

# Sociolinguistics Analysis of Internet Language under the Background of New Media

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## Abstract

**Based on this phenomenon that the number of internet users are showing exponential growth, the network language in new media has also shown a rapid expansion trend. At the same time, the Internet language is developing rapidly, gradually becoming a social dialect with a large number of speakers. Under the background of social language environment, as a typical language variant, network language has become a social product. In this situation, network language not only has the characteristics of change, but also has the characteristics of social dialects. Through the analysis of the sociolinguistics of network language, this paper seeks the variant characteristics, attributes and future development laws of network language in the new media environment.**

## Keywords

**Network language; New media platform; Medium; Sociolinguistics.**

## 1. Research Background

### 1.1. Literature Review

Sociolinguistics is formed by sociolinguists exploring the essence and differences of language from different dimensions through multiple methods such as linguistics and sociology. From the division of fields, there are two main types of sociolinguistics. One is the change of language elements caused by the change of social context, that is, the influence of fluctuation of social environment on language factors. The other is the change of language factors caused by the variation of language. Entering the new media era, the form of network language has been widely disseminated through the internet media. At present, many scholars discussed the content of network language from the different perspective of social linguistics. Some scholars pointed out that the emergence of the network language in the internet era has a greater impact on social life. From the perspective of sociolinguistics, network language is formed by the combination of multiple factors of society, which not only has the characteristics of rapid communication, but also has a positive and negative impact on social life. Some scholars took the network users as the research object, systematically expounded the current development of the popular language on the network, and compared the differences between the popular language and the traditional language. It is concluded that only by excavating the connotation meaning of the popular language of the network and integrating this value into the traditional language environment can people play the positive role of the internet meteor language in social life. Based on the theory of sociolinguistics, some scholars have compared the vocabulary variations between the two languages by collecting Chinese and English online corpus, and found out the similarities and differences. The result shows that network language variation is closely related to social culture. After entering the new media era, the social language has

changed greatly, especially under the role of multiple media, the network language has begun to change. From the variation of sociolinguistics linguistics, some scholars pointed out that the new media network language formed by the emergence of new communication media has undergone major changes in the context of language variation. People regard the new media network language as homogenization view gradually dissolved, and gradually explore the practice of different language associations. At present, in the new media era, it is a matter of concern to discuss the characteristic attributes of network language from the sociolinguistics dimension, what laws to follow in the development of network language, and what position it should hold on to this network language.

## 1.2. Purpose of Research

As the product of social progress, network language has gradually become a new communicative language. In the new media environment, network language has a great impact on the traditional language habits and thinking cognition of society. It is the core topic of this paper to analyze the social linguistics of network terms under the new media network environment. At the same time, by analyzing the dimensions of variant sociolinguistics, it is found that the emergence of new media network language as a new communication medium has significant characteristics of the times. Early research on network language is based on emerging language variants. However, with the development of the times, people have gradually realized that although the network language has been updated under the new media communication, but this language variant gradually tends to normalize, and there is no great difference between the traditional language. Based on this circumstances, the homogeneity of new media network language is more serious, and people are beginning to turn to the practice of platform network language users. In addition, network language is a special form of contemporary language organization, bringing together the wisdom and innovation of the public, and relying on the new media context has been rapid development, has a greater impact on many groups in society. In view of this, on the basis of clarifying the concept and characteristics of network language, recognizing the survival state of network language in the era of new media, and analyzing the sociolinguistics of network language with new media as the background are good for finding out the law that network language needs to follow and provide people with certain theoretical reference.

## 2. The Concept and Characteristics of Network Language

Theoretically speaking, there are more definitions about the connotation of network language in academic circles, and a view that network language is a kind of network communication language which is produced in the network and composed of Chinese and English letters, symbols, punctuation, text and pictures. It can be further understood that the network language is generally produced in the Internet environment, is a language used for daily information exchange. At present, the prevalence of network language, not only because of the widespread popularity of the network to provide it with a broad space for development, but also because of its own characteristics and vitality. Combined with the current actual situation, the network language generally has the following characteristics.

### 2.1. Faster Iteration Updates

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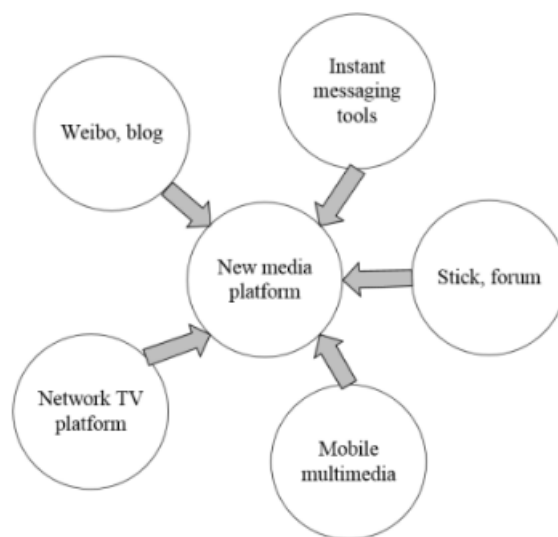


Figure 1: Representation of Network Platform in New Media.

## 2.2. More Abundant Forms of Expressions

People use different symbols on network platforms in different periods, with distinct phase characteristics, and the focus is on the form of use. According to the relevant statistics, before 2010, network users in the blog symbol usage rate, accounting for more than 70% of the total number of the network, and then paste bar, accounting for about 20%, and another 10% of the network language from other platforms. The common network terms of these platforms are composed of text and simple symbols, such as the use of harmonic words, acronyms and other words and simple text symbols. At this stage, the form of network language is relatively single, it can only meet people's simple needs such as communication. Since 2013, WeChat and other new media platforms have emerged, and the form of expressions in internet language has become more abundant. At this time, people gave some dialects, traditional meaning words to a new connotation, made it become a new connotation of the network language.

## 2.3. Innovative Network Language

In the new era, people are more willing to express their emotions through popular words, buzzwords, and witty language because of the richer information. So far, these methods have become an important manifestation that large amounts of information concentrate. In general, network language are innovative, mainly for the following reasons. On the one hand, the number of network names participating in network language has gradually increased, and the sources of innovative forms have become more extensive. With the wide application of internet platform, the people involved in the network tend to be youthful. These young people are more active in their thinking and more innovative, and they have developed new online language that are more time-critical and more acceptable to others. In this way, in order to effectively promote their own network language, people have to enhance the innovation of network language from a new perspective. On the other hand, the material that can be transformed into network language is more extensive. In general, network language materials come from books, daily communication. But under the new media, the network language material can come from dialect expression, movies, other people's small mistakes and so on. These source channels have richer material and more innovative expressions, so people prefer to use it as a web term.

### 3. The Survival State of Network Language in The New Media Age

#### 3.1. Number and Structure of Users

In the new media environment, the scale of Chinese netizens is on the rise, which has laid a user foundation for the generation and development of network language. According to the CNNIC (see figure 2), in terms of internet penetration and the number of users, the total number of internet users in mainland China rose from 298 million in 2008 to 513 million in 2011, and the internet penetration rate rose from 22.6% to 38.3%. Since then, the number of network users and internet penetration in China are on the rise. By 2020, China’s internet population had reached 828 million, with an internet penetration rate of 59.6%. Compared with the 2013 base size data, the number of netizens increased by 1.8 and the internet penetration rate increased by 3.8%. Further analysis of the user’s age structure shows that, based on 2010 data, the number of internet users aged 18-24 is the highest, and the number of internet users aged 30 and over is the lowest. By 2020, the age structure of Chinese netizens as a whole is expanding. Among them, 20-30 years old netizens accounted for about 20% of the total number of people, 31-45 years old accounted for about 21%. Overall, the age of Chinese netizens has risen over the past eight years and has maintained a high growth rate. In terms of academic qualifications, in 2015, internet penetration among people with tertiary education and above grew rapidly, while internet penetration among people with primary education and below was generally lower. In terms of professional structure, the three groups of freelancers, students and enterprises account for 16%, 30% and 8.7% of the total number of netizens respectively. From the above data, it can see that the user base of network term survival has taken shape.

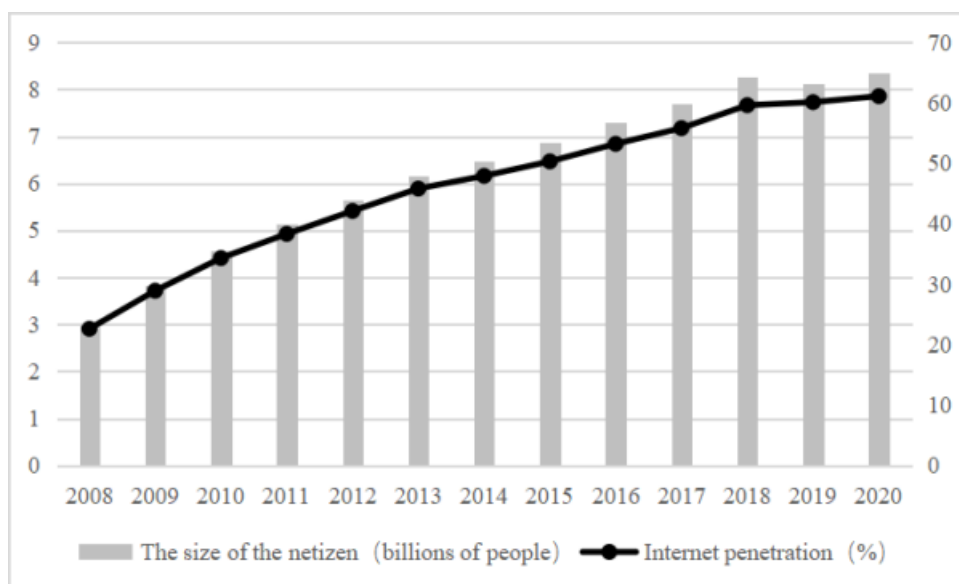


Figure 2: The Scale of China’s Internet Users and Internet Penetration. The source of the data: China Internet Information Center (CNNIC)

#### 3.2. Support and Opposition of Users

From the reality, in the new media environment, the usage frequency of Chinese network language is higher, which brings about certain social problems. In this case, the mainstream opinion on the use of network terms appear two views, namely partial support, partial opposition or resistance. A mainstream opinion questioned the rationality of the use of internet terms and raised objections accordingly. Some professionals have suggested that people do not regulate the use of network language phenomenon more and more serious, this phenomenon into the campus will lead to teachers, students, parents face a lot of confusion, is not conducive

to the overall quality of teaching. For this reason, these scholars propose to prohibit the use of online language in the composition of elementary and middle schools. At the same time, the college entrance examination scoring experts also advise candidates to use less or not use online language in the college entrance examination composition through the media platform. Another mainstream view is that network language can reflect a sense of innovation and help people improve their ability to innovate, so this group has an understanding and inclusive attitude towards network language. Some scholars have pointed out that in the new media environment, people can use network terms to expand their communication, help maintain interpersonal relationships, and improve their cognitive level. Therefore, in the new media environment, people should treat online language with a positive, pragmatic, and open attitude.

### 3.3. Expressed Willingness of Users

In the new media era, different social users have different degrees of willingness to express their desire for network language, as detailed in figure 3. In reality, many social users say they can use network language if they know someone, but use them very rarely with strangers. Some users also said that in the new media platform, they can communicate with strangers through the network language, and the communication effect is better. However, both between people and strangers, male users are more active in the use of network language, while female users use network terms less frequently. At the same time, about 67.1% of users are happy to use network language for strangers, and about 30% are happy to use network language for relatives and friends. Through analyzing the reasons behind this phenomenon, it can be found that because each person’s experience is different, their willingness to express network language is also different. Further analysis shows that in the new media social environment, some users consider using network terms very little based on multiple factors, and they think that using network language will have different degrees of problems. In contrast, some users are happy to use web terms and say they can make more friends and expand relationships through network language.

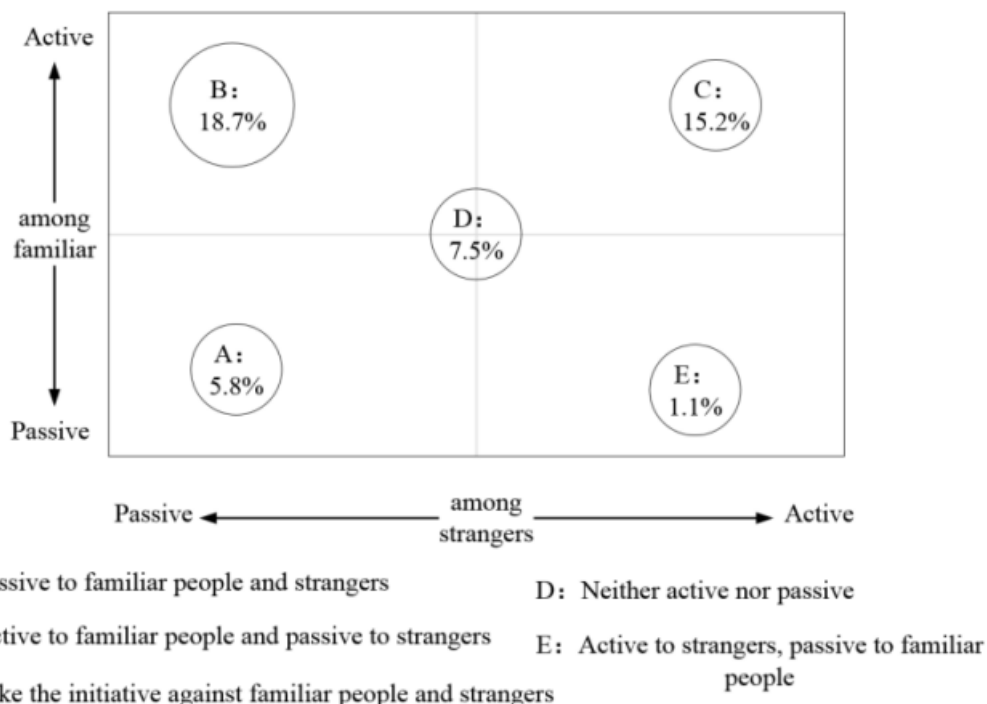


Figure 3: Distribution of the Population in Which the User Expresses Their Wishes.

## 4. Sociolinguistics Analysis of Network Language in New Media

### 4.1. Social Product of Materialization

Generally speaking, as a product of human society, language is produced with the needs of society. And with the continuous change of society, the degree of language expression is further improved. Because of this, under the virtual network space, language has become an effective tool for human communication. In essence, interpersonal relationships in virtual cyberspace are still a kind of real social relations. Therefore, the new media as a concrete manifestation of virtual cyberspace, acts as a communication tool in this social relationship. Under this platform, based on the needs of social interaction, language form, content, expression of a greater degree of change. In order to adapt to the changes in this situation, the new media began to gradually with witty, funny, entertainment and other content filled with related materials. In other words, language does not exist independently, but is a form of social activity. In this case, in order to achieve its own needs, social groups update and optimize this communication tools at any time. Therefore, in the new media environment, in order to meet the communication needs in the virtual network, people gradually innovate network language and spread it through multiple media. It can be said that the network language is a kind of social product in the new media environment.

### 4.2. Variation of Social Language

There are great differences between language and human social characteristics, and there are different situations with the social environment at that time. In different situations, people use different language variants for different purposes. Among them, network language is a social language variant produced in the new media environment. When social life changes, network language as a more common phenomenon will appear in the process of people's communication. At the same time, network language, as a tool of social communication, has undergone major changes along with social progress. In this case, the new media provides a comprehensive environment for network language optimization and innovation. From the point of view of sociolinguistics, the structure of language is not eternal. Similarly, network terms can mutate by a certain amount as the new media environment changes. This phenomenon of variation will co-live with the new media for a certain period of time. In recent years, as new media has gradually become an indispensable part of social life, the style of social life has been greatly changed. This change naturally leads to a great change in network language, which is reflected in semantics and content form.

### 4.3. Variable Feature

Since the development of new media, network language has gone through several stages of development. At the same time, in the process of self-media dissemination, network language mainly presents the characteristics of "fragmentation", which is manifested in various forms but unstable, volatile and lack of system. For a long time, online languages have had many negative effects due to the above characteristics. In other words, some web language content does not conform to some principles in sociolinguistics, and there is a certain conflict with social mainstream value orientation. In this case, the negative Internet language quickly disappeared in the new media environment. With the optimization of the network environment, the degree of network language involvement in life continues to increase, and the number of users in the group is gradually expanding, making the network language present a certain degree of integrity and independence. In this case, the sociality of online language is stronger and it is more in line with the current mainstream thinking. Therefore, people also agree more with some online languages. Moreover, under the spread of new media, online language will play a greater role.

#### 4.4. Social Dialect Characteristics

As far as the new media era is concerned, with the rapid development of media, the phenomenon of language differentiation is extremely significant. In this situation, network language has formed from language differentiation and has a certain degree of impact on society. From the perspective of sociological language, the reason for language differentiation is that people who use the same language have generated relatively isolated groups internally, and these groups have gradually formed regional dialects. If the relative isolation is affected by geographic area, then this online language is a regional dialect. If the relative isolation is caused by social factors, then this online dialect is a social dialect. In the current new media environment, online language users are more widely used and the frequency of daily use is gradually increasing, which makes online social dialects have their own characteristics in terms of grammar and semantics.

#### 5. Conclusion

In the new media environment, the emergence of network language conforms to the general law of sociolinguistics theory, and has important value of the times. In this case, people should face up to the network language in a kind way. As far as reality is concerned, the bilingual phenomenon in network language is more prominent, among which the introduction of English vocabulary is an important manifestation. In view of this, many scholars have questioned this, fearing that this phenomenon will affect the purity of online language. However, from the other perspective, the social role of network language is more prominent in the new media environment, and will be automatically screened and eliminated under the influence of social laws. Therefore, the existing research needs to fully apply sociolinguistics to explain the network language, and to provide targeted countermeasures for its future direction.

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