

INTERNET DISCOURSE IN CHINESE ON-LINE SLANG

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It's hard to overestimate the value of Internet communication in modern China, which is connected to a current political and social situation in the country. A very simple and accessible opportunity to see people's opinions and ideas from all over the world is the reason why 250 million Chinese are sinking in the global web these days.

'Online boards' in Chinese universities have served as the most widespread means of intellectual communications in China. Now almost every big company, mass media, web-resource and other types of access to information are already using this system of information exchange. Every single day online boards are refilled with approximately 10 million comments and new messages. This type of communication failed capturing popularity in Western countries, but prospered in China. Due to ease of usage blogging became popular, which indicates the growing number of amount of blogs that most of big companies obtain today. The popularity is easy to explain: the reviews that services and products of all spheres get are mostly anonymous, meaning that most of them are honest. That's what drove a lot of attention of customers at the first place. Chinese blogging already became an essential part of commerce and everyday life.

As some researches claim, Chinese Internet not only became an opportunity for people to get the information and communication they need, but at some point turned into a predator, hunting down and exposing Chinese corruption 腐败 [fǔbài] and crimes 罪恶 [zuì'è]. These type of Internet "society" has its own name now 晒黑族 [shaihēi zú]. Chinese freedom of speech has been rudimentary: although it was claimed to be able to share personal opinions, in reality it could be strictly punished. Meanwhile suppressed Chinese freedom of speech managed to find a way to present itself online in a form of anonymous communication. Since then Chinese Internet became a so called 'homemade judge' – filled the gaps in revealing prejudices, mistreating and crimes. One can hardly miss on reports of corrupted officials, unsolved crimes and personal tragedies. Online communication helped to find a way to deal with external and internal problems lots of people had.

In such conditions 普通话 [pǔtōnghuà] Mandarin formed a new brunch of discourse mainly used in online environment. The speech of a modern society dedicating much time to the online life has changed drastically. Modern online language gained next features:

1. Diffusive usage of English and Chinese language units:

女GF = 女朋友[nǚ péngyou] = girlfriend; 装B [zhuāng] = 'poser'; A片 [piān] means 'adult movie'; Hard模式 = Hard Mode; HOLD不住 (stands for 忍不住) = 'can't take it anymore'; OUT in你太OUT了 means 'not understand'; P民 = 屁民 [pì mín] literally 'shitizen', means 'regular people', 'sitizens'.

2. Chinese transcription 拼音 [pīnyīn]:

TMD = 他妈的; JP = 极品 [jípǐn] ‘someone with a very bad character’; LB = 篱笆 [líba] used to replace the full name of a forum, hosted for attractive women searching for men. Now LB refers to girls who are only materialistically interested in the opposite sex; BC = 白痴 [báichī] refers to an ‘idiot’ (全家都是白痴 – The whole family are idiots); SL = 色狼 [sèláng] or ‘pervert’; BT = 变态 [biàntài] also means ‘pervert’; BZ = 版主 [bǎnzhǔ] = moderator; CN = 处女 [chǔnǚ] = virgin girl; FL = 发廊 [fāláng] = ‘hairdressers’ (usually stands for a brothel); FZL = 非主流 [fēizhǔliú] = ‘not mainstream’.

3. Gaining additional meaning of characters:

恐龙 [kǒnglóng] ‘dinosaur’ = ugly girl; 河蟹 [héxiè] ‘river crab’ is alternative to 和谐 [héxié] ‘harmony’. Is commonly used to avoid possible censorship while mocking Chinese Governmental policy of "harmonious society". 功夫网 [gōngfu wǎng] literally ‘kung fu Web’, but as with "river crab," mentions of kung fu in blog posts often refer to censorship. You’ll notice that the pinyin [gōngfu wǎng] starts with g, f, and w. GFW is the abbreviation for the Great Firewall. 草泥马 [cǎonímǎ] is another great example of avoiding being caught for criticizing own government. Literally means ‘grass mud horse’ which is used as a substitute for 你妈 [nǐ mā], to mock or avoid censorship on the Internet; 被自杀 [bèi zìshā] means ‘being forced to commit suicide’; 菜鸟 [càiniǎo] = newbie; 海龟 [hǎiguī] literally ‘sea turtle’, but means ‘people who graduated in Western countries and returned back to China’ (归 (return) and 龟 (turtle) pronounce same way in Chinese); 菊花 [júhuā] literally ‘chrysanthemum’ but gained additional meaning of ‘jerk’.

4. Combination of English and Chinese words:

我I你 = 我爱你 [wǒ ài nǐ] = ‘I love you’; 傻B [shǎ] = ‘someone stupid’; 3Q = 三Q [sān] = ‘Thank you’.

5. Combination of numbers:

51201314 = 我爱你一生一世 [wǒ ài nǐ yīshēngyīshì] = ‘I love you all my life’; 94 = 就是 [jiùshì] = ‘I agree’, ‘OK’; 88 = 拜拜 [báibái] = goodbye; 8147 = 不要生气 [bùyào shēngqì] = ‘don’t get angry’; 360 = 想念你 [xiǎngniàn nǐ] = ‘I miss you’; 246 = 饿死了 [èsǐle] = ‘Very hungry’; 286 means ‘out fashioned’; 7456 = 气死我了 [qìsǐ wǒle] = ‘Very angry’.

6. New words originated to serve special functions:

五毛党 [wǔmáodǎng] ‘50 cent party’ are Internet commentators (网络评论员) hired by the government of the People's Republic of China (both local and central) or the Communist Party to post comments favorable towards party policies in an attempt to shape and sway public opinion on various Internet message boards. 人肉搜索 [rénròu sōusuǒ] is the Chinese terminology for the phenomenon of distributed researching using Internet media such as blogs and forums. It is similar to the concept of "doxing", a practice often associated with Anonymous. 树洞贴 [shùdòng tiē]

Literally ‘tree-hole post’. The Wong Kar Wai movie *In the Mood for Love* closes with the protagonist traveling to the remains of an ancient temple in Cambodia, finding a small hole among the ruins, and whispering into it. The scene is based on a (perhaps made-up) saying that in the past, people would find a small hole in a tree, hide a secret in it, and then seal the hole with mud, to be kept hidden forever. In online parlance, 树洞贴 refers to a popular trend of posting secrets anonymously on the Internet—anything ranging from one’s salary to marital problems and beyond. People who do this are called 晒密族 [shàimì zú], literally ‘secret revealers’ or 晒客族 [shàikè zú], literally ‘information exhibitionists’. 打酱油 [dǎ jiàngyóu] literally ‘to buy soy sauce’, also means ‘it’s none of my business’, ‘I’m just here to buy some soy sauce’; 不能我一个人瞎 [bùnéng wǒ yīgèrén xiā] = ‘Can’t get blind alone’, means to want to share something interesting online.

7. Abbreviations:

GL = girl love; BL = boy love = 玻璃[bōli] (literally means ‘glass’, but refers to boy love because of the abbreviation); TAXI = 太可惜 [tài kěxī] ‘very sorry’; BS usually stands for English ‘bullshit’ and at the same time is the abbreviation for Chinese ‘despise’ 鄙视 [bǐshì]; PP = 飘飘 ‘cute’ = 片片 ‘picture’ = 屁屁 ‘ass’; ML = make love (doesn’t; have an equivalent in Chinese); CCAV = CCTV = China Central Adult Video = China Central Television.

It’s obvious now that Chinese online communication is only available for those who understand the terms used in their slang. The homonymy of the language and ease of adjusting it to the social and political circumstances created modern speech in China. The speech filled with pervert meanings and jokes, but psychologically free from borders imposed by the government and historically formed restrictions. Young people have their own freedom of speech applicable only in online society, the way of communicating only 网友 can appreciate. A so-called “secret society” of modern language.

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