

# Translation Methods of Internet Buzzwords and Their Application

--Taking the 2021 Internet Buzzwords as An Example

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**Abstract:** In recent years, Internet buzzwords, as an important field presenting Chinese cultural characteristics, have become difficult to translate because of their unique connotations and forms, and how to improve the acceptability of their translations. This paper takes the "Top Ten Internet Phrases of 2021" released by the National Center for Language Resources Monitoring and Research as an example, summarizes the common translation methods of Internet buzzwords, and analyzes the use of Internet buzzwords by college students through the data obtained from a questionnaire to provide countermeasures and suggestions for future dynamic translation.

**Keywords:** Internet buzzwords, Translation, Countermeasures.

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## 1. Introduction

With the rapid popularity of the Internet, modern society is increasingly inseparable from the Internet, where people communicate and express themselves. In this process, many new words or old words endowed with new meanings are born in response to the times and spread among Internet users, especially young college students. Language is the mirror image of society, and Internet buzzwords reflect the events or things that people are generally concerned about in a certain period of time, reflecting young thoughts, with strong timeliness, topicality and Chinese characteristics. At the same time, as a product of the network era and the information age, Internet buzzwords are characterized by novelty, richness and simplicity and popularity. In recent years, the deepening of globalization and the development of Internet technology have promoted the spread of language and culture, and popular Internet buzzwords, which have received a lot of attention, are also an important and indispensable part of Chinese language and culture. Therefore, accurate and appropriate translations of Internet buzzwords are necessary for the effective export of Chinese culture and are helpful for the world to understand the thoughts and values of contemporary Chinese youth. However, there are many problems in the translation of online buzzwords nowadays, and how to achieve accurate translation of online buzzwords has become a major problem in the translation practice of college students. This paper will analyze and discuss the common translation methods and classifications of Internet buzzwords, explore the strategies to solve the translation problems and put forward some suggestions in the light of the problems that exist when college students translate Internet buzzwords.

## 2. Meaning and Characteristics of Internet Buzzwords

Internet buzzwords are "popular words in the Internet language, which usually revolve around social daily life and major hot topics in society, and are words used more frequently by social people in their capacity as Internet

subjects to collect, publish and exchange information in the Internet" [1]. Therefore, network buzzwords have the characteristics of the times, and they reflect to a certain extent the hot events of a period, a country, and a region. In addition, Wu Jianhua and others (2011) argue that in the spread of Internet buzzwords, the interactive nature of the network requires its language to be concise and clear. Internet buzzwords are popular among Internet users because of their ability to avoid shielding, common image, attractiveness, profound meaning, quick image, etc., and play an important role in the dissemination of Internet information and formation of public opinion [6].

## 3. The Common Translation Methods of Internet Buzzwords

The translation of Internet buzzwords is not only the conversion from one language to another, but also the dissemination and exchange of culture. However, scholars and translators have been exploring and studying how to successfully translate Internet buzzwords with profound Chinese cultural characteristics, which can be accepted and understood correctly by the target language audience. In the translation of Internet buzzwords, the first and most important thing is to accurately grasp their literal and implied meanings to convey the correct information, and the second is to express the essence of Internet buzzwords with appropriate translation strategies and flexible methods [2].

### 3.1. Literal translation

Literal translation means respecting the original text in dealing with lexical meanings and rhetoric, and not using transitive techniques; in dealing with lexical and syntactic structures, appropriate changes or conversions are allowed to make the translation conform to the lexical and syntactic norms of the target language [9]. For example, "觉醒年代" is translated as "The Awakening Age", where it is important to note that awake is used as a present participle instead of a past participle, indicating that it is an active awakening, an age in the process of awakening. The translation of this buzzword reflects the choice of word form, which needs to be paid

attention to in the direct translation.

However, some people think that a direct translation is a word-for-word translation, but in fact this view is incorrect. Therefore, direct translation and word-by-word translation are different, and the result may be unsatisfactory simply by pursuing word-by-word translation. For example, if the 2021 Internet buzzword “伤害性不高，侮辱性极强” is translated as "Not very harmful, very insulting", the target language audience will be confused. In this case, we should choose a sentence that matches the expression of the target language, "...be more of A than B" means "...更多的是A而不是B" and "... be not so much as B" means "...与其说是A，不如说是B", both of which are good choices and easy to understand. The direct translation is "...be more of an insult than an injury" or "...be not so much damaging as humiliating". The word “伤害” here is "injury" or "damaging" and “侮辱” is "insult" or "humiliating".

For Internet buzzwords, the direct translation method is applicable to a significant portion of buzzword translations. When the structure of English and Chinese languages is similar, the literal translation can make the target language readers understand the meaning. For example, the Internet buzzword “我看不懂，但我大受震撼” expresses surprise, incomprehension or speechlessness about a certain "confusing behavior", and the direct translation method is adopted to translate it as "I did not get it, but I was just in awe." The word “震撼” here is "awe", expressing shock or marvel. On the basis of the above translation version, translators can actually make flexible substitutions for "awe" according to specific scenes. For example, when "awe" is more about appreciation and praise, "admiration" can be used to replace "awe" to highlight the sense of "unawareness". But when something happens or progresses unexpectedly, or even causes a bad result, it is more accurate to use the word "shock" with a pejorative meaning.

### 3.2. Liberal/free translation

#### 1. Paraphrase

Paraphrase is the method of interpretation, which is not to use the customary expression of the target language to replace the original, but to interpret the original [9]. For example, the Internet buzzword “破防”, first of all, is not desirable to be translated simply as "breakdefense". This kind of translation is bound to the original words and phrases, and the readers of the target language cannot accurately understand that what breakdefense wants to express is actually a psychological state of people. There are two kinds of scenarios in which the word "break" is usually used. The first one is to say that people feel excited and moved by seeing a shocking or moving scene. In this scenario, the word “emotional” can be used to describe it. For example: The awards ceremony was so amazing that I became emotional. Another is to say that some people are upset or annoyed after being mocked, or in a state of hurt after being poked at a sore spot. In this scenario, then sting can be used to describe the feeling of being shocked on a psychological level. For example: He was stung by their criticism. In addition to the above, the word “overwhelm” is a common and useful word for many scenarios when translating “破防”. “Overwhelm” is often used for many emotions, such as: being overwhelmed with joy, being overwhelmed with guilt. Without knowing which state the person is in to break the defense, it would be more objective and less prone to error to use the word “overwhelm” to

describe it.

#### 2. Idiomatic translation

The Idiomatic translation method is also a kind of interpretation, only like its name, and it translates by applying the idiom of the target language [9]. This method is applied to the translation of the 2021 Internet buzzword “强国有我”. “强国有我” originates from the solemn oath made by young students at the Tiananmen Square celebration of the centenary of the founding of the Party. Most online articles use the sentence “We are ready to build a powerful China.” But “强国有我” is both an oath and a slogan. In the English translation of the slogan, the wording should be as concise and crisp as possible. “We'll make China strong” is a good translation. This translation is to use the slogan “Together, we will make America strong again” that Trump shouted at his inauguration in 2017, which is similar to the slogan “强国有我”. This is a good translation which has a rallying point.

Another clever application of the translation method is to translate the Internet buzzword "YYDS". "YYDS" is the phonetic abbreviation of “永远的神” which originated from the term used by an anchor to praise Uzi, the former professional League of Legends player, and has gradually evolved into a regular expression used by people to praise various people or things in conversations, pop-ups or comments. It can be used directly. "YYDS" can be directly translated as “eternal god”. This translation retains both the content and the form of the original word. Because there is a corresponding meaning in English, there is less possibility of ambiguity. So it is not a wise move to use a direct translation of this buzzword. However, a translated version using the set translation method may work better. We can translate it as “GOAT” while staying true to the meaning of the original word. It is actually the abbreviation of “Greatest Of All Time”, which means “the best and greatest in history” in Chinese, and can also be understood as “永远的神”. For example: In my opinion, The Awakening Age is the GOAT. “GOAT” is an acronym similar to “YYDS”, but with a more compatible form and spirit. It is more authentic, more localized, and more easily understood by foreigners. This translation not only preserves the special meaning of the source language, but also facilitates the understanding of the target readers, fully reflecting the freedom and flexibility of translation.

### 3.3. Imitation

Imitation means that the translation is not limited to the details of the meaning of the original text, let alone the vocabulary and syntactic structure of the original text, but the original text is used as a reference to translate only the main idea information through deletion, or to translate more information it contains through addition [9]. For example, the Internet buzzword “双减”. The term “双减” refers to reducing the excessive burden of homework and off-campus training for students in compulsory education. The translation of such Chinese expressions as “双减” has always been a difficult task. The most important point is to deeply understand the connotation of the terminology when translating current political terms with Chinese characteristics. Without understanding the “双减” policy, most of the time we translate it directly as “double reduction” or “double reduction policy”. Admittedly, this translation is more widely circulated in the society. However, the effectiveness of this translation is based on people's knowledge of the national policy. This translation can still be confusing to some

foreigners. Therefore, we should add some more information than the original in the translation. Thus, the translation “to ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education” is better. This translation not only explains the content of “double reduction”, but also expresses the meaning of “double reduction policy” to the fullest. At present, the term “double reduction” or “double reduction policy” is very common in domestic and foreign media. In general, it can be used directly in conversation or writing. If the meaning of the word is to be understood more clearly, more detailed information is needed. In this case, it is enough to use the method of imitation to add the specific content about “reduced”.

### 3.4. Variation

Variation is the opposite of imitation, in that the content and the main idea of the translation translated by the method of adaptation are different from the original. Sometimes, if the translator wants to change the focus of the translation or to better meet the needs of the readers of the target language [9], he or she can use the adaption translation method. For example, the term “绝绝子” is popularly used by some fans in an online program to cheer for the contestants. This word is mostly used as a compliment, meaning “too good and great”. The direct translation is obviously not applicable, but the interpretive translation method is better, according to the meaning of the word. “awesome, breathtaking, marvellous, unbelievable” and so on are all possible. However, this translation obviously does not convey the connotation of the word: the performance of the contestants and the performance is fascinating. Therefore, changing the focus of the translation, instead of focusing on the emotions. “Show-stopping” which fits better than the previous versions, means “something or someone exceptionally arresting or attractive”.

### 3.5. Recreation

Recreation means to translate the original text with creative processing, not limited to the original syntactic structure and meaning, to meet the needs of the target language readers [9]. Compared with variation, recreation is basically unrelated to the original text. For example, how to translate the word “躺平”. For the word “躺平”, it means that no matter what the other person's reaction is, you will have no ripples in your heart and will not make any reaction or resistance to it, indicating the submissive mentality. If you just translate the word “躺平” directly as “lie down” or “lie flat” literally, it cannot express the connotation of “躺平”, and the target language readers will not be able to understand it and they will only regard it as the movement of “lying down”. However, if we do not stick to the syntactic structure and meaning of the original text and just look for similar expressions in English, “couch potato” [4] will be apt to describe the “lying flat people”. It literally means “potatoes in the couch”, but it actually refers to “a lazy person who just wants to lie on the couch”.

## 4. Problems of University Students' Translation of Internet Buzzwords

The problems encountered by contemporary college students in translating Internet buzzwords can be divided into two main categories: the basic level and the skill level.

The problems at the basic level refer to the limited ability

of students themselves restricting the translation practice, which is manifested in the lack of their own knowledge reserves, especially vocabulary; the lack of solid basic language skills, which may encounter difficulties in the conversion of language order and grammar in the translation process, and thus are prone to grammatical errors, such as the lack of coherence of translation results, wrong sentences with grammatical mistakes, twisted collocation, ambiguous logic or haphazard translation, etc. These phenomena have certain universality [7]. According to the questionnaire survey of “Survey on College Students' Knowledge of Internet Buzzword Translation Methods and Their Application” conducted in the early stage of the study, among the sample data, 60.75% of the students said that they usually encountered “difficulties in conversion of language order and grammar, and grammatical errors are easy to occur” when translating Internet buzzwords according to their actual situation. This is the largest proportion. Another 54.67% of students reported that they encountered the problem of “lack of relevant English vocabulary”.

The problem at the skill level mainly refers to students' lack of basic theoretical knowledge and skills in translation, and in many cases, they fail to translate faithfully and accurately to express the spiritual connotation of the original words. In the first case, when students translate Internet buzzwords, they may find that although the translation does not contain grammatical errors, it does not read naturally. This situation is common that the translated results do not conform to the English expression habits. According to the questionnaire survey, 52.34% of the students reflected that they encountered the problem of “differences in expression habits” when translating Internet buzzwords. The fundamental reason lies in the existence of cultural differences between Chinese and foreign countries. For example, if the word “dragon” is simply translated as “dragon”, it will cause misunderstanding. Westerners' understanding of “dragon” is very different from Chinese people's. Westerners think “dragon” is the embodiment of evil, while in Chinese people's eyes, “dragon” is a symbol of good luck. Moreover, there are many differences between “龙” and “dragon” in terms of appearance [10]; The second type is that students cannot translate flexibly, but only translate literally - rigidly translating each Chinese word into English vocabulary, ignoring the cultural connotation and resulting in the lack of colorful meaning and rigid translation. For example, “是个狼人” is simply translated as “a wolf man”, and “柠檬精” is directly translated as “a lemon”. In general, such translations make it difficult for Westerners to truly understand the connotation and meaning of the word. In the sample data of the questionnaire survey, 57.01% of the students reflected that they encountered the problem of “not being able to translate flexibly and only translating literally” when translating Internet buzzwords, and 43.46% of the students reflected that they usually had the problem of “easily ignoring the cultural connotation”. 43.46% of the students said that they usually have the problem of “easily ignoring the cultural connotation”. Internet buzzwords are concentrations of hot events in a certain period of time, with strong real-time and cultural connotations. If the translation is only regarded as a vocabulary without understanding its origin and its meaning, the translation result will be very thin and does not have enough cultural supports and cultural communication power. Students usually encounter two types of problems when translating Internet buzzwords: the basic and the skill level.

The problems at the basic level mainly refer to the lack of students' own basic language ability and language accumulation, while the problems at the skill level mainly refer to the weakness of students' translation ability, lack of certain translation skills and cultural literacy, which restrict the realization of “信达雅”.

## **5. Countermeasures for Translation Problems**

### **5.1. Strengthen the learning of basic English knowledge and consolidate the foundation**

In the face of the problem at the basic level - that is, the limited ability of students themselves restricts the translation practice - students should strengthen their learning of basic English knowledge and consolidate the foundation. It is undeniable that some methods and techniques do exist in translation. However, these methods and techniques are based on a solid mastery of basic knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns. Therefore, it is essential to master the relevant basic knowledge of English. In terms of vocabulary, students should pay attention not only to Receptive Vocabulary - the number of words that individuals can understand and read, but also to Productive Vocabulary - the number of words that individuals can speak and write. In the early stages of English learning, students' productive vocabulary accounts for a higher proportion of their receptive vocabulary, but as their receptive vocabulary grows, their productive vocabulary does not grow in the same pace, and the vocabulary they use in written or oral expressions is often the same as the vocabulary they mastered in the early stages. In other words, at higher levels of learning, students' productive vocabulary skills tend to be stagnant at a certain level, which results in the phenomenon of "petrified" productive vocabulary skills[3]. Students can adopt different "memorization strategies", such as describing some life scenes by telling stories, using body movements to memorize vocabulary, sharing knowledge related to the word (near synonyms, antonyms, different forms of the word) with classmates when learning the word, etc. to alleviate the process of "petrification" [8]. In terms of grammatical knowledge, basic grammar, syntactic rules need to be memorized. However, it does not mean that the more grammar books you read, the more grammar rules you remember and the better you translate. It is more important to know how to apply the grammar and syntax rules in practice. Consolidating the basic knowledge, mastering the application of vocabulary, grammatical discernment and the basic rules of syntactic analysis are the important prerequisites for us to carry out the translation work smoothly, improve the translation level and master the translation skills. Therefore, if college students want to do a good job in translating Internet buzzwords, they should firstly strengthen their vocabulary learning and grammar training.

### **5.2. Strengthen cross-cultural knowledge learning and cultivate cross-cultural awareness**

English translation not only lies in the knowledge and understanding of the content, but also requires a deep understanding of the emotions it contains. In the process of translation, students often make the mistake of "Chinese English", expressing the English content in their own

customary way of understanding, which leads to the translation of words that do not make sense but make jokes[12]. "Cross-cultural awareness" is a specific code. In the process of communication, the two parties use different languages and have different national cultures, then they do not use the same code. The code of intercultural awareness can help us to communicate more accurately and to make a deeper cultural communication. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the learning of intercultural knowledge and develop intercultural awareness. Students can develop their intercultural communication skills by exploring the connotation of vocabulary, making generalizations, making analogies, and summarizing the special cultural meanings of Chinese and English words. For example, the Chinese word “牛饮” is translated into English as "drink like a fish" instead of "drink like an ox". For another example, the Chinese word “群” in the following different combinations “一群鸟, 一群蜜蜂, 一群牛” corresponds to the English words "flock, swarm, herd" respectively [11]. The literal meaning of a word in one language may contain multiple literal meanings of the corresponding word in another language. After collecting, generalizing, analogizing and summarizing, students will have a deeper understanding of the cultural connotations of the language and will be able to reduce the occurrence of errors when using it and do a better job of translation, cultural transmission, and communication. In addition, students can read related books, browse related websites, listen to original English songs, watch original English movies and listen to related news to understand the cultural connotation of English, feel the differences between Chinese and English cultural expressions, broaden their horizons, promote their own English cultural literacy, cultivate their own cross-cultural awareness and improve the level of their English translation. Faced with the cultural vocabulary of Internet buzzwords that convey information with flirtation, humor or irony, students can translate them flexibly and convey their original meaning only if they master certain cross-cultural knowledge and cultivate their own cross-cultural awareness.

### **5.3. Strengthen the study of relevant translation knowledge and methods, and flexibly apply translation skills**

Translation is a practical activity, but practice needs theoretical guidance[5]. There are great differences between English and Chinese in terms of vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric, etc. Therefore, when translating between English and Chinese, we are bound to encounter many difficulties and need certain translation knowledge and translation skills as guidance. Translation knowledge and skills can serve as an effective means and a favorable tool to help us reduce the blindness and conformity of practice, make the translation work more smooth, guarantee the quality of translation and improve the standard of translation. Students should read books on translation theories to understand the essence of translation, the situation of dissimilation and naturalization, and other translation theoretical knowledge. In addition, students can try to apply translation theories in practice to become familiar with and proficient in using translation methods and techniques. For example, when students see a beautiful English text in the course of daily self-learning, they can select a classic passage and carry out translation training using different translation methods, compare different translation versions derived from different translation

methods, and apply discursive thinking to appreciate different translation versions. Through this kind of random translation practice on a regular basis, you can derive your own translation methods and techniques from a lot of practice. Mastering translation methods and techniques in practice can promote the improvement of one's own translation thinking and the overall improvement of English translation learning effect. Internet buzzwords are different from standardized texts, and their innovative nature and irregularity of word formation make their translation work difficult. Therefore, college students need to master certain translation knowledge to guide the practice of translating Internet buzzwords.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper explores the characteristics of 2021 Internet buzzwords and their different versions of English translations, focusing on literal translation, paraphrase and recreation, and summarizes, compares and analyzes them, which have certain practical significance for the translation of Internet buzzwords. At the same time, this paper also combines the questionnaire of college students' Internet buzzword translation practice, analyzes the problems of college students in Internet buzzword translation practice and summarizes the corresponding strategies, so as to provide ideas and countermeasures for college students to translate dynamically in the future. Internet buzzwords have the characteristics of timeliness, entertainment and culture, etc. They are a kind of words that reflect people's emotional attitudes, contain different expectations of people's life, convey cultural information and have the significance of specific times and language environment. With the strengthening of China's comprehensive national power and the improvement of its international status, cross-cultural exchanges and cultural exports are becoming more and more frequent. The popularity of Internet buzzwords has become an important opportunity to promote cross-cultural communication, and whether to accurately translate Internet buzzwords has also become the key to cross-cultural communication. Exploring the English translation of Internet buzzwords plays an active role in promoting Chinese culture, telling Chinese stories and explaining national spirits. The essence of the translation of Internet buzzwords is to faithfully express the ideological contents, feelings and styles they contain in another language so that the target readers can clearly understand their connotations. As a cognitive activity, the translation of Internet buzzwords requires the translator's interpretation of the source language and reconstruction of the translated language. Therefore, if college students want to improve their translation quality, they need to strengthen their learning of basic English knowledge, cultivate intercultural communication awareness, master relevant translation knowledge and flexibly apply translation skills. The development of Internet buzzwords is changing rapidly, and the translation knowledge is expanding constantly. The

examples excerpted in this paper, the translation methods involved, and the suggestions provided are not sufficient, and there are still shortcomings that need to be further explored. The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of more authorities and university students in the translation field by studying the English translation of Internet buzzwords, to raise relevant issues, to carry out more practice, to jointly improve the quality of translation, to promote the development of translation, to promote the development of cultural "going out" and cross-cultural communication, to establish cultural confidence, and to contribute to the improvement of national cultural soft power.

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