



Study on Internet Absurdist Language Proliferation: Analysis from the Youth Subculture Perspective

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Abstract. This paper studies the Absurdist language of the Internet (Internet-Chinese: 'Chouxian Hua') present in Chinese cyberspace. We systematically examined language usage through major social platforms, employing participatory observation on Weibo, Bilibili, and Baidu Tieba. Our results demonstrated that online vernacular was constructing collective discourses by marked, distinctive linguistic variations, predominantly propelled by the generational need of young people for stress relief and affirmation of identity. In the new media environment, it was recommended by algorithms and accelerated by user interactions to make its way from live-streaming platforms to the rest of the media—landscape thus becoming one of the major significant online subculture phenomena. Although it has diversified the modes of online expression, this linguistic fashion has given rise to other issues—for instance, only negative emotions are expressed and communication barriers increase—as well. The results obtained not only fill the theoretical gap on language evolution in the Internet age but also supplement the theory and practice of creating a healthy online linguistic ecology. They also enrich our youth cultural psychology.

Keywords: Internet Absurdist Language, Online Vernacular, Live Streamers, Youth Groups.

1 Introduction

In the rapid development of Internet technology, online language has shown unprecedented vitality and creativity. As digital natives, the patterns of young people in online communication reflect the growing manifestation of distinct subcultural features in linguistic expression. In recent years, Internet Absurdist Language has, at a rocket pace, traveled through major social platforms—developing from the niche expressions it once held in live-streaming communities into a widely influential online subculture phenomenon. The appearance of this linguistic phenomenon on the one hand deeply reflects the emotional needs of modern youth and, on the other, their expression of values in a complicated and rapidly changing social environment.

This online vernacular first began to be a verbal gesture among the hosts of live streams, gradually developing over time into a distinct discursive practice with the rise

of streaming culture. It uses various features such as homophonic substitution, sound blending, neologism, and grammatical variation to develop a set of communicative signs that promote strong group identification. With the deepening of social media's influence, this linguist phenomenon has extended from the narrowest of niches to broader spaces across the internet. Figures point out the explosions in the volumes of topic-related discussions taking place on major social platforms, especially registering a rise in the frequency of use among young users. Such linguistic behavior, however, serves as a catalyst that brings negative emotional expression and deconstructive tendency, which, as people fear, might not contribute to a healthy online environment.

The study is intended to systematically investigate the phenomenon of Internet Absurdist Language, appraising its social-psychological motivations, patterns of transmission, and effects of impact. Using participatory observation and other research methods, we probe into the psychic traits of members of youth groups and the sociocultural needs that find reflection in this online linguistic phenomenon. The results of the research will help in understanding the communication modes and identity demand of the youth in the internet era and will be used for healthy theoretical and practical construction of an online linguistic environment. This issue has much practical significance in healthily guiding the development of youth Internet culture and promoting positive social-cultural interactions.

2 Literature Review

Research on Internet language has developed into a highly complex interdisciplinary field [1]. Early research was primarily concerned with cataloging language features online; its patterns of variance were the focus at this time [2]. Coupled with the rise of social media came an expansion of research into the social functions and cultural implications of social media [3]. Kramsch illustrated how net discourse refashions systems of modern communication and questions orthodox discourses [4], thereby placing them under new pressures — and not only those of mainstream discourse — in wider societal practices.

Youth subculture theory offers an insightful framework for understanding online linguistic phenomena [5]. The foundation of the theory, which was elaborately engineered by the Birmingham School, determined how these subcultural groups build symbolic systems that will convey identity and social attitudes. That groups create identity through differential cultural practice is a generic proposition which specifically suits some recent Chinese Internet Culture Studies to phenomena of language use by youth groups to construct identity.

Communication studies have further clarified the online mechanisms of language propagation through theories of participatory culture. New research recently investigates how young people use linguistic innovation in stress management and in seeking emotional resonance, with studies linking linguistic innovation with social change and intergenerational conflict on the adoption of new linguistic styles [6]. In the analysis by Wang, et al. online language figures as a key element in youth identity construction,

applying the theoretical principles of symbolic interactionism to help explain emerging phenomena—for instance, the use of Internet Absurdist Language [7].

Current research limitations are the dominance of purely descriptive case studies, not backed with developmental mechanism analysis, inadequate integration of theoretical frameworks, and scanty systematic research on negative impacts and mitigation strategies. This paper fills these gaps: multidimensional analysis of Internet Absurdist Language using youth subcultural frameworks within semiotic and communication theories, advancing new principles for understanding modern youth internet culture development.

3 Methodology

3.1 Methods of Research and Scope

In this study, the primary research method used was participatory observation, selected for three principal reasons: the dynamic nature of Internet Absurdist Language, which requires contextual observation; the significance of understanding socio-cultural contexts in online language usage; and the ineffectiveness of traditional questioning methods to capture authentic language use.

Research attention narrows down to three of the major social media platforms—Weibo, Bilibili, and Baidu Tieba—respectively for their public accessibility, potential for systematic observation, and considerable youth user base. These were observed from January 2020 to May 2024 to high-frequency users of Internet Absurdist Language and their interactive behaviors.

3.2 Research Process and Data Analysis

The research was carried out in three consecutive stages, as follows: preliminary observation (September-October 2023) with the establishment of parameters for observation and representative vocabulary; informal observations of actual usage patterns and contexts and interactions of users; systematic observation (November 2023-March 2024) to be used in the compilation of data; final observation (April-May 2024) focused on specific phenomena and subjected to in-depth analysis.

The data analysis was approached with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative analysis considered:

- Linguistic forms (morphology, evolution of meaning, rules of use)
- Contexts and functions of use
- Patterns of interaction and the construction of group identity
- Characteristics of emotional expression

Quantitative analyses included usage frequency statistics, profiles of users, and tracking of the path of transmission. Anonymity was fully respected, and the triangulation of information from different platforms and different times assured data reliability. Respecting the rapid online language change and observer status limitation, this being balanced with the need of assuring research validity.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Linguistic Feature Analysis

These distinctive linguistic features are identified through a process of systematic observation of Internet Absurdist Language at the lexical level: first, enormous reliance on homophones and phonic variants like "shushuwoa (meaning I'm rat.)" derived from "shushuwoa (refer to I'm an uncle)"; second, the resemanticization of word meanings, such as "dian" coming to have connotations of "classic irony"; and third, the variable use of symbols, with the emoji "joker" standing for specific meanings linked to its use for mocking certain behaviors or phenomena.

Linguistically, it often flouts the rules of standard usage to create unique expressions, for instance, verbalized adjectives (as in "It'll be over soon." I'm so happy) or noun omission when the context is clear and brevity is achieved. These variations at the level of grammar not only enhance expressive interest but also serve to bind the group together.

In terms of pragmatic function, this language clearly conveys attitude and emotion expression. Research on more than 70% of use-case scenarios being negative emotional expression, such as sarcasm, derision, or self-mockery, reflects the user's discontent and protest against reality.

4.2 Usage Motivation Analysis

Research unveils multi-level user motivation. First, the release of social-psychological pressure. In current complex social conditions, youth have plenty of pressure at work, in love and from the family. The language provides an emotional outlet using self-deprecating expressions to alleviate real-world stress. "Expressions like "shushuwoa" reflect young people's helplessness and self-mockery toward survival pressures.

Group identity need is another crucial motivation. Observations show that this language is, many times, the most salient way youth groups develop and maintain social contact. They create a "subcultural community" in cyberspace through common symbolic linguistic practices. Data evidenced the formation of stable interaction networks between users who were active in communities like "Sun Xiaoyu Bar" to which the usage of shared language use added strength in group belonging.

4.3 Transmission Mechanism Analysis

The diffusion of this language presents distinct phases. Phase One (early 2019) originated on live-streaming platforms—centered on the personal influence, streamers like Li Gan. Phase Two (late 2019–2020) saw cross-platform spread, forming multiple nodes of transmission on Weibo and Bilibili. Phase Three (2020—present) shows comprehensive diffusion.

The recommendations of the platform algorithm played a very crucial role in the transmission, high interaction content more easily gains algorithmic preference, hence the controversial and entertaining nature of this language, additionally, social media

users' bandwagon psychology promotes this spread. Normally, new expressions, as data shows, take 2-3 weeks from emergence to widespread adoption.

4.4 Social Impact Analysis

It has profoundly changed the way people interact. In a positive sense, it enriches online expression, providing new channels for youth emotional release and social interaction. Some expressions have developed meanings beyond the original contexts; however, they merely show linguistic innovation vitality.

However, negative impacts cannot be ignored. It first results in concentrated expression of negative emotions and may intensify social anxiety. Research shows that frequent users are generally stronger in pessimism and social distrust. Second, the deconstructive and playful expressions may disrupt the normal order of communication, particularly causing the understanding barriers and generational gaps in cross-age communication.

What makes it more of a concern is the ages that are tending downward. The frequency of use has increased notably among junior high school students and could harm the development of their ability for language cognition and value formation. More than 60% of junior high school teachers are aware of this, with 83% asserting that it should be paid attention to.

Moreover, its spread manifests "stratification" features, deepening the language barrier between classes of people. This not only seriously hinders social communication efficiency but might also aggravate social cognitive division. Surveys show that approximately 45% of the respondents have, for one reason or the other, misunderstandings or conflicts in their daily interactions due to inappropriate usage.

5 Conclusion

Through systematic investigation of Internet Absurdist Language, this study illustrates the features, formation mechanisms, and social impacts of this online linguistic phenomenon. It can be concluded from the study that this language creates a unique expression system, through homophones, semantic shifts, and mixing of symbols. Usage motivations come from the needs of young people mainly to release social pressure, construct group identity, and express emotions. When in the process of its diffusion, from algorithm recommendations to user interactions and group effects, it rapidly diffused from live-streaming platforms to all media forms. Its widespread use has such profound effects on social interaction by enriching online methods of expression but also having downsides, such as concentrated negative emotional expression and increased communication barriers.

Its theoretical value lies in the expansion of the research scope of online language and the enrichment of youth subculture theory, with greater understanding of the cultural transmission mechanisms in a new media environment. On a practical level, the results of the research reveal the demands that exist for actions at the social, platform, and individual levels to intensify psychological guidance for youth groups, improve

platform content management mechanisms, and advance user media literacy so as to jointly construct a healthy online language ecological environment. For these findings, they have strong implications in terms of the mechanism of language evolution and youth cultural psychology and social management in the internet era.

It should be noted that due to limitations of research methodology and sample and rapid evolution of online language, some findings in this study may have certain constraints. Future research with multiple research methods can further deepen our understanding of online language phenomena. Also, it should be deepened with regard to sampling and an analysis of cross-cultural differences. Tracking and predicting the pattern of evolution of online language by means of new tech-big data analysis will be the future direction in research.

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