that are easy to understand, catchy, and resonate with people's daily experiences are more likely to be integrated into the everyday lexicon.

H3: There may be some overlapping Chinese online buzzwords used by the media and preferred by the general public, suggesting shared popular trends. However, differences may arise as the media often selects buzzwords based on newsworthy events, while the general public's preference might be influenced by personal interests and social interactions.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Research Material

The main research object of this study is Chinese Internet neologisms. In order to make the material more comprehensive and diversified, I selected and synthesized the corpus from two separate sources.

The first data source for the research material on Chinese Internet neologism came from the *National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center*, in collaboration with *Beijing Language and Culture University*, *Communication University of China*, *Huazhong Normal University*, *CAPT* (*China Association of Press Technicians*)*, CIPSC* (*Chinese Information Processing Society of China*), and *The Commercial Press*. They jointly published the "Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords" for ten years from 2013 to 2022. In order to "promote the development of the Internet in China," the "Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords" list was published. The annual buzzword list aims to "describe China and the world with one word and one phrase." It encourages all people to use language to record their lives and describe the social changes and world events in China (The Paper, 2018).

The other source of data was selected from the top ten buzzwords from 2013 to 2022 published by the leading Chinese culture magazine "咬文嚼字 *yaowenjiaozi*" (Bite

Words). The selection channels are mainly from the mainstream print media corpus, audio media corpus, and online media corpus data from influential websites such as *NetEase forums* and *blogs*, *Sina blogs*, *Sina News*, and *Tencent News*. The magazine's annual buzzword selection process starts with readers' recommendations, collects a wide range of high-frequency words in social and linguistic life during the year, and then invites experts and scholars in applied linguistics to jointly evaluate, screen, and compare these words, and finally collectively select them according to four criteria (Editorial Department of "*Yao Wen Jiao Zi*," 2021), which are: (1) *Fashionable*, (2) *Popular*, (3) *Vivid description*, (4) *Avoiding vulgar expression*.

Although representative, the data sources of the current study still have drawbacks. The details are elaborated on in the limitations section.

3.3.2 Research Tools

For the purpose of studying the penetration of Chinese Internet words into everyday life, it is necessary to find a tool to assess their popularity and influence. *Baidu Index* is an online data analysis tool launched by Baidu, Inc., to track and analyze search volume trends and user interest for a specific keyword or topic on the Baidu search engine. The data of *Baidu Index* is derived from the search data of *Baidu* search engine, which covers a vast user group and search volume. It provides keyword search volume, trend charts, and related search popularity data to help users understand the interest level and search behavior of netizens. Users can learn about the change in popularity of certain hot words or catchphrases, geographical distribution, and other information on *Baidu Index*. Besides, *Baidu Index* also features *information and media index* for keywords, which can assist users in grasping the trend of a selected buzzword or phrase used by Internet users and media on the web. Regarding searchable time range, *Baidu Index* offers PC search results from June 2006 to the present and mobile search results from January 2011 to the present (Baidu Index, n.d.). Because of the functions mentioned above, *Baidu Index* is well suited for research on the diffusion characteristics of new words on the Chinese Internet.

3.4 Survey

The survey conducted online through the *Tencent Questionnaire* examined the respondents' perceptions regarding the meaning of the selected Chinese Internet neologisms and their self-evaluation of the usage frequency of these new coinages. The Internet neologisms from 2013-2022 were combined from two sources, and after removing duplicates from both word lists, a total of 163 annual buzzwords for the last ten years were obtained, of which 128 words could be accessed through *Baidu Index* for data trends. In order to conduct a more in-depth study and to take into account the time and patience required by the participants to complete the questionnaire, 40 new words were selected. The final selection of 40 neologisms was classified according to the neologism-forming strategies synthesized in the previous literature (Zhang et al., 2013, Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019) and was randomly selected in each category. The categories were *Abbreviations* (semantically relevant constituents or morphemes for abbreviated compounds), *New Coinages* (loanwords, neologisms compounded by letters and numbers, or generated by homophonic words), *Existing Words with New Meanings*, *Additional Derivation*, *Political Propaganda Terminology*, and *Catchphrase*. The complete list of 40 buzzwords can be found in Appendix 1.

The first part of the questionnaire examined the respondents' ability to use various types of neologisms from the Internet over the past decade, and all 40 Internet buzzwords were presented through contextualized cloze tests and questions. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' personal use of the Internet terms that appeared in the first part. The range of usage is from "I have not seen this word before" to "I use this word in both writing and speaking" (see Appendix 3). In contrast to the first part, which objectively reflects whether trending words are still used in specific contexts, the second part reveals people's willingness to use Internet buzzwords in real life through participants' subjective judgments.

Further, the result has been used to cross-reference with *Baidu index Information and Media Index* trend data to compare the frequency of use between individuals and mass media.

3.5 Participants

A total of 217 valid questionnaires were received, including 65 males and 147 females, and five subjects did not want to disclose their gender. Participants were divided into 19 years old and below, 20-29 years old, 30-39 years old, 40-49 years old, and 50 years old and above by age group.

The educational background of the subjects was dominated by the group with college and undergraduate education, with 134 people representing 61.8% of all participants. Postgraduate and higher education, high school level education accounted for the subject group's second and third percentages, respectively.

The leading occupation group of participants in the questionnaire was 61.8% of school students, followed by 17.1% of office employees. 62.7% of the participants spent more than three hours a day on the Internet for information, social media interaction, and video entertainment. *WeChat* was the most frequently used social media among the participants, while *Weibo*, *Bilibili,* and *Xiaohongshu* were all used by more than 50% of the participants. In terms of the dialects used by the participants, Chinese Mandarin, the official language, accounted for 61.3% of all participants, followed by Cantonese and Wu dialects, with 14.7% and 13.8%, correspondingly.

In the question inviting participants to assess the importance of language in their work on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 means very important), 58.5% rated language communication as very important to their work, while 29.5% gave an assessment of 4. It should be noted that the median score for this question was 5, with a mean score of 4.4, indicating that verbal communication is essential to the work of the vast majority of participants. For this reason, the participants met the implicit requirement of frequent use of language quite well.

3.6 Procedures

First, a small corpus of Chinese Internet buzzwords was built by integrating and processing all the annual top ten buzzwords published by the *National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center* and the journal *yaowenjiaozi* from 2013 to 2022 from online sources. In order to observe the synchronic and diachronic spreading

features of the trending words in the corpus and the statistics of Internet users, the author searched all 163 words selected using *Baidu Index* and obtained the search trends and user data of 128 Internet buzzwords. The preliminary online data collection helped to create a certain expectation and predictability on how to classify and select specific Chinese Internet neologisms for the subsequent questionnaire.

The survey was conducted to further investigate which patterns of Internet neologisms are more likely to enter the lexicon of everyday language and what kinds of Internet terms are prone to be used by people in their daily communication and writing. By condensing 128 Chinese Internet neologisms into 40, these words are further divided in the survey according to their frequency of use. The words with different recognition and usage frequencies were compared with the *information and media index of Baidu*, respectively, to probe the connection between the Chinese Internet neologisms incorporated into written use by the media and the Internet neologisms that people tend to use in their lives.

More in-depth findings are found and further discussed, in addition to correlating the data obtained from the *Baidu Index* and the online questionnaire, with previous research on the topic of ontology and extrinsic factors such as social, political, and cultural aspects of Chinese Internet language.

3.7 Limitations

First, while the origin of the corpus is highly defensible, the limitations specific to the Chinese Internet, such as the control of speech due to strict online censorship and the dissemination of mainstream ideology through the Internet in China (Zheng & Chen, 2017), lead to the inevitable presence of political propaganda terms in the data. Thus, the word list of collected data must have been influenced by these two factors and has been filtered in advance, even though the provenance of new words on the Chinese Internet is not necessarily web-derived (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010). Nevertheless, by conducting searches on *Baidu Index* for each term listed from the source material, the results indicate that all the selected words have experienced substantial popularity at some point. In addition, due to criteria for

selecting words to eliminate curses and vulgarity, Internet swear words are missing in the corpus.

Second, the regional characteristics of users available from the *Baidu Index* are of limited relevance. The search trends for different Chinese Internet neologisms do not reflect differences in geography, as the top three provinces with the highest search volume are all from the top five Chinese Internet provinces. The same study was conducted by Song (2019), who took *Tuyang Tusen Po*, a popular Chinese Internet neologism, as the research object and concluded from studying the regional big data of search users on the *Baidu index* that the spread of Chinese Internet buzzwords is not much driven by the locations of Internet users.

3.8 Ethics

Since this survey is an online questionnaire, informed consent, personal information privacy, and data security of the subjects need to be guaranteed. Regarding informed consent, this questionnaire ensures that subjects fully comprehend the purpose and content of the experiment before answering the questionnaire, and clearly states that the study is based on their complete voluntariness and that they are free to withdraw at any time. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the study was conducted in an anonymous manner. The experiment also ensured that subjects' personal information would not be associated with their personal information or be leaked at all. The survey data was provided by *Tencent Questionnaire* for secure data transmission and storage and was only accessed and used by the author throughout the study. All questionnaire data would be completely deleted after the completion of the research.

The content of the questionnaire complies with all relevant laws and does not involve any discrimination or other unethical behavior. All questions were designed to avoid infringing upon the rights of the participants and consistently treat the respondents as human beings rather than mere experimental subjects. Respondents were given the freedom to express their concerns or questions at the end of each section of the questionnaire.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Results

This chapter presents the results and findings of the data analysis. Section 4.1 begins with a statistical analysis of fill-in-the-blank correctness based on user attributes, including gender, age group, and education level. Section 4.2 unveils the cognitive and usage patterns of four types of Internet users towards Chinese Internet neologisms. The final part correlates the different usage preferences between massive media and the public.

4.1 Accuracy of Situational Use of Chinese Internet Buzzwords

The situational quiz session was designed to examine participants' ability to use popular Chinese Internet new words. Among the ten questions, participants were asked to select the word or phrase they thought best fit the contextual meaning. For five of the questions, more than 90% of Internet users chose the expected option. More than 80% of the participants answered three of the questions correctly. Two questions had less than 80% correct, while the lowest correct response was only 69.6%. The mean accuracy in use was 87.28% (See Figure 1).

Here are two examples from this section, with one having the highest accuracy rate of 96.8%, "套路 *taolu*," and the other having the lowest accuracy rate of 69.6%, "辣眼睛 *la yanjing*." The bolded and underlined words represent the most appropriate option for the given context, and below the examples are their corresponding English translations.

All the questions can be found in Appendix 2.

(1) 你这个人就是太容易被_____了，总是上当。

You're just too easily _____ , always falling for it.

a) 柠檬精 *ningmeng jing* (jealous person)

b) YYDS (perfect)

c) skr (a sound performed in hip-hop or rap)

d) <u>**套路** **taolu**（**tricked**）</u>

(2) 你的朋友向你推荐了一部电影，说非常好看，让你一定要看。你根据他的建议看了这部电影，但是影片中有一些让你感觉不适的镜头。你想要跟他表达你的想法，于是你说了什么？

这部电影真是_____ .

Your friends recommended a movie to you, saying it was really good and that you have to watch it. Based on their suggestion, you watched the movie, but there were some scenes that made you feel uncomfortable. You wanted to express your thoughts to your friend, so what did you say?

This movie was_____ .

a) 打 call *da* "call" (cheer for)

b) 你懂的 *ni dongde* (you know)

c) 雨女无瓜 *yunüwugua* (none of your business)

d) <u>**辣眼睛 *la yanjing* (unbearable)**</u>
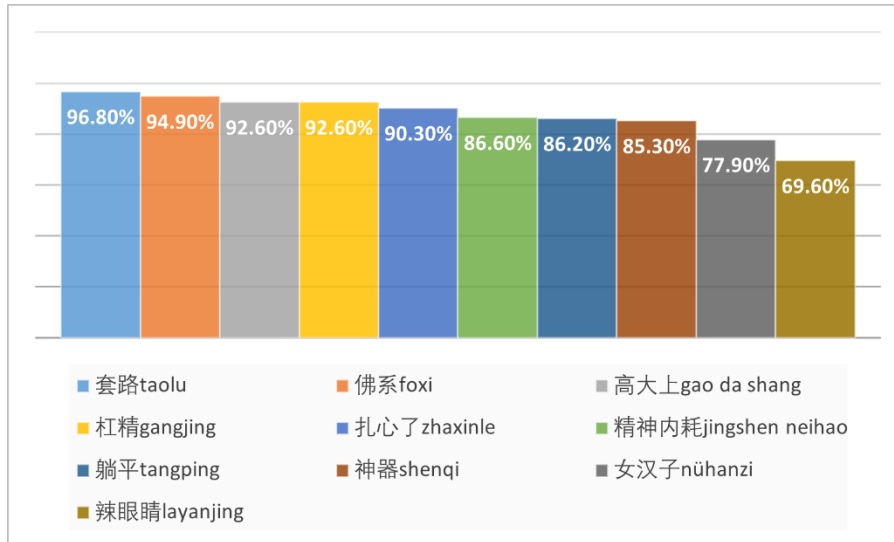
Figure 1. Percentage of correct use of each buzzword

In the following analysis of the data, a significant relationship was tested between the variables and the accuracy of using Chinese Internet neologisms. This suggests that there is a noteworthy association between the variables (gender, age, and education level) and the precision of utilizing these online expressions. In this study, this relationship was determined to be statistically significant, with a significance level of 0.05.

Gender

The average accuracy rate among all participants was 87.28%. Gender differences were observed in the performance of contextualized fill-in-the-blank questions, with males achieving an accuracy rate of 82.6% and females achieving a higher accuracy rate of 89.6%. The higher accuracy rate among females compared to males indicates that women have a more robust command of these new online language expressions.
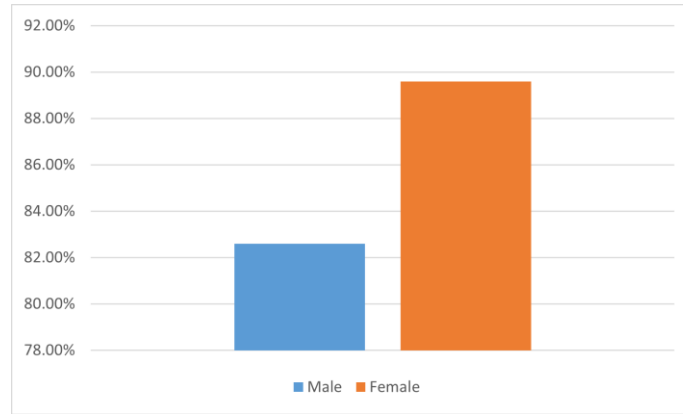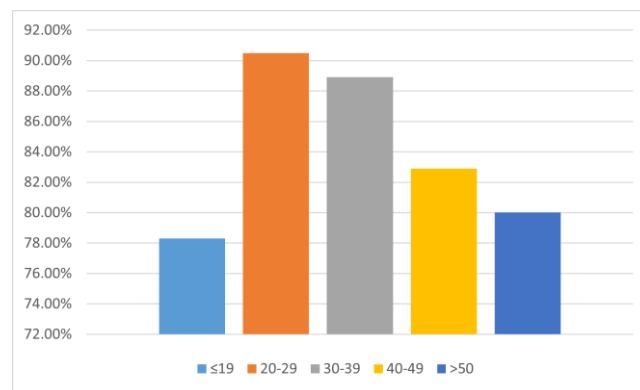
Figure 2. Distribution of correct rates by gender

Age group

Participants aged below twenty demonstrated an accuracy rate of 78.3%. The highest accuracy rate of 90.5% was observed in the age group of 20-29. Participants aged 30-39 achieved an accuracy rate of 88.9%, while those in the 40-49 age group had a slightly lower accuracy rate of 82.9%. Lastly, participants aged 50 and above exhibited an accuracy rate of 80%. It can be observed from the chart (Figure 3) that, excluding the age group of teenagers (below 20 years old), the proficiency in the use of Chinese Internet slang decreases with age.
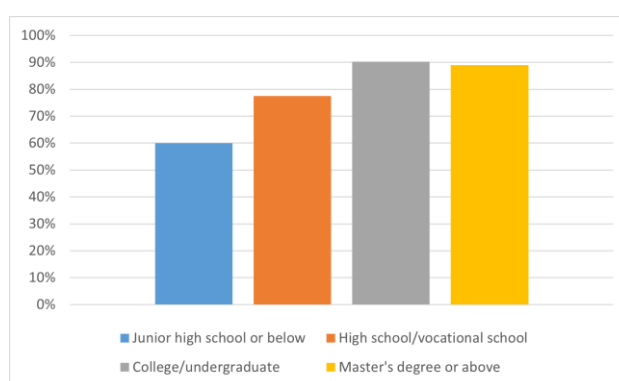

Figure 3. Distribution of correct rates by age groups

Education level

The accuracy rates of the participants were analyzed based on their educational levels. The results showed that those with a junior high school education or below achieved a correctness rate of 60%. Participants who had completed high school or vocational school exhibited a higher accuracy rate of 77.5%. Moreover, college or undergraduate education individuals displayed the highest accuracy rate of 90.3%. Lastly, participants with a master's degree or above demonstrated a correctness rate of 89%.

In general, the level of proficiency in using Internet neologisms is positively correlated with educational attainment. However, it is worth noting that participants with graduate and postgraduate education performed slightly worse in answering the questions compared to those with a highest educational attainment of a bachelor's degree.

Figure 4. Distribution of correct rates by education level

In summary, the findings of this section indicate that the accuracy rate of participants in using Chinese Internet neologisms is 87.28%. Gender, age, and education level significantly influence the accuracy rate. Females outperform males in the use of online language expressions, and participants in the age group ranging from 20 to 29 demonstrate the highest accuracy rate. Moreover, higher levels of education are associated with higher accuracy rates. The slight decline in proficiency observed among participants with education beyond the bachelor's level may be attributed to age factors, which can be inferred from the performance of different age groups.

4.2 Cognitive Awareness and Usage of Chinese Internet Buzzwords

In this section, the buzzwords for each option of the situational fill-in were presented and offered to the participants for judgment and evaluation. The author invited the participants to assess themselves on these Internet buzzwords based on three criteria: whether they knew them, whether they understood them, and whether they would use them. If the participants did not know the word, there was no case for understanding and using it; if the participants did not understand the word, they would still use it because of social pressure reasons (Qu, 2020); on the usage basis, in addition to whether they tended to use the word, the author wanted to further examine whether the scenario of its use was based on daily communication or for writing. This resulted in seven options:

a. I have not seen the word;
b. I have seen it but do not understand the meaning;
c. I have seen it and understand the meaning, but I have never used it myself;

d. I do not know the meaning but still use it;
e. I only use it in writing;
f. I only use it in speaking;
g. I use it in both writing and speaking.

After counting the distribution of participants' choices for all selected words, the following four patterns of perception and use were observed:

Table 1. The number and percentage of buzzwords per pattern in the questionnaire

Pattern	Number of buzzwords	Proportion of buzzwords
I. Well-known and commonly used in **both spoken and written language** by the majority of people	14	35%
II. Well-known and commonly used in everyday **spoken language** by the majority of people	15	37.5%
III. Well-known among the majority of people, with nearly equal proportions of individuals choosing to use it exclusively in everyday spoken language or choosing not to use it at all	9	22.5%
IV. Not widely known among the majority of people, but still maintains a certain level of usage	2	5%

I. The first pattern is the one that will be used in all aspects, such as "996" (a work schedule entails working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week) and "内卷 *neijuan*" (a situation where individuals and communities become trapped in a cycle of relentless competition and overwork). The vast majority of respondents chose to use this kind of words in everyday conversation and writing (see more details in Fig. 5 & 6).
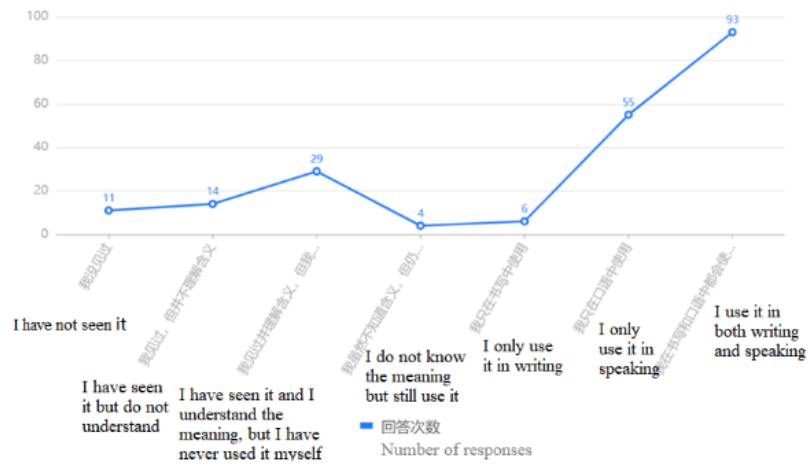
996

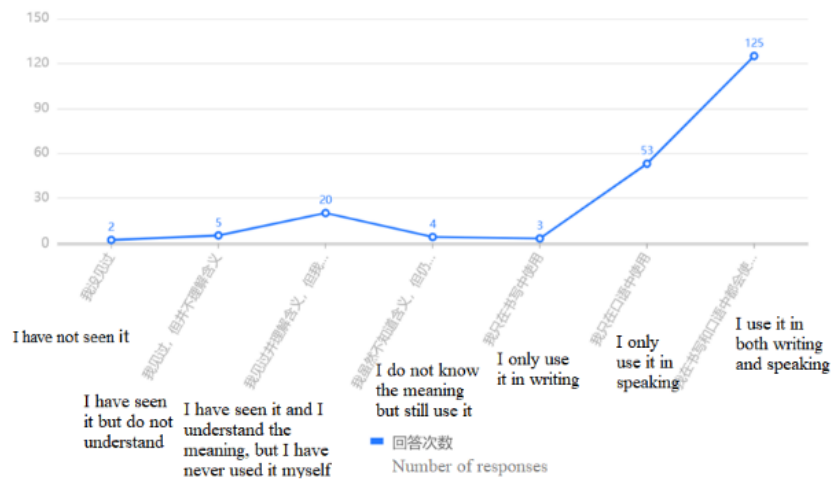*Figure 5. Distribution of responses for 996*

内卷 *neijuan*

Figure 6. Distribution of responses for neijuan

When considering these neologisms that are already known or even familiar to the public, it is essential to trace the emergence of these words. After analyzing a total of fifteen Chinese Internet neologisms that fit **Pattern I** in the survey, it is observed that the popular catchphrases that have wholly entered daily language have a wide span of years of appearance. There are "new coinages" that emerged more than ten years ago, such as "逆袭 *nixi*" (counterattack), as well as trending terms like "精神内耗 *jinshen*

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neihao" (mental internal friction) that appeared less than a year ago. This indicates that Internet neologisms integrated into the everyday Chinese lexicon are not easily fading from people's sight. Furthermore, the viral spread of Internet buzzwords can make them popular and widely known within a short period.

Within this category of cognitive patterns, half of the Chinese Internet neologisms mentioned in the survey are closely intertwined with current social and cultural phenomena, making them highly resonant and captivating. Examples include terms such as "躺平 *tangping*" (lying flat), "巨婴 *juying*" (big baby), "精神内耗 *jingshenneihao*" (mental internal friction), and the forthcoming discussion from the user's perspective on "内卷 *neijuan*" and "996".

"内卷 *neijuan*" and "996," as Chinese Internet buzzwords that have entered daily usage, reflect similar yet slightly different social realities in China. "996" refers to a high-intensity work schedule, while "*neijuan*" represents an excessive state of competition that encompasses work, education, and even lifestyle. From Figure 5 and Figure 6, it can be observed that although the majority of participants have incorporated these two terms, which contain new concepts, into their daily language practices, there are still some participants who are either unwilling to use or unaware of the meanings of these words. Upon examining the specific attributes of this subgroup, it is found that these two terms are particularly unfamiliar to younger respondents. Among the eleven participants who have not heard of the term "996," seven are below the age of 20. Furthermore, there is a certain correlation between the awareness of these terms and educational attainment. None of the participants with a postgraduate or higher degree are unfamiliar with or have a lack of understanding of these two terms, whereas some participants with educational levels below a bachelor's degree are unfamiliar with them. This outcome indicates that the social phenomena underlying these two words have not resonated with adolescents, as they have not yet become actively involved in the workforce.

II. The second pattern is highly likely to be used only in spoken language. It clearly peaks in the option of "Only used it in speaking," such as "杠精 *gangjing*" (Internet troll), "高大上 *gao da shang*" (high-end and groovy). The remaining small percentage could understand their meaning, but said they would not use them personally. There is almost no one who does not know these words or only uses them in the written.
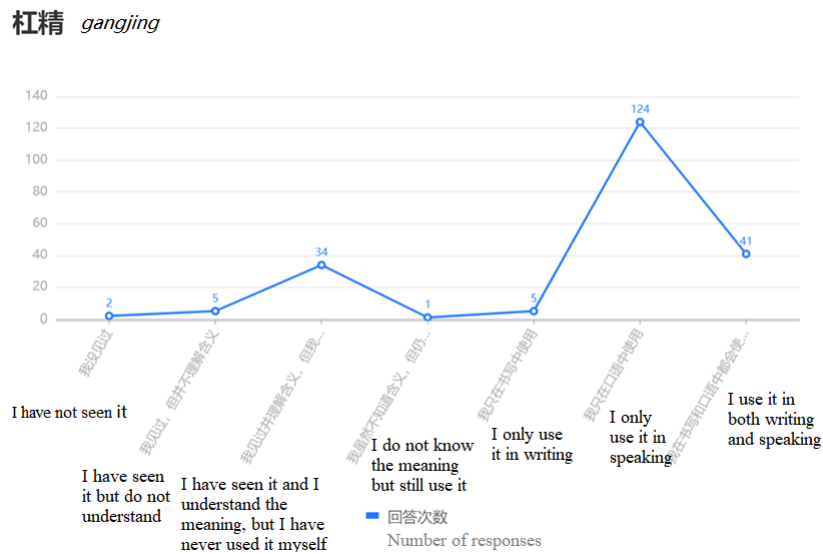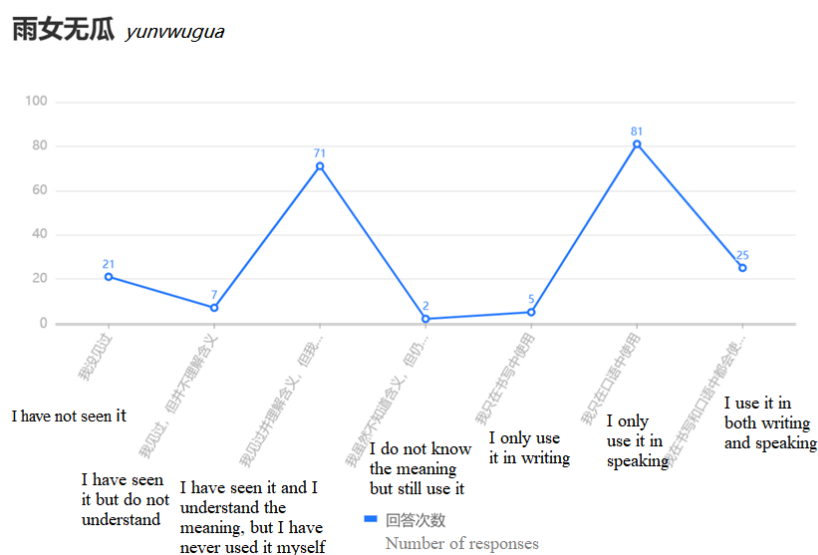

Figure 7. Distribution of responses for gangjing
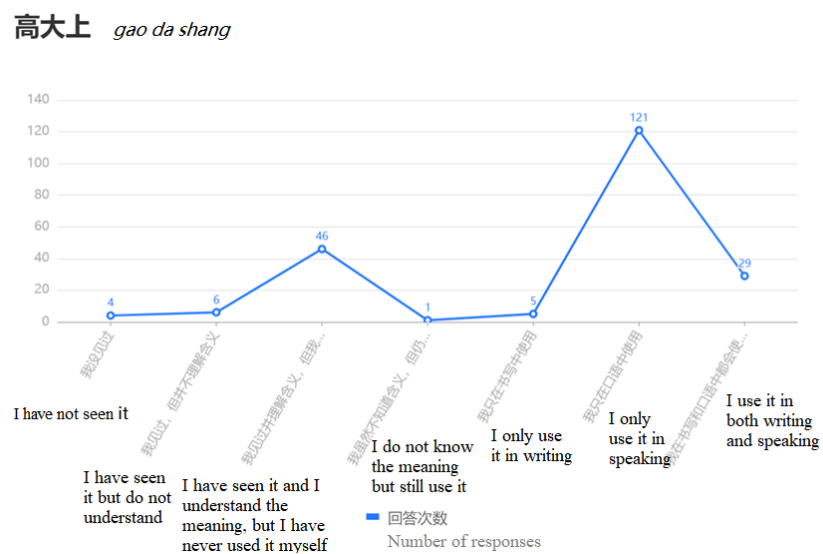
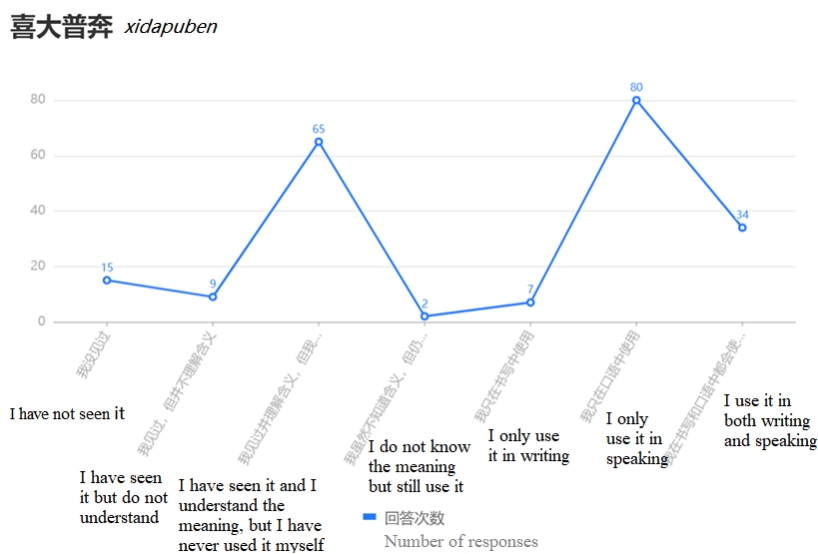*Figure 8. Distribution of responses for gao da shang*

Internet language is regarded as a form of "writing talking" (Davis & Brewer, 1997, p. 2). A significant distinction between the neologisms in **Pattern II** and **Pattern I** lies in their frequency of usage in written contexts. By comparing the popular terms associated with both patterns in the questionnaire, two prominent findings emerged. Firstly, **Pattern I** consists exclusively of individual words that can serve different grammatical roles in a sentence when writing, while **Pattern II** includes some phrases and sentences that will lose their meaning when removed from the online context. Secondly, **Pattern II** includes three neologisms compounded by Roman letters, whereas **Pattern I** does not feature combinations of Chinese characters and Roman letters. This suggests that individuals rely on their own language intuition to decide whether Chinese Internet neologisms are suitable for use in daily conversations or written communication.

III. The third pattern is characterized by a similar number of participants who either use or do not use the term in spoken language, resulting in two peaks on the chart. Such as "雨女无瓜 *yunüwugua*" (none of your business) and "喜大普奔 *xidapuben*" (so exhilarating that everyone is celebrating and spreading it to the rest of the world).

Figure 9. Distribution of responses for yunüwugua

喜大普奔 *xidapuben*

I have not seen it

I have seen it but do not understand

I have seen it and I understand the meaning, but I have never used it myself

I do not know the meaning but still use it

I only use it in writing

I only use it in speaking

I use it in both writing and speaking

回答次数
Number of responses

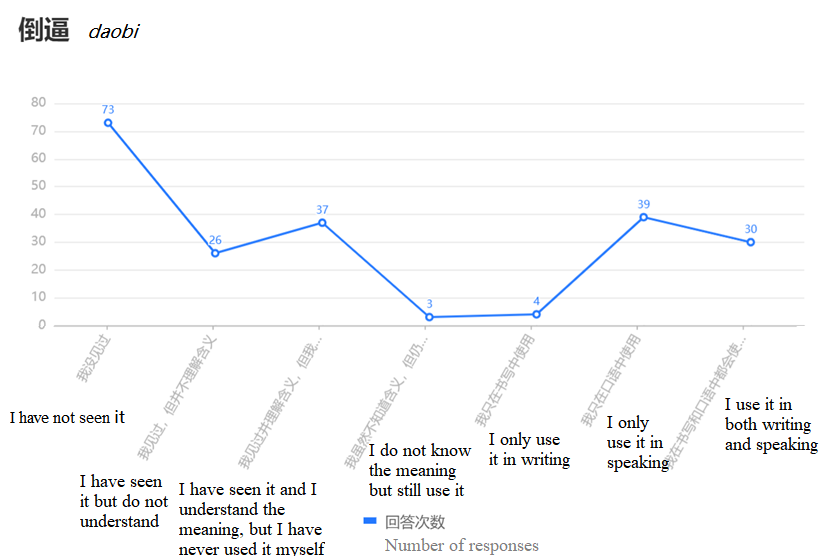*Figure 10. Distribution of responses for xidapuben*

A detailed analysis of the neologisms belonging to this pattern reveals some common characteristics. On the one hand, almost all of them are new coinages on the Chinese Internet (e.g., "喜大普奔 *xidapuben*" is compounded by morphemes from four different words), which means that users need to consider their appropriateness and understandability outside the context of the Internet. On the other hand, this pattern includes phrases or slogans led by Internet celebrities or repeatedly used by different netizens. These phrases or slogans do not enrich the semantic aspect of our daily language, but rather reinforce the expression of certain emotions at the pragmatic level (e.g. "你们城里人真会玩 *nimen chengliren zhenhuiwan*" expressing surprise towards certain behaviors). Therefore, they are more suitable for being used in everyday spoken language or simply remaining in the online realm.

Taking a deeper look at the term "雨女无瓜 *yunüwugua*" from the perspective of user attributes, it is found that participants did not show differences in gender and age, which are consistent with the overall distribution characteristics of the population. Interestingly, as *yunüwugua* is an expression of non-standard Mandarin with a dialectal tone, also known as "Plastic Mandarin" (Bo, 2022), there might be differences in usage preferences among speakers of different dialects. However, cross-analysis based on the specific dialects used by the participants did not reveal a higher tendency for this term in any particular dialect user group. The only parameter that showed a difference was

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the level of education. Among participants with a high school, vocational school, or technical school education level, the number of individuals who chose "I only use it in speaking" was twice the number of individuals who chose "I have seen it and I understand the meaning, but I have never used it myself."

IV. The last pattern is characterized by a high proportion of people who have not encountered the words but still have some usage. Only two of all words have such a pattern, which are "倒逼 *daobi*" and "打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*".


Figure 11. Distribution of responses for daobi
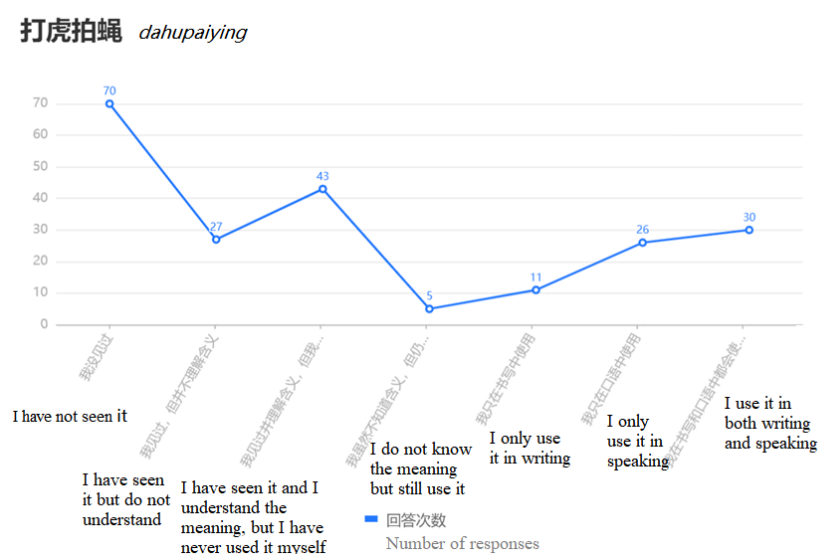
*Figure 12. Distribution of responses for dahupaiying*

As mentioned in Section 3.7, Chinese Internet buzzwords do not necessarily originate solely from the Internet. With the aim of expanding political influence and promoting economic development, Chinese media consistently highlights the terms created for political propaganda in government reports, such as "打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*" (cracking down on corrupt officials at all levels) and "倒逼 *daobi*" (pressure to bring about change), which are the only two terms appearing in this particular pattern. Throughout the survey, two additional terms with political and economic connotations, namely "不忘初心 *buwangchuxin*" (stay true to the original aspiration) and "砥砺奋进 *dilifenjin*" (forge ahead with determination), were included in the **Pattern I**.

When comparing *dahupaiying* and *buwangchuxin* using the *Information and Media Index* on *Baidu Index*, it becomes evident that they differ in their emergence and the level of attention they garnered. *buwangchuxin* entered the public's consciousness through the media in 2017 and maintained a consistently high average weekly exposure of over 1,800,000 between 2018 and 2020. It continued receiving media coverage from 2020 to 2022 and has since gained sustained and significant attention and exposure, particularly since the end of 2022.

On the other hand, despite being listed as a new word in 2013, *dahupaiying* gained significant prominence only towards the end of 2021. While it achieved a peak exposure of nearly 100,000, there remains a noticeable disparity compared to *buwangchuxin*.
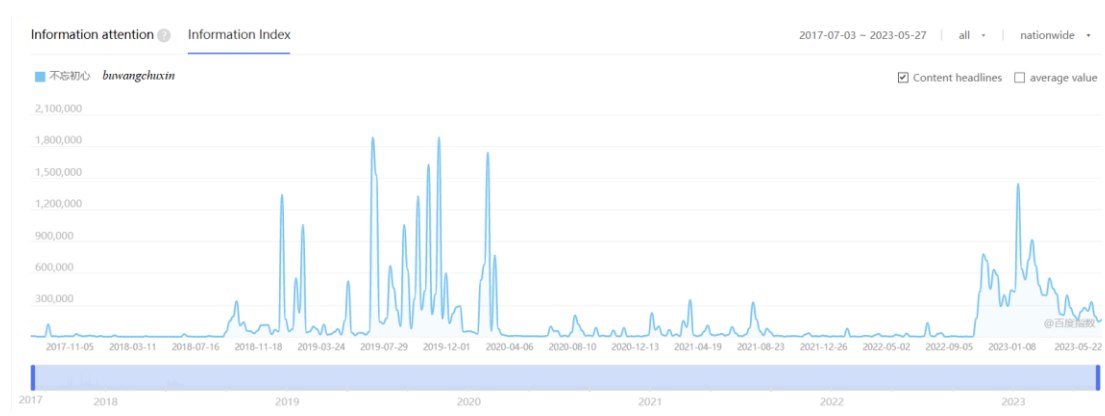
Figure 13. Information and Media Index for buwangchuxin
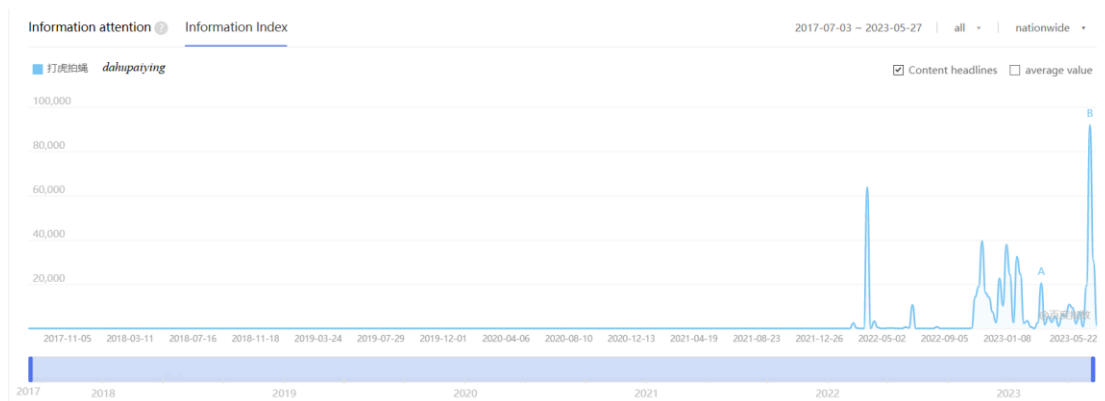
Figure 14. Information and Media Index for dahupaiying

An analysis of the participants' characteristics reveals a minimal disparity between males and females regarding their familiarity with these pattern-based buzzwords. However, a notable discrepancy exists in their willingness to use them. Approximately 40% of males are inclined to incorporate these terms into their everyday lives, whether in formal or informal contexts, whereas only 28.6% of females express the same inclination. The variations in awareness, however, become apparent when considering participants' educational backgrounds. Among those with a master's degree or higher, a mere 33% are unfamiliar with the word, followed by individuals holding a high school diploma or its equivalent, with only 37.5% lacking familiarity. Surprisingly, among participants with a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, 48.5% remain unfamiliar with the word. Regarding the usage rate of this term, no significant disparities emerge based on educational attainment, as it hovers between 32% and 35%.

In summary, Chinese Internet buzzwords display distinct characteristics across different patterns. **Pattern I** demonstrates their widespread usage in both online and offline contexts. Once these words become part of everyday language, they stabilize and remain consistent. Importantly, their popularity does not necessarily correlate with the time of their emergence. These words predominantly reflect and respond to current social and cultural phenomena.

Patterns II and **III** indicate a tendency to incorporate these buzzwords into spoken rather than written language. However, a notable distinction lies in the proportion of netizens who know these words but are reluctant to use them. **Pattern II** stands out from **Pattern I** as it includes newly coined words composed of Chinese characters,

Roman letters, phrases, and even complete sentences, making them less suitable for written language. The difficulty for words in **Pattern III** to transcend the online context contributes to their lower usage. Statistical data suggests that participants with a high school education level prefer using these Internet buzzwords more than those with other educational backgrounds.

Interestingly, **Pattern IV** reveals that the selected terms categorized as Chinese Internet buzzwords are unfamiliar to most people. Comparing the political buzzwords in this category to the buzzwords in **Pattern I** based on media exposure indicates that the former requires higher levels of media exposure to achieve widespread dissemination. Additionally, males are more inclined to incorporate these words into daily usage.

4.3 The Correlation Between Media Usage Trends and Netizens' Usage Preferences

In the previous section, we described the patterns of Chinese Internet users' perceptions and usage of Internet neologisms based on the questionnaire results. This section then compares the use of new Internet expressions that have entered the everyday lexicon of grassroots in the mass media domain.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, *Baidu Index* is a useful tool for researching and visualizing the search trend and popularity of a particular Chinese Internet buzzword. In addition to *Baidu Index* providing the search volume of a keyword within a specific time window, the trend chart of the *Information and Media Index* shows the exposure of the keyword. The *Information and Media Index* is not directly associated with the search index; instead, it counts the number of news items featured in Baidu's news channels. This feature is valuable for investigating the media's inclination towards a newly coined Chinese Internet term and determining to what extent the term has become a routine part of the press's lexicon. By utilizing the *Information and Media Index* as evidence, we can ascertain whether the term has gained substantial recognition within the media and has become widely used.

In order to meet the requirements of integration into the everyday lexicon, three words that conform to **Pattern I** were randomly selected from the pool of popular words used in all 40 questionnaires. These terms were chosen to investigate the extent of their

information exposure since their emergence. As a control, we also selected two Internet "hot" words from **Pattern IV**, which had low awareness, to explore their level of popularity through *Information and Media Index*.

To illustrate, three examples of Chinese Internet buzzwords are provided in the table below, including their meanings, the year they appeared on the popular word list, and the average daily information index. It is worth noting that these three words did not emerge in the last three years, with the earliest appearance dating back to 2014.

Table 2. The Information Index of buzzwords conforming to distribution pattern I

| Chinese Internet Neologism	Definition	Year Appearing on the List	Average Daily Information Index
断舍离 *duan she li*	Letting go or detachment	2014	54,713
套路 *taolu*	A set pattern or routine, often used to deceive or manipulate others	2016	48,251
巨婴 *juying*	Adults who display childish or immature behavior	2018	249,829

In contrast, within **Pattern IV**, two words were largely unfamiliar to the surveyed Internet users: "打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*" and "倒逼 *daobi*." The specific details of these words are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. The Information Index of buzzwords conforming to distribution pattern IV

Chinese Internet Neologism	Definition	Year Appearing on the List	Average Daily Information Index
倒逼 *daobi*	pressure to bring about change	2013	8
打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*	Cracking down on corruption at all levels	2014	1,888

Given that the *Information and Media Index* data is only available from 2017 onwards, there are no instances in this comparison where a buzzword remained unused by the media due to its nonexistence before that period. "倒逼 *daobi*" reached a peak **weekly** publicity of only 2,188 mentions, briefly, in late November 2022, slightly higher than the average **daily** index of "打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*."

"打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*," along with "断舍离 *duan she li*," emerged as new buzzwords in the same year but exhibited different popularity patterns. It appears that *dahupaiying* is only extensively used by the media during specific time periods, while *duan she li* is closer to a frequently used term or concept.
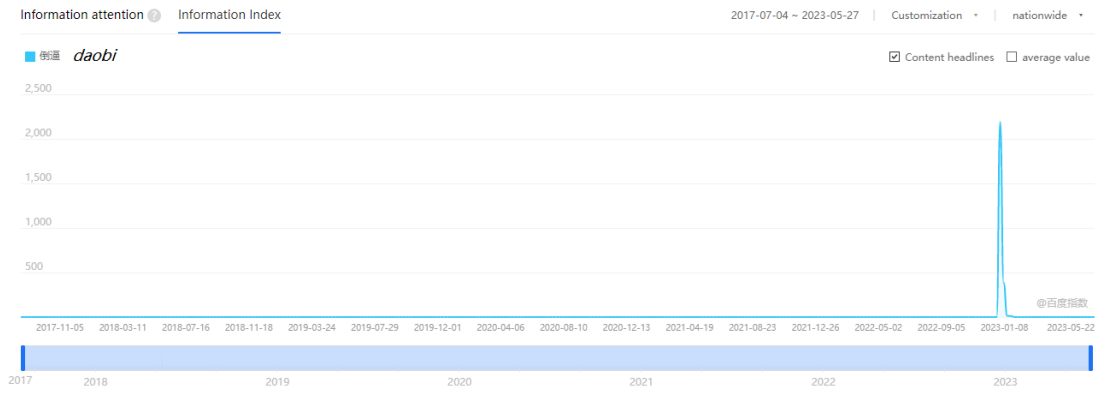
Figure 15. Information and Media Index for daobi
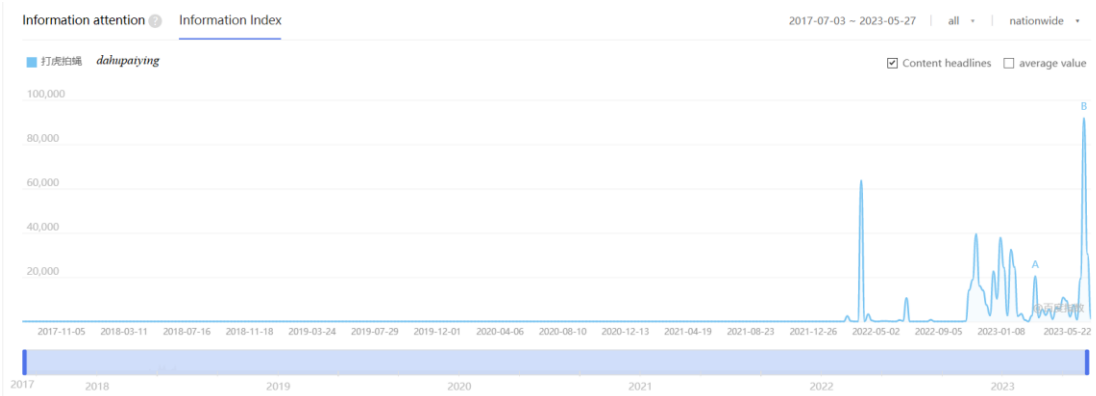
Figure 16. Information and Media Index for dahupaiying
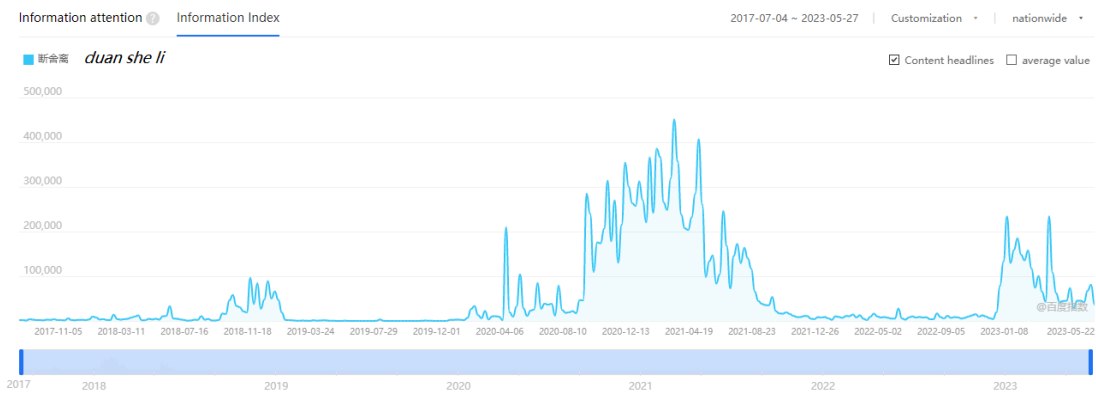
Figure 17. Information and Media Index for duan she li

The above comparison shows that Internet neologisms commonly used by grassroots individuals also receive significant notice and usage in media language. This is because these neologisms reflect the concerns and expressive needs of the general public. However, conversely, certain Internet buzzwords that generate high interest in the media may not enter people's everyday language. This could be attributed to the fact that these buzzwords are primarily used by the media as specific topic labels or specialized terminology, which may not be as applicable for general daily communication. Additionally, this discrepancy may also reflect differences in language usage and expression between the media and grassroots individuals. Therefore, this phenomenon demonstrates the distinct usage patterns and language requirements of Internet neologisms between the media and grassroots netizens. Furthermore, words like *dahupaiying*, which are discussed in the following chapter, have a unique "origin" that warrants special attention.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate if and how Chinese Internet neologisms have become an integral part of daily language. In order to achieve this aim more specifically, the following research questions were posed and examined through this study:

RQ1: How familiar are individuals with Chinese Internet neologisms?

RQ2: What kind of Chinese Internet neologisms are more likely to be integrated into an everyday lexicon?

RQ3: What are the similarities and/or differences between Chinese online buzzwords widely used by the media and those preferred by the general public?

5.1 Familiarity

The first research question (**RQ1**) has been examined by inviting respondents to take part in contextualized fill-in-the-blank questions, measuring their familiarity with Internet phrases in terms of correctness (see Section 4.1). Based on the questionnaire survey findings, it was observed that Chinese Internet users achieved an average correctness rate of 87.28% in their comprehension and utilization of Internet buzzwords. This outcome suggests a solid level of proficiency among netizens in grasping the semantics, application, and contextual significance of Chinese Internet buzzwords, enough for them to effectively employ these words and phrases for communication and self-expression. The elevated accuracy rate further attests to netizens' heightened awareness and familiarity regarding contemporary Internet buzzwords. It is worth mentioning that one of the respondents (No.171) commented that the Internet buzzwords listed in the options were originally commonly used.

However, participants of different genders, ages, and educational backgrounds demonstrate specific differences. This study found that females exhibit a higher level of familiarity with and proficiency in using online neologisms compared to males, with

a 7% difference in accuracy rates between the two groups. This could be attributed to the higher proportion of females with a higher education level (89%) compared to males (72%) among the participants. The analysis of the results indicated a positive correlation between individuals' awareness of Internet neologisms and their level of education. Regarding different age groups, the survey showed that Internet users aged 20-29 were more familiar with Chinese Internet terms. The finding is also corroborated by Li (2020), who also found through big data that Internet users aged 30-39 are more adept at using Chinese-English hybridized Internet neologisms.

Additional research findings further substantiate these observations. The widespread of mobile Internet has generated a great deal of opportunity to expose new words online to the public and create a demand for them (Sandyha et al., 2022), while Chinese Internet buzzwords are becoming more and more relevant to public life and are being used more often to talk about recent popular events (Qu, 2020).

The statistical analysis of participants' responses also revealed some limitations in the questionnaire design for this section. The two words with the lowest accuracy rates in the questionnaire results were "女汉子 *nv hanzi*" (tough girl) and "辣眼睛 *la yanjing*" (unbearable). The lower accuracy rates of these words may be attributed to differences in question types. The word *nv hanzi* was presented in a multiple-blank question, where its accuracy rate may have been influenced by participants' familiarity with the other two buzzwords in the question. On the other hand, the word *la yanjing* required participants to select a response based on the given context rather than filling in the blanks within a sentence. This format may have caused more interference or confusion for participants compared to the other simple fill-in-the-blank questions.

5.2 Internet Neologisms in Everyday Language

The response to **RQ2** needs to be traced back to the survey to specifically analyze which words were chosen by the majority of participants to be used in their daily lives. According to the data analysis in Section 4.2, four kinds of distribution patterns were found in respondents' choices due to their willingness to use those newly coined words and phrases on a daily basis. Among all the catchwords, Chinese Internet neologisms that display **Pattern I and II** distributions can be regarded as those that Internet users

tend to use in their everyday lives. Since Internet language appears to be written but is more like spoken language (Davis & Brewer, 1997), everyday language practices are distinguished between formal and informal, written and spoken. In order to further explore what kinds of Internet terms can be integrated into the everyday lexicon, the authors looked at the words selected as high-frequency use in the questionnaire and found features concerning the linguistic aspects.

On a lexical feature level, buzzwords employing these construction strategies are prone to be used in oral communication: abbreviations (e.g., 高大上 *gao da shang*, 喜大普奔 *xi da pu beng*), loanwords, or newly coined words compounded by Roman letters and numbers (e.g., C 位 *c wei*, YYDS, 996). Zhang et al. (2013) proposed that the morphological creativity observed in this online environment can be explained by the concept of *language energy* introduced by Ezra Pound. According to the theory, language sustains vitality and energy by interconnecting words and generating novel expressions. Daily conversations constantly require vibrant expressions to make communication more lively and engaging, capturing the listeners' attention. Internet neologisms serve this purpose by infusing vitality into everyday spoken language through concise and humorous forms. However, it is worth noting that such linguistic innovation can also pose communication barriers between different generations (Luo, 2022).

Bo (2022) mentioned the emergence of a construction in Chinese Internet neologisms known as "Plastic Mandarin." Initially referred to as "dialect-influenced Mandarin (DIM) words," this linguistic phenomenon represents a unique variety of non-standard Mandarin or regional Chinese dialects. With the rapid development and widespread use of the Internet, these DIM words have evolved into cyber neologisms, gaining significant popularity within the Chinese online community. One prominent example in the questionnaire is the term "雨女无瓜 *yunv wugua*." Due to its non-standard nature, it is primarily used in informal contexts and is less common in formal writing scenarios.

One such interesting finding from the semantic perspective is that people often use existing words that have been given new meanings both for communication and writing. For instance, "神器 *shenqi*" has existed for a long time in Chinese and referred to the imperial throne, power, or generally to weapons. Nowadays, it is used to describe any

object that works very well (e.g., "做饭神器 *zuofan shenqi*" means magic tools for cooking). Once known for its beautiful colors, "锦鲤 *jinli*" (Koi) has become a Chinese Internet buzzword that stands for "good luck." As mentioned in the review of the history of Chinese neologisms (see Section 2.2.1), neologisms can be used to refer to new things or to convey new concepts (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019), online languages have gradually matured in the past 30 years, and more and more online languages can concisely and accurately describe our current social life and people's mental state, while the existing language or the existing Chinese lexicon does not have the appropriate words to convey the meaning or has to be expressed in a lengthy sentence. In contrast, some long-standing words in the Chinese lexicon have faded into oblivion because they have not been used for a long time (i.e.神器 *shenqi*). As a result, many pre-existing words have acquired new meanings, becoming "new words" within the cyber community.

Lastly, from a pragmatic standpoint, Jiang (2021) concluded that Internet buzzwords fulfill people's specific communication needs. Internet language is characterized by its relatively simple form, and many catchwords exhibit humorous and exaggerated features, which can be supported by some of the analysis and participants' comments in the questionnaire. For instance, "重要的事情说三遍 *zhongyaode shiqing shuosanbian*" (literal translation: important things repeat three times) only means "important." 43% of participants who knew it is a cliché responded that "they would use it in the spoken word," compared to only 21% who knew its meaning but did not want to use it. Even 30% of people would use it in writing.

5.3 Media-Favored and Public Preferences

During the data collection process, the emergence of a counterintuitive phenomenon prompted the author to propose a new research question, namely **RQ3**. When conducting the survey on the public's daily usage of new Chinese Internet words, it was observed that the mass media utilized all the words that had become prevalent in our daily lives.

Drawing on previous research on Chinese Internet neologisms (Zhou, 2021; Chen et al., 2022), it becomes evident that a dynamic and interconnected relationship exists between Chinese Internet users and Chinese mainstream media. Internet users serve as creators and promoters of Internet neologisms, while the media actively assimilate and validate these linguistic innovations through their reporting and communication endeavors.

Netizens, as emphasized in Section 2.2.2, play a crucial role in originating and spreading these innovative linguistic expressions. As active participants in the online sphere, Chinese netizens have showcased their creativity by generating numerous fresh and imaginative words, effectively conveying specific concepts, ideas, and emotions. Chinese Internet neologisms with wide circulation exhibit great adaptability, making them suitable for diverse contexts (Zhou, 2016). In the digital era, grassroots Internet users, benefiting from their large population base, have facilitated the rapid diffusion and popularity of Chinese Internet neologisms through various social media platforms, online forums, and video-sharing sites.

Meanwhile, the mainstream media in China have displayed a keen interest in the emergence of new Internet terms and acknowledged their significance in shaping public opinion and captivating readers. Media institutions have actively embraced popular Internet trends and catchphrases, consciously integrating these neologisms into their reporting. This deliberate assimilation has facilitated the socialization of these previously internet-exclusive terms. Furthermore, Zhou (2021) goes as far as to assert that Internet language serves as a representation of media culture.

Based on the scenarios mentioned above, it is clear that Chinese netizens and the media in China indeed share some vocabularies of the circulating Internet neologisms. However, it is important to note that the online neologisms preferred by the general public, which effectively reflect the current social reality and social identity (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019), may not receive full representation in the media. For instance, apart from vulgar language, there is a widely popular Internet slang term known as "润 run." Its pinyin form is identical to the English word "run," and it is used to describe the act of leaving China and immigrating to developed countries. Despite the high level of discussion and usage of this Internet slang term online and offline, it has not yet appeared in the reports of mainstream media in China.

This is primarily attributed to the Chinese government's strict control and censorship over media (McKee, 2019), as well as the influence of state propaganda that dominates the digital sphere (Xu, 2022). The Chinese government employs censorship and regulatory measures on social media platforms to carefully preserve regime stability, taking the advantages of bottom-up information dissemination (Qin et al., 2017). In the realm of Chinese Internet neologisms, there indeed exist certain "Internet buzzwords" that are not actually coined by netizens themselves. There are instances of such terms within the corpus used for this study:

Table 4. Chinese Internet neologisms created for propaganda

Neologism	Definition	Origin
不忘初心 *buwangchuxin*	staying true to the original aspiration	A song title used to praise the Communist Party of China
砥砺奋进 *dilifenjin*	forging ahead with determination	A slogan used for propaganda of the 19th CPC National Congress
打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*	Cracking down on corruption at all levels	The anti-corruption slogan proposed by Xi Jinping, the president of China, in 2013

These terms are also regarded as tools of "soft-propaganda" (Gunitsky, 2015), commonly employed by state-orchestrated Internet water armies to disseminate pro-regime comments on the Chinese Internet (Wong & Liang, 2021).

Based on the above, in response to **RQ3**, it can be concluded that Chinese Internet neologisms integrated into the daily lives of ordinary people are indeed absorbed by the media. However, due to government manipulation, the media consciously overlook terms that reflect social realities but are deemed detrimental to maintaining regime stability. Besides, the media also contributes to the dissemination of so-called Internet neologisms created by the government for state-propaganda purposes. Surprisingly, the

political terms for propaganda examined in this study have been found to be widely used.

While the repetitive use of specific words is a common technique the Chinese government employs for propaganda purposes, which would typically elicit negative sentiments from audiences towards any officially mandated concepts (Min & Luqiu, 2021), the survey results reveal a starkly different reality. Apart from relatively low awareness of terms such as "打虎拍蝇 *dahupaiying*," both terms "不忘初心 *buwangchuxin*" and "砥砺奋进 *dilifenjin*" were observed within the **Pattern I** in this study, proving their incorporated into everyday usage by the general public. The results of this study demonstrated a significant disparity in the exposure levels between *dahupaiying* and *buwangchuxin* (see Section 4.2). This raises the question of whether media exposure can be further inferred as a critical factor in integrating such terms into the everyday lexicon.

This phenomenon challenges the conventional understanding of the bottom-up dissemination of Chinese Internet slang (Jing-Schmidt & Hsieh, 2019). It poses a dilemma in categorizing and defining Internet neologisms in China. Additionally, it is worth conducting further research to investigate how these political propaganda terms have permeated into people's everyday language and how they are commonly utilized in daily discourse.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the integration of Chinese Internet neologisms into everyday language. Through an analysis of data obtained from *Baidu Index* and a specially designed questionnaire survey aligned with the research questions, the results indicated that Chinese Internet neologisms have become an integral part of the linguistic repertoire of Internet users.

The findings imply that some key features of Chinese neologisms, such as lexical adaptations, semantic shifts, and meeting pragmatic communication needs, have successfully integrated into everyday language. This reflects the evolving nature of Internet language and its ability to express contemporary social realities and mental states concisely.

Interestingly, the study also found a counterintuitive phenomenon where the Chinese mass media used Internet buzzwords that were less familiar to the public, unveiling that the media in China selectively incorporates Internet neologisms that have permeated everyday life while also disseminating government-created Internet neologisms for state propaganda. This highlights the complex dynamics between netizens, media, and government control. Additionally, further studies could explore the acceptance and usage of political terms in Chinese Internet slang among the general public.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research on Chinese Internet buzzwords, offering valuable insights into their familiarity, usage patterns, and integration into everyday language. The findings highlight the dynamic nature of language in the digital era and emphasize the importance of considering social and political factors in language research. By continuing to explore the complexities of Chinese Internet neologisms, we can gain a deeper understanding of language evolution and its implications for contemporary Chinese society.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.   40 Chinese Internet buzzwords used in the survey, organized by neologism-forming strategies, with pinyin annotations.

a. Abbreviations (choose semantically revelant constituents/morphemes for abbrivated compound)

gāodàshàng   xǐdàpǔbēn   duànshělí   pòfáng
高大上 、喜大普奔、 断舍离、破防

b. Coinage (loanwords or neologisms compounded by letters and numbers, or generated by homophonic words)

 wèi   àolǐgěi dǎ   hǎohāiyō yǔnǔwúguā   nìxí   dǎobī
c位 、YYDS、奥里给、打call、好嗨哟、雨女无瓜、996、逆袭、倒逼、skr

c. Existing Words gaining New Meanings

nǐdǒngde   làyǎnjīng   sà   shénqì   hòulàng   jǐnlǐ   jīngshénnèihào   jùyīng   nèijuǎn
你懂的、辣眼睛、飒、神器、后浪、锦鲤、精神内耗、巨婴、内卷、
tǎngpíng   tàolù
躺平、套路

d. Additional Derivation (prefix and suffix)

fóxì   gàngjīng   juéjuézǐ   níngméngjīng   nǔhànzi
佛系、杠精、绝绝子、柠檬精、女汉子

e. Political propaganda terminology

bùwàngchūxīn   dǐlìfènjìn   xīnchángtài   dǎhǔpāiyíng   dǐngcéngshèji
不忘初心、砥砺奋进、新常态、打虎拍蝇、顶层设计

f. Catchphrase

zhāxīnle   lǎotiě   zhòngyàodeshìqingshuōsānbiàn   zhǔyàokànqìzhì   nǐmenchénglǐrénzhēn
扎心了，老铁、重要的事情说三遍、主要看气质、你们城里人真
huìwán   ránshāowǒdekǎlùlǐ
会玩、燃烧我的卡路里

A. Please select the appropriate option that best suits you.

1.Your age:

a. <20

b. 20-29

c. 30-39

d. 40-49

e. ≥50

f. don't want to answer

2. Your gender:

a. male

b. female

c. do not want to answer

3.Your location (province):_____

4. What is your commonly used dialect (Select all that apply):

a. Mandarin

b. Cantonese

c. Hokkien

d. Xiang

e. Gan

f. Hakka

g. Wu

h. Others (please specify)：_____

5. Your educational background:

a. Junior high school or below

b. High school/vocational school

c. College/undergraduate

d. Master's degree or above

e. Other

6. Your occupation:_____

7. How important do you consider language communication for your work? (Rate from 5 indicating very important to 1 indicating not important at all, with lower scores indicating lower importance)

8. The time you usually spend on the surfing and social media per day:

a. >3 hours

b. 2-3 hours

c. 1-2 hours

d. <1 hour

9. Which social media platforms do you frequently browse? (Select all that apply)

a. Weibo

b. Baidu Tieba

c. Douyin

d. Xiaohongshu

e. Bilibili

f. Weichat

g. QQ

h. Instagram, facebook, twitter and other overseas social platforms

i. Others (please specify)：_____

B. Please select the option that you think best matches the given context.

1. My home has a newly built modern primary school with a swimming pool at the entrance. The school is really _____!

a. 奥里给 (awesome)

b. 高大上 (high-end and groovy)

c. 好嗨哟 (exciting)

d. 断舍离 (detachment)

2. If you have a _____ attitude towards life, you won't care too much about gains and losses.

a. 佛系 (Zen)

b. 新常态 (new normal)

c. 巨婴 (big baby)

d. 后浪 (rising tide)

3. She always _____ targets each colleague's proposal, so few people are willing to collaborate with her.

a. 打虎拍蝇 (tackles tigers and swats flies)

b. 喜大普奔 (gets excited together)

c. 锦鲤 (lucky koi)

d. 杠精 (Internet troll)

4. This task has put him in a state of _____ because he is unsure if he can complete it.

a. 倒逼 (pressure to bring about change)

b. 砥砺奋进 (forging ahead)

c. 精神内耗 (mental internal friction)

d. 失联 (disconnected)

5. Faced with intense competition in big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, going back to the hometown and finding an easy job is another _____ choice for young people.

a. 躺平 (lying flat)

b. 不忘初心 (staying true to the original aspiration)

c. 逆袭 (counterattack)

d. 996 (working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week)

6. The sports band is truly a _____ for fitness as it allows me to better monitor my health and fitness goals.

a. 顶层设计(top-level design)

b. 神器 (magical tool)

c. C 位 (C position)

d. 天花板 (ceiling)

7. You are just too easily _____. You always fall for it.

a. 柠檬精(lemon troll

b. YYDS (perfect

c. skr (a sound performed in hip-hop or rap)

d. 套路 (tricked)

8. Although she seemed like a _____ before, after changing into a different outfit, her temperament became _____, simply _____!

a. 绝绝子 (awesome), 女汉子(tough girl), 飒 (refreshing)

b. tough girl, awesome, refreshing

c. refreshing, tough girl, awesome

d. tough girl, refreshing, awesome

9. You are chatting with your friends, and one of them says something hurtful that makes you feel uncomfortable. You want to express your feelings, so you say:

a. 燃烧我的卡路里 (burning my calories)

b. 重要的事情说三遍 (important things need to be said three times)

c. 你们城里人真会玩 (you city folks really know how to have fun)

d. 扎心了，老铁 (hitting my heart, bro)

10. Your friend recommends a movie to you, saying it's really good and you must watch it. Based on their suggestion, you watch the movie, but there are some scenes that make you feel uncomfortable. You want to express your thoughts to them, so you say:

a. 我想为这部电影打 call (I want to give a shout-out to this movie)

b. 这电影，你懂的 (This movie, you know)

c. 这电影雨女无瓜 (This movie is none of you business)

d. 这电影真辣眼睛 (This movie is unbearable)

11. Do you have any thoughts or suggestions regarding the above question? Please feel free to share.

C. Please answer the following questions based on the prompts:

1. 高大上

a. I have not seen the word;

b. I have seen it but do not understand the meaning;

c. I have seen it and understand the meaning, but I have never used it myself;

d. I do not know the meaning but still use it;

e. I only use it in writing;

f. I only use it in speaking;

g. I use it in both writing and speaking.

Due to the identical content of the provided options, only the first word are displayed. The list of buzzwords has been presented in Appendix 1.

……

41. Thank you for your patience, and you are also welcome to share your thoughts or suggestions on the above questions.

42. Would you be willing to use Internet slang in your daily life? (On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating "very willing" and 1 indicating "very unwilling", the lower the score, the lower the willingness.)

43. What are your thoughts on the phenomenon of internet slang entering daily life? I look forward to hearing your insightful perspective!