The evolution of language : How netspeak changes the way we speak

语言的演变：网络用语如何改变我们的说话方式

Every year, hundreds of new words and phrases that come from Internet slang are added to the dictionary. Some of them are abbreviations, like "UR" for "you are" or "your"and "U for "you." Others are words that have been stretched into parts of speech different to those originally intended -- for instance, when "trend" became a verb ("It's trending worldwide"). Others still have emerged as we adapt our language to new technologies, for example, "crowdfunding," "selfie," and "cyberbullying.'

每年，都有数百个来自互联网俚语的新词汇和短语被添加到词典中。其中一些是缩写词，比如“UR”代表“you are”或“your”，“U”代表“you”。另一些则是被扩展成与最初意图不同的词性——例如，当“trend”变成动词时（“It's trending worldwide”）。还有一些则是我们在适应新技术时出现的新词，比如“crowdfunding”（众筹）、“selfie”（自拍）和“cyberbullying”（网络欺凌）。

You might notice how many of these "new" words are ctually just appropriated. A meaning they are pre-existing words that are combined or given entirely new meanings. For example, "social network" became a word in the Oxford English Dictionary back in 1973, referring to the physical activity of networking in a social atmosphere. In the 1990s, people began using the term to refer to virtual engagement, and that became an official definition in 1998.

你可能会注意到，这些“新”词汇实际上只是被挪用了。它们是预先存在的词汇，被组合或赋予了全新的意义。例如，“social network”（社交网络）这个词早在1973年就出现在了《牛津英语词典》中，指的是在社交氛围中进行网络联系的物理活动。到了1990年代，人们开始用这个术语来指代虚拟参与，这在1998年成为了官方定义。

Why are so many new words and phrases emerging from the Internet, and why is it happening at such an accelerated pace? Actually the Internet isn't the only technological phenomenon that's changed the way we talk. Radio, television, and telephone have contributed their fair share of new words and phrases to our lexicon over the last century.

为什么有这么多新词汇和短语从互联网中涌现，而且这种变化的速度如此之快？实际上，互联网并不是唯一改变我们说话方式的技术现象。在过去的一个世纪里，无线电、电视和电话也为我们的词汇库贡献了不少新词汇和短语。

For example, the origin of TTFN (ta-ta for now) can be traced back to a 1940s radio series. Similarly, the word "doh" that was made famous by a TV cartoon series became an official word in the Oxford English Dictionary, "used to comment on afoolish or stupid action, especially one's own." And don't forget "Give me the 411."the American slang phrase for "Give me all the details," which refers to the telephone number for local directory assistance2

例如，TTFN（ta-ta for now，现在再见）的起源可以追溯到1940年代的无线电系列节目。同样，因电视卡通系列而出名的“doh”这个词也成了《牛津英语词典》中的官方词汇，“used to comment on a foolish or stupid action, especially one's own.”（用来评论愚蠢或愚蠢的行为，尤其是自己的）。别忘了“Give me the 411.”这个美国俚语，意思是“给我所有的细节”，它指的是本地电话簿帮助的电话号码。

But the more time we spend online, the less time we spend listening to the radio or watching TV - and smartphones have blurred the distinction between phones and the Internet. At this point, the Internet could be seen as probably the most prevalent influence on our day-to-day dialog.

但我们在网上花费的时间越多，听收音机或看电视的时间就越少——智能手机模糊了电话和互联网之间的区别。在这一点上，互联网可能是对我们日常对话影响最大的因素。

Think about how quickly Internet trends come and go. The fast pace of change on the Internet means we are adopting more words, and doing it faster than ever before."Language itself changes slowly, but the Internet has sped up the process of those changes so you notice them more quickly," says a professor of linguistics at Bangor University. You can imagine how much longer it took new words to spread through word of mouth than it does today with the Internet.

想想互联网趋势来得快去得也快。互联网变化的快速意味着我们正在采纳更多的词汇，而且比以往任何时候都要快。“语言本身变化缓慢，但互联网加速了变化过程，所以你更快地注意到它们，”班戈大学的一位语言学教授说。你可以想象，与今天通过互联网相比，新词汇通过口口相传传播需要多长时间。

So, how do new words, like the acronym "LOL," make it all the way to the dictionary?

那么，像缩写词“LOL”这样的新词汇是如何进入词典的呢？

The secret of a new word's success is its longevity, says a senior editor in the New Words Group at the Oxford English Dictionary. In order for a new word to make it into the dictionary, the general population must use it and keep using it. A word must be in use for at least five years to be considered. So, love it or hate it, when words like "LOL" become common, widespread, well understood, and stick around for more than five years, they're eligible for a spot in the big book.

《牛津英语词典》新词组的高级编辑说，一个新词汇成功的秘诀在于它的持久性。为了让一个新词汇进入词典，大众必须使用它并持续使用它。一个词汇必须至少使用了五年才会被考虑。所以，不管你喜欢还是讨厌，当像“LOL”这样的词汇变得普遍、广泛理解并持续存在五年以上时，它们就有资格进入大词典。

There are plenty of Internet slang words that don't make it in, like "wurfing" (the act of surfing the Internet while at work). But to say that word was rejected would be wrong - that word, among many others, will be revisited if its usage grows. The dictionary is a living, breathing document, and there's always a chance a previously down-voted' word will make it into the mainstream vocabulary in the future.

有很多网络俚语词汇没有进入词典，比如“wurfing”（在工作时上网冲浪的行为）。但如果说这个词被拒绝了，那就错了——如果它的使用量增加，这个词和其他许多词将被重新审视。词典是一个活生生的文件，总有之前被否决的词汇将来会进入主流词汇库的机会。

That's where even the word "slang" gets a little fuzzy. Is a word considered "slang"until it graduates' into an official word in the dictionary? When exactly does a word become "real"? The fact is, only when a word becomes "real" - that is, widely used and understood - is it considered for a place in the dictionary. "When we see the word in the dictionary, it has already been used for a long time. We see it in the constant appearance of slang and jargon. Language is not so much a creator and shaper of human nature as a window into human nature3."

这就让“俚语”这个词本身也变得有点模糊。一个词在成为词典中的官方词汇之前被认为是“俚语”吗？一个词什么时候变得“真实”？事实是，只有当一个词变得“真实”——即广泛使用和理解时——它才被认为是词典中的一员。“当我们在词典中看到这个词时，它已经被使用了很长时间。我们看到了俚语和行话的持续出现。语言与其说是人性创造者和塑造者，不如说是人性的一面镜子。”

As it turns out, dictionary editors look to us when they vote on whether a word should have a place in their dictionary. Dictionaries are fantastic resources, but they are a reflection of humanity and they are not timeless. If you ask dictionary editors,what they'll tell you is that they're just trying to keep up with us as we change the language. They're watching what we say and what we write and trying to figure out what's going to stick and what isn't.

事实证明，词典编辑在决定一个词是否应该在他们的词典中占有一席之地时，是看我们的。词典是极好的资源，但它们是人类的反映，它们并非永恒不变。如果你问词典编辑，他们会告诉你，他们只是试图跟上我们改变语言的步伐。他们关注我们说什么和写什么，并试图弄清楚哪些会留下来，哪些不会。

There will certainly be changes in language that we don't like simply because many of us don't like change, but we should be less quick to impose our likes and dislikes about words on other people. Language change isn't worrisome. On the contrary, it's fun and fascinating.

当然，语言的变化中有些是我们不喜欢的，只是因为我们中的许多人不喜欢变化，但我们不应该太快地将我们对词汇的喜好和厌恶强加给别人。语言变化并不令人担忧。相反，它既有趣又迷人。

So, no matter whether you think netspeak vitalizes or destroys language, there's no denying how revealing it is of the culture that invents and uses it - and the ease with which we adapt our language to new technologies and concepts. Just try to enjoy being part of the creativity that is continually remaking our language and keeping it robust.

所以，不管你认为网络用语是活跃了还是破坏了语言，不可否认它揭示了发明和使用它的文化——以及我们如何轻松地调整我们的语言以适应新技术和概念。试着享受成为不断重塑我们语言并保持其活力的创造力的一部分吧。