



# A Study of Disease Metaphors in Network Language

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**Abstract.** With the development of the Internet, the use of language is more and more diversified and vivid. But at the same time, there are also a lot of violent network languages, some of which use the metaphor of disease. Disease is a physiological phenomenon, but the use of these metaphors of diseases covers a layer of emotional attitude. Moreover, disease metaphors in the violent network language express disgust, abandon, contempt and many other negative emotions. This may produce bad effect on other people's psychology. So we should be careful with these metaphors, and don't make language become violence.

**Keywords:** network language; disease metaphors; language violence

## 1 Introduction

The development of the Internet and the rise of various social ways have promoted and enriched the communication between each other, stimulated the emergence of various network languages, and made the expression more interesting, lively and concise. However, at the same time, the unfettered network environment gives netizens too much tolerance, and the anonymous network communication features facilitate netizens to speak freely, which ultimately results in the frequent occurrence and repeated use of various violent languages on the network. In particular, new media platforms such as Weibo, which have a high degree of participation, involve a wide range of people and speak freely, are almost the source and common place of various novel and specific network language patterns. On these platforms, it is not difficult to find that there are many violent words in various new network languages created with the development of The Times. It contains some disease metaphors such as "xx cancer" and "xx essence".

Disease is a physiological phenomenon that should not have personal feelings. Once it is connected with metaphor and given a metaphorical meaning, it becomes less objective and always contains a variety of emotions and attitudes of people, because metaphor is not only a rhetoric, but is closely related to cognition. As Wang Yin (2007) mentioned in *Cognitive Linguistics*, "Metaphor originates from cognition, is the result of cognition, and at the same time promotes the development of cognition"<sup>[1]</sup>. At the same time, cognition is bound to be inseparable from emotion. Therefore, the use of some disease metaphors has become a kind of moral criticism, especially the disease metaphors in the language of cyber violence. It also expresses feelings of disgust and contempt for others. It can be said that some disease metaphors are violent language.

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From the perspective of metaphorical cognition, combined with the characteristics of violent language, this paper analyzes the disease metaphor in cyber violence language, which reflects people's views on disease and the harm of these languages to the victims, reminding us to treat the disease correctly, pay attention to the use of language, and purify the Internet environment.

## 2 Internet Violence Language

With the development of network, network language has become a topic worthy of attention and research. Previous studies have shown that there are generally two ways to define network language: broad and narrow. In a broad sense, network language refers to some special terms in the field of network. It is a language related to network in the network era, and the network carrier of network language is its emphasis. In the narrow sense, network language refers to the widely popular improvised language among Internet users in the network world, especially the popular network media language such as Wechat, Weibo platform, Blog, Forum, Chat room and QQ in recent years. [2] This paper mainly discusses network language in the narrow sense.

Everything has two sides, and network language is no exception. In addition to a lot of playful, vivid expression, there are some languages with violent tendencies. Research in Western countries generally believes that violence does not always have to mean physical violence, it can be expressed in various forms, can be expressed in words to hurt a person's feelings and dignity. "So-called 'verbal violence' is the use of spoken or written language and is associated with verbal violence." [3] Therefore, even though verbal violence does not seem to cause direct damage to others, the psychological damage it causes is more serious.

This paper mainly discusses the Internet buzzwords with violent tendencies, "directly or indirectly using language to abuse, slander, contempt, ridicule and so on, so that others' personal dignity, spiritual world and mental health are violated and damaged." [4] The emergence of network buzzwords has injected fresh blood into Chinese that meets the development requirements of The Times and won the favor of many netizens and media. More and more people have even expanded the use of these languages from the Internet to real life. However, in these languages, there are some words that can be called violent, and many of the expressions of disease metaphors seem to be jokes or jokes, but actually contain attitudes such as disgust, ridicule, dissatisfaction, contempt for others, and even become a moral criticism, which is easy to cause unimaginable psychological damage.

## 3 Disease Metaphor

Metaphor is not just a rhetorical device to add color to language, but also a way of thinking and cognition. Lakoff and Johnson emphasize the cognitive role of metaphor in *Metaphors We Live By*: "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action." [5] Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. And in our thoughts and action. Because when we know a

new thing or a new concept, we often rely on the existing knowledge system in cognition, a thing or concept that we are already familiar with, and match the similarities between them through association, so as to realize and understand the characteristics of the new conceptual system. This cognitive process is realized through metaphor. "It's about mapping a well-defined origin domain to a less well-defined destination domain in a conventional way."<sup>[6]</sup> However, it is precisely because the cognitive process of this metaphor is full of subjectivity, so some metaphors are brought with strong emotional colors by users to express certain emotions to metaphorical objects.

In the disease metaphor, physical illness is forcibly assigned to mental attitudes. "Disease metaphor" comes from the Metaphor of Disease<sup>[7]</sup>, which pointed out that the metaphor of disease is the social stress with some symbolic meaning outside the disease, and the metaphorical exaggeration distorts the disease itself and prevents patients from seeking treatment. American writer Susan Sontag, known as "the conscience of the American public", has a wide influence on the Metaphor of Illness as a classic work of social criticism.<sup>[8]</sup> Susan Sontag pays attention to the world as it is, interprets and restores the essence of things. In the book "Disease Metaphor", the author discusses "physical disease" and "the attitude of the world" at great length, emphasizing that disease is only a disease of medical concept and cannot be endowed with human subjective thinking concepts, and calls for disease to be liberated from the shackles of human subjective metaphorical meaning, remove the metaphorical cloak of disease, and restore the true face of disease.<sup>[7]</sup> In the disease metaphor, physical illness is forcibly assigned to mental attitudes. "Disease metaphor" comes from the Metaphor of Disease, which pointed out that the metaphor of disease is the social stress with some symbolic meaning outside the disease, and the metaphorical exaggeration distorts the disease itself and prevents patients from seeking treatment. American writer Susan Sontag, known as "the conscience of the American public", has a wide influence on the Metaphor of Illness as a classic work of social criticism.<sup>[8]</sup> Susan Sontag pays attention to the world as it is, interprets and restores the essence of things. In the book "Disease Metaphor", the author discusses "physical disease" and "the attitude of the world" at great length, emphasizing that disease is only a disease of medical concept and cannot be endowed with human subjective thinking concepts, and calls for disease to be liberated from the shackles of human subjective metaphorical meaning, remove the metaphorical cloak of disease, and restore the true face of disease.

Sontag sought to remove the many "meanings" attached to illness, arguing that "nothing is more punitive than to assign a meaning to an illness - meaning that is invariably moral." Any serious illness with no known cause and no cure is full of meaning. In the first place, all the things that the heart fears (corruption, corruption, pollution, abnormality, weakness) are all equated with disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Secondly, in the name of illness, this fear is transferred to something else." Many of the causes of their own incurable or infectious and people are disgusted, this is a normal reaction, but we should not bring this attitude to patients with these diseases, so that patients have to endure the pain and suffering of the disease, but also bear the unreasonable and heartless aversion from the outside society, and even have their own disgust. It is very detrimental to the treatment and rehabilitation of the disease and the mental health of the patient.

In many kinds of diseases, such as cancer, AIDS, infectious diseases, etc., it has been given a very strong metaphorical color, people's fear, aversion, aversion and other heavy pressure on the patient, whether intentionally or unintentionally, more or less patients will have differential treatment, so that patients bear greater pressure. Yi Yao, the heroine of the movie "Sad Current into the River", got a sexually transmitted disease that was hated by people. Yi Yao's mother is a massage woman, so many massage people come to the home every day. Because they misused Yi Yao's towel when taking a bath, so Yi Yao suffered from sexually transmitted diseases, and this disease in most people's eyes is caused by improper life. Her classmates use insulting language to hurt her every day. Being attacked by violence, she finally want to use death to prove his innocence. It seems that such a disease and its moral significance can no longer be separated, and its metaphorical color is infinitely amplified, so that in the face of this disease, no one will find out the cause of its occurrence, not because they do not care about it, but it has been tacitly accepted by people. Hanne and Hawken (2007) argue that the repeated use of certain metaphors reflects people's attitudes towards illness and influences our own attitudes towards others<sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, we should look at the disease objectively and rationally, return the disease to itself, and reduce the moral significance imposed on it.

#### **4 Metaphorical Expressions in the Internet Language From the Perspective of Disease Metaphor**

The emergence of various popular languages on the Internet conforms to the development of the trend of The Times, enriched the content of Chinese, and also reflects the creativity of Chinese, many of which are related to diseases, such as "straight male cancer", "lazy cancer", "lemon essence", "bar essence", "soil fat round" and so on. Just like Sontag's research on disease metaphor, people always have a kind of aversion or resistance to disease. No matter in the past when medical science was backward or in the present when medical level is becoming more and more developed, people seem to be accustomed to using disease as a metaphor to express some negative things or describe some people with unpopular characteristics, especially in the era of the Internet. The Internet violence metaphor is formed. "The Internet violence metaphor realizes its metaphorical meaning by selecting a specific metaphor body and mapping the attributes of the metaphor body to the object referred to by the ontology."<sup>[10]</sup> That is, the characteristics of the source domain are placed on the target domain. This paper mainly summarizes two kinds of disease metaphors related to verbal violence, using the name of mental illness and the word "cancer" as the suffix.

The use of the name of mental illness as a kind of network language to tease and even attack others to a certain extent, this is a scientific diagnosis of the phenomenon occurring in the body, but it is used to ridicule people who think or act differently from themselves, such as "mentally disabled", "brain disability", "idiot" and so on, "these words are originally medical terms. It refers to organic diseases or serious psychological disorders occurring in the nervous system, and patients' cognition, emotion, will, action and behavior often have lasting obvious abnormalities, and netizens use these

words in online communication." [11] These words are used to refer to people who they think behave abnormally, or who are different from the public.

These words map the low intelligence and backward development characteristics of the original domain of "abnormal nervous system" to the target domain of "people who think and act differently from the public", full of ridicule and satire of others, which is a kind of disrespect, but also an injustice, because the group of people who are mocked just do things that are not consistent with the public's understanding, but not necessarily wrong or bad. For example, the term "brainless fans" combines "brain retards" with the group of fans. In particular, it is more used by netizens to call fans of stars they don't like, or by people who don't follow stars to call people who follow stars. Especially when the stars they chase are entertainment stars, they are often described as "brainless fans", which contains people's irony to this group of fans. The disgust of the star, however, the star is only in their own field of hard work to finally be exposed to the ordinary people, fans are only the star as their own example and the heart is full of love of a group of supporters, so, "brainless fans" this word for stars and fans, is undoubtedly a kind of network language violence.

The use of the word cancer as a suffix constitutes a new Internet word, mapping the incurability of cancer to certain groups of people, such as "straight male cancer" and "straight female cancer", adding the word "cancer" after it, strengthening the strength of the language, emphasizing the helplessness of people with this characteristic, and greatly deepening the harm to others. The definition of "straight male cancer" on the Internet is: "Internet users live in their own world view, values, aesthetics, always reveal to others the other side of the eye and dissatisfaction, slightly male chauvinist people a ridicule, the main feature is aesthetic negative, bad taste in clothing and do not know, late often accompanied by hallucinations, think that the aesthetic mainstream and even advanced taste in clothing..." This word is full of extreme disgust and disgust for this population, and even more "straight male cancer this disease, get death" extreme ironic expression. "Straight female cancer" is "a woman who has bad aesthetic taste and does not know it, is harsh to the same sex, picky, jealous, has a sense of competition, and is flattering to the opposite sex, over-dependent, and requires tolerance." People turn their fear and aversion to cancer into mockery of a certain group of people, which is extremely harmful.

## 5 Summary

"Internet hot words are not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a social phenomenon." [12] The social reality reflected behind the language is mass psychology. The disease metaphor in violent language on the Internet uses disease-related words to express the irony of the public to some people. For the recipients of such language, an invisible psychological harm will be formed, and even make them doubt themselves and no longer dare to express themselves directly, for fear of being treated differently and being bullied by the Internet. This is very detrimental to personal development and even social development, and those who are vilified because of language may become depressed and even do harm to themselves. Not only the visible beating is violence,

language is also a means of violence, and the damage caused by language is invisible, especially the network language. We should prohibit all forms of violence to avoid causing irreparable harm to others.

The use of disease metaphor in network buzzwords does reveal and explain some phenomena existing in the real society, but everything should have a degree, if excessive use, not only cannot play a good role, and even may form a kind of violence to others. In recent years, more and more patients with depression, choose to commit suicide. Many of them are closely related to the language violence they have suffered, so this issue should get everyone's attention. Words are beautiful, and we should not turn them into weapons to hurt others, especially in this era where almost everyone is inseparable from the Internet. We should create a good Internet environment, eliminate violent language, and respect patients with diseases.

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