

The Phenomenon of Identity Tagging Derived from Internet Slang and Its Social Bullying Effect: From the Perspective of Sociolinguistics

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Abstract. Internet memes, as a by-product phenomenon of the Internet era, can well reflect the psychology of the people and the social and cultural ecology. Numerous earlier studies have examined Internet slang from the standpoints of rhetoric, social impact, semantic formation and structure, etc. Identity tagging derived from Internet slang and its social bullying effect has been a heated phenomenon from the perspective of sociolinguistics. This paper focuses on terms formed from Internet meme words as identity labels based on the research findings mentioned above. using techniques like qualitative interview analysis and word meaning description in conjunction with ideas like metaphor, critical discourse analysis, and semantic degradation. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the derivative path from Internet memes to identity tags and the phenomenon of social bullying, which will be useful for building recognition, distinguish groups, and gain popularity. The identity labels derived from this, while building a certain group, have also triggered some social bullying effects.

Keywords: Internet memes, Identity tags, Critical discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Internet slang is an inevitable product of the information age and the popularization of the Internet. This product has a positive effect on enriching the vocabulary of the language it belongs to and has even given rise to online language styles. However, due to the Internet's pursuit of fluent topics, Internet slang, under the joint influence of creators and users, has gradually transformed from an Therefore, Internet slang has increasingly become an important mechanism for constructing public opinion hotspots and public issues [1].

2. Research method

2.1. Case collection

This section collects popular meme words from mainstream online platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo, and describes their evolution paths from the perspectives of semantics and

conversational meanings, as well as the groups they represent and the bullying phenomena they trigger.

2.1.1. Regarding personal traits

In terms of personal traits, it includes some examples such as Puxin male/Female, Love brain and Phonenix Male, etc: 1)Puxin male/Female: Originally, it was used to describe those men or women with ordinary conditions but who feel extremely good about themselves. From teasing a certain kind of arrogant mentality to generalizing it into a comprehensive denial and humiliation of the confidence that ordinary people display in marriage, love and social interactions, it is easy to become a convenient label for attacking others; 2) The term "love brain" refers to the condition of being unduly committed to a relationship and losing one's capacity for independent thought. Nowadays, what should have been a gentle reminder is frequently misused to denigrate and mock the person who truly contributes in a close relationship, stigmatizing intense affection; 3) Phoenix Male/Female: It primarily refers to those who have relocated from rural or small communities to large cities and established themselves there through personal initiative. Stereotypical labels that are used for personality denial and background discrimination include "calculating," "narrow-minded values," and "a burden from the original family"; 4) Factory girls: Originally used to describe young ladies employed in factories. The term is expanded to refer to women at the bottom of society with a relatively low educational level.

2.1.2. Associated physiological characteristics

Regarding associated physiological characteristics, there are some terms like supermale, Tang People, Tank Weapons, etc: 1) supermale: A medical term originally related to men, describing chromosomal abnormalities (XYY syndrome). When taken beyond of its medical context, term has been misused to disparage the personalities of people (including women) who are deemed "strong-willed and not to be trivialized," as in the case of the "Kunming Super Xiong Old Lady"; 2) Tang People In ancient China, the phrase "Chinatown" was used to refer to both Chinese people and the Chinese population living abroad. It had no negative connotations. It has been maliciously misrepresented in some online groups in recent years, and it is now a derogatory phrase used to make fun of those who have sluggish reflexes and low IQ. It has even been forcibly linked to "Down syndrome," a severely derogatory term that has been employed as a bullying tactic in educational institutions; 3) Tank Weapons: In Internet language, it is used as a malicious term for people who are overweight, which is a direct form of physical humiliation and body bullying.

2.1.3. Associated material conditions

There are two terms in terms of associated material conditions: 1) Android people/Apple people:The remarks made by the Internet celebrity "Hu Chenfeng" oppose those who use Apple products to those who use Android and other domestic brands. By categorizing and grading consumer brands, using "Apple people" to represent high-end and success, and "Android people" to label the lower class and cheapness, and even extending to terms like "Android education", they incite opposition and discrimination; 2) Debutante: Originally, it referred to a famous beauty or a lady from a noble family. Later, due to social news reports that some women forged their identities as socialites and used them to commit fraud, the term "socialite" gradually changed from a positive term to a derogatory one for women who committed fraud.

2.1.4. Originated from internet memes

Three terms that originated from Internet memes are: 1)Chicken brother: The phrase "Chicken, you're so beautiful" originated from the song "Just Because You're So Beautiful" by the celebrity CAI Xukun and later became a representative meme that maliciously ridiculed him. In reality, students whose names contain the character "Kun" are often given the nickname "Chicken Brother" by their classmates or those who like the star CAI Xukun, suffering continuous ridicule and isolation, which leads to psychological trauma. How can Internet memes be directly transformed into offline bullying tools; 2)Dingzhen: Later, he magnified his lack of understanding of the language in the Chinese language environment to describe someone with low intelligence; 3)Paratrooper: Originally a respectful title for the brave airborne troops, it has been widely used as a homophonic abbreviation due to its resemblance to the pinyin abbreviation of a certain uncivilized word, stigmatizing the glorious profession of "paratrooper."

2.2. Interview

Based on the aforementioned terms, interviews were created with college students and teachers between the ages of 18 and 22 as the primary target audience. In the age of digital media, college students born between the ages of 18 and 22 are frequently considered digital natives. They show clear signs of digitality, inventiveness, and initiative when expressing their emotions [2]. Investigating them can therefore accurately reflect the sentiments of Internet users. Teachers are also frequently seen as having the ability to assist students and even society in avoiding "Internet slang." If educators are to fulfill this duty, they must first possess keen insight, be able to see past the apparent "fun" of Internet jargon, and recognize their inherent risks [3]. Therefore, the key issue for teachers lies in whether they can be aware of the labeling and potential bullying behind Internet memes.

The following are the interview questions:

1) Background issues

Please briefly introduce your professional/teaching field and daily learning or working environment. Have you ever seen identity labels like "small-town problem solver", "top student/underachiever", or "Apple user/Android user" in your social circle? Could you provide examples?

How do you understand the phenomenon of "linguistically derived identity labels" (the phenomenon of categorizing groups by language vocabulary)? Do you think these labels are neutral, positive or negative? Why?

2) Individual experience and social effect of labels

Have you ever been labeled by others (e.g., based on your profession, gender, or spending habits)? If so, how has that label affected your self-perception or behavior? (For example, have you ever felt stressed, discriminated against, or reinforced your identity because of that label?)

Have you observed instances of social bullying (such as exclusion, mockery, or resource allocation) caused by identity labels in campus or social environments? Please describe a specific case and analyze the role of labels in it.

What do you think is the relationship between the spread of identity tags and the algorithmic recommendation mechanisms of social media (such as Weibo, TikTok)? Does the online environment strengthen or weaken the bullying effect of tags?

For teachers:

As an educator, have you noticed bullying among students caused by labels? Does the school have policies to deal with it?

Do you think interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g. linguistics and sociology) can help us understand the label phenomenon more comprehensively? Why?

The study discovered that both sides typically acknowledge that online identification tags are a "double-edged sword" through simulated conversations with student and teacher groups. Its positive importance is that it can act as a quick coagulant for social currency and a sense of belonging to the group (for example, in the context of academic competition, the term "top student" is occasionally associated with hesitant admiration rather than being wholly disparaging). The simplifying and solidification effect of labels, which serves as the catalyst for social bullying, is a more significant problem. At the same time, because of this identity tags bullying often wrapped in humor, entertainment joke, lead to education, guide, demonstration should have the function of the sensitivity of the teacher group to identity bullying is reduced, and even itself is also involved.

3. Results

3.1. The generation of bullying: from "convenient classification" to "violent classification"

The interview found that the usage scenarios of these words do not always start with malice. The student body generally acknowledges that the initial use of labels (such as "socially anxious" and "Buddhist-like") was mostly for a convenient cognitive classification, which conforms to the need of individuals in social identity theory to simplify social cognition through classification. However, when labels are detached from specific contexts and abstracted as the sole criterion for judging individuals, convenient categorization slides into violent categorization [4].

3.2. Intensification of bullying: algorithmic recommendation and the formation of "pseudo-tribes"

Most of the interviewed students and teachers pointed out that the algorithmic recommendation mechanism of social media is an amplifier of tag bullying. The platform algorithm tends to push controversial and opposing content. Once labeled discussions about "Puxin men/women" and "Apple fans/Android fans" emerge, the algorithm will constantly push extreme views to users, intensifying the echo wall effect and group polarization.

Student experience: Students describe that once they express their stance on a certain topic, the information flow will be filled with similar viewpoints, and those with different opinions will be labeled as "opponents", thus compressing the space for rational discussion. They found themselves unconsciously joining a "pseudo-tribe" - a highly emotional temporary group based on a single label (such as consumer brands, entertainment preferences) rather than deep interaction, whose internal cohesion is built on the common belittlement of other groups.

3.3. The adult world is less sensitive to bullying

Teachers and parents are unable to tell whether the usage of similar terms by students or teens constitutes bullying because many words have developed from the original jokes or classifications previously discussed into label-like bullying. Adults are less sensitive to bullying conduct, even as a result of long-term label-like communication. For example, folks use phrases like "Android thinking" and "Apple thinking" when discussing whether to buy an electric automobile or a gasoline-powered one during interviews. Even though these are meant to be humorous, the social

labeling associated with them will eventually permeate people's thoughts, making them less sensitive to categorization and labeling.

4. Discourse analysis conclusion

Discourse "has never been merely a static textual structure", and the changes in discourse represent the intrinsic transformation of society and culture. Famous British scholar Norman phil krogh has proposed critical discourse analysis, points out that existence of the dialectical relationship between "social discourse -" : on the one hand, discourse by the factors such as social structure, social situation shape, and is subject to the social structure; On the other hand, social identity, social relations, knowledge and belief systems can, under the social construction based on discourse, promote the shaping of social structure in a reverse way

4.1. Shortcuts to social classification

These Internet buzzwords have progressively changed from distinct themes discussed within a particular community to those within isolated groups, where individuals who share similar beliefs mostly interact with one another. In the end, complex people are reduced to one-dimensional identity tag phrases, such their place of origin (such as "Phoenix Man") [5].The lines between "my group" (the inner group) and "other groups" (the outer group) are brutally drawn. For example, the separation of "Apple people/Android people" uses consumer brands to create a virtual group antagonism and hierarchical order.

4.2. Metaphor and materialization

Many labels simplify people to a single, negative trait through metaphor. The "tank" materializes the bulky as a cumbersome weapon, the "Phoenix Man" uses mythological animals as a metaphor for a seemingly "overstepping" of one's own social class, and the "factory girl" directly binds an individual's identity to her occupation, erasing her richness as an independent individual. The core of this metaphor is to deprive people of their complexity and pave the way for labeling and stigmatization [6].

4.3. Semantic degradation and misinterpretation

A large number of tags have undergone severe semantic degradation. For instance, the term "paratrooper" has been downgraded from a glorious professional title to a homophone of foul language. The term "Tang people" has been misinterpreted from a glorious national symbol to an intellectual insult. "Super Male" has been stripped of its context from a medical term and has become a pure tool for personal insult. For example, the term "super male" used to refer exclusively to men in the medical field, but it is now used to describe women. This process is a form of symbolic violence in which the previous neutral or positive meanings are violently removed and replaced with negative implications [7]. Binary opposition and simple classification: all these labels are used in the service of binary opposition and simple categorization of thinking, with "man's faith" and "love" brain labels taking the place of each person's in-depth comprehension, which is supported by "we" and "their" binary logic. Consumer brands even more overtly categorize "Apple people/Android people" in order to create virtual opposing factions. And a lot of women a woman of good words, gradually become popular and even be derogatory sense. For example: "beauties" of the famous beauties of the original point, noble family. Later, due to social news reports that some

women forged their identities as socialites and used them to commit fraud, the term "socialite" gradually changed from a positive term to a derogatory one for women who committed fraud [8].

4.4. Generation and appropriation of discourse

Most Internet buzzwords initially appear in the specific speech behaviors of a few individuals (or groups). Their form-meaning pairing gradually stabilizes during the subsequent high-frequency usage process and is continuously applied to new cognitive domains, thereby achieving semantic and pragmatic expansion [9]. These labels have a variety of origins. While some are generalizations of societal phenomena (like "Phoenix Man"), others are produced internally within online subcultural communities (for example, "Chicken Brother" came from certain fan networks and the "gichu" culture). However, the crucial issue is that they are appropriated by other groups in new cognitive domains once they are consistently utilized within one group. Their meanings are frequently warped and generalized, turning from particular allusions into easily replicable weapons. The target groups are offended and insulted by such tag-like terms on the Internet, which ultimately jeopardize ethnic solidarity and national unity by misrepresenting and abusing their language [10].

4.5. Unequal distribution of discourse power

In the practice of labeling discourse, there exists obvious inequality of power. The labelers (often the dominant group in online discourse) impose their own evaluation criteria on the labeled journalists (the disadvantaged group) through the right to name. For instance, in the case of "Ding Zhen", the group that holds the mainstream cultural capital and discourse power maintained their superior position in the intellectual class by mocking his "Chinese language proficiency".

5. Conclusion

The explosive emergence of these labels is not accidental but a reflection of the structural pressure during a specific social transformation period. Behind labels like "Phoenix Man" and "Factory Girl" lies the anxiety and discrimination brought about by the urban-rural disparity and the solidification of social classes. The phrases "love brains" and "common trust men" are strongly associated with the tensions and disputes brought about by the shifting patterns of intimate relationships and gender roles. The phrase "Android people/Apple people" aptly captures the identity problem and worship of symbols that characterize consumerism. As a discourse activity, labeling is frequently used to uphold the current power structure. By attributing complex social issues (like unequal resource distribution) to a particular group (like the "calculation" of the "phoenix man") or individual misfortunes (like emotional setbacks) to personal traits (like the "love brain"), it shifts the criticism of structural problems and maintains an unequal order. At the same time, it may also be used by certain groups as a weapon to challenge others.

The above investigation reveals that identity-labeled Internet memes have widely entered People's Daily Communication. Whether it is the group aged 18 to 22 or teachers with certain educational guiding roles, they have all reduced their sensitivity to such words in the process of long-term contact and use. Therefore, this study holds that it is unrealistic to completely prevent the emergence of these words. However, the platform should be more cautious in algorithmic push and enhance its sensitivity to the evolution of new words and buzzwords.

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