

# A Comparative Study on AI Translation of Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Conceptual Blending Theory: Exemplified by “Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords of 2024”

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## Abstract

The internet buzzwords emerge amid the vigorous development of the Internet, and their generative process can be effectively explained by the Conceptual Blending Theory. Meanwhile, more academic research on AI translation has also been prompted by the rapid advancement of AI technology. This study selects the “Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords of 2024” as the research object, and by comparing the conceptual blending process of the original buzzwords and their three translations from mainstream Chinese AI (DeepSeek, Doubao, and Wenxin Yiyan), it aims to reveal the translation differences among different AI systems in translating emerging words, thereby providing a new perspective for the translation research of emerging buzzwords.

**Key words:** Conceptual blending theory; Internet buzzwords; AI translation; Emerging vocabulary; Comparative study

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## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the Internet having established itself as a major frontier for information exchange, it gives rise

to “Internet buzzwords”, which is a distinctive type of emerging vocabulary. Emerging vocabulary arises from the combination of existing words. It not only carries the connotations of the original vocabulary but also breaks new ground by developing its own unique meanings. This vocabulary production process which creates new elements with unique meanings based on existing ones, is highly consistent with the core principles of Conceptual Blending Theory. Tracing the cognitive processes underlying the formation of emerging words.

The “2024 Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords” list is released by China’s National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center. On the basis of large-scale corpus data, the list is determined through linguistic information processing technology and expert evaluation, thus embodying both scientific rigor and authority. Meanwhile, the translation quality of translation tools has achieved a qualitative leap due to the advancement of artificial intelligence technology. Consequently, in the AI era, conducting exploration into the performance of different AI systems in translating “Internet buzzwords” bears significant theoretical and practical value.

Based on the Conceptual Blending Theory, the author conducts a detailed analysis of the “Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords of 2024” by identifying input elements and emergent structure of their AI-generated translations, which contributes to revealing the conceptual blending processes employed by different AI systems in handling internet buzzwords and providing insights for enhancing the ability of AI translation tools to translate emerging vocabulary.

## CONCEPTUAL BLENDING THEORY

Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) was proposed by renowned American linguists G. Fauconnier and M. Turner, who argue that conceptual blending is a common cognitive activity and a dynamic process occurring in

real time. A conceptual blending network consists of four mental spaces: Input Space 1, Input Space 2, Generic Space, and Blended Space.

The process of conceptual blending refers to the mapping and integration between elements contained in the two input spaces with the help of the Generic Space. The Generic Space contains abstract elements shared by the two input spaces; under its influence, the elements projected into the Blended Space undergo further conceptual blending through composition, completion, and elaboration, resulting in emergent structure that carries new meanings. As a new element generated through integration, the emergent structure serves as the source of innovation for emerging nouns.

## STUDY ON CONCEPTUAL BLENDING PROCESS OF THE “TOP 10 CHINESE INTERNET BUZZWORDS OF 2024”

This section conducts a analysis of ten Internet buzzword based on conceptual blending theory. The part first deconstructs the original conceptual integration mechanism of each word, clarifies the core elements of their two input spaces, as well as the unique meaning generated in the blended space through mapping and integration under the function of the generic space. Then, taking the three AI translation versions by DeepSeek, Doubao, and Wenxin Yiyan as the research objects, it examines the performance of each AI system in reproducing the elements of the input spaces of the original words and restoring conceptual integration process.

For the convenience of subsequent analysis, this study defines the DeepSeek’s translation version as T1 (Translation One), the Doubao’s translation version as T2 (Translation Two), and the Wenxin Yiyan’s translation version as T3 (Translation Three).

### Example One: The Internet Buzzword “新质生产力”

T1: new quality productive forces

T2: new productive forces

T3: new quality productive forces

The term “新质生产力” is a new term first proposed in 2023. It mainly refers to the situation where, with the development of technological innovation, new technologies serve as the driving force of production and lead the development of emerging industries and future industries. For this term, its Input Space 1 consists of elements related to “traditional production”, such as laborers being farmers or workers, production tools being simple mechanical equipment, and labor objects being natural resources like land. Input Space 2 includes elements associated with the term “new quality”, for example, the background of its proposal being the new era, which meets the current requirements of digital

development. In the Blended Space, in addition to elements mapped from the original spaces, there are elements formed through integration. For instance, laborers are digital talents, and production tools are more advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, which are superior to simple mechanical equipment.

Three AI translations of the term “新质生产力”, all directly render the element of “traditional productive forces” present in Input Space 1 as “productive forces”, thereby effectively conveying the elements corresponding to Input Space 1 in the original text.

In handling Input Space 2, both Translation One and T3 translate it as “new quality”, which reflects the characteristics such as high technology and innovation-driven that are contained in the original term “新质”. However, the T2 transforms Input Space 2 into elements related to the word “new”. Although “new” can evoke associations with elements like innovation, renewal, and new models, it lacks elements related to “质”. Naturally, the key elements of “新质生产力” such as “high quality” and “superior quality” fail to be integrated, making it unable to effectively convey the meaning of the original text.

In summary, in the translation of “新质生产力”, all three AI versions have handled Input Space 1 relatively accurately. However, in the translation of Input Space 2, the T2, which only focuses on “new” while missing elements related to “quality”, struggles to comprehensively integrate and convey the key meanings of the term.

Example Two: The Internet Buzzword “《黑神话：悟空》”

T1: Black Myth: Wukong

T2: Black Myth: Wukong

T3: Black Myth: Wukong

《黑神话：悟空》 is a role-playing game based on the Journey to the West theme, which was launched in August 2024. The game company has perfectly integrated the Journey to the West with dark fantasy games, representing a re-creation of the original work. From this, it can be concluded that the two input spaces for the new term 《黑神话：悟空》 are “the image of Wukong in the original Journey to the West” and “dark fantasy games”. These two input spaces map onto each other and initiate integration under the influence of the generic space. In the blended space, elements unique to this game are integrated. For example, in this game world, Buddhism is not supreme, and characters are not simplistic, one-dimensional figures defined as purely good or evil, these are all new elements in the game that differ from the original work.

Three AI software programs uniformly translate 《黑神话：悟空》 as “Black Myth: Wukong”, with “神话” rendered as “Myth” and “悟空” as “Wukong”. “Myth” reflects the characteristics such as fantasy and ancient

legends contained in the original term “神话”, ensuring that overseas players’ Input Space 1 contains elements similar to those in Chinese players’ Input Space 1.

Furthermore, the translation directly renders the character “黑” as “Black”, highlighting elements of the dark fantasy game such as darkness and mystery. The popularity of dark fantasy games has led to a shared understanding of such games among both Chinese and foreign players, making Input Space 2 of the original text and its translation quite similar. The popularity of dark games has led to a similar perception of them among both Chinese and foreign players, so translation’s Input Space 2 are similar to that of the original text.

The similarity between the input spaces naturally leads to similar conceptual integration in the blended space, making the translation and the original text largely consistent in conveying core elements. This enables English readers to effectively perceive the unique worldview of the game that combines the character “Wukong” with “dark fantasy games”, thus successfully conveying the meaning of the original text. All three AI translations have effectively restored the integration process of the original text.

#### **Example Three: The Internet Buzzword “人工智能+”**

T1: AI Plus

T2: AI+

T3: Artificial Intelligence Plus

“人工智能+” refers to the in-depth integration of AI technology with other industries to promote the upgrading and development of various industries. Therefore, the two input spaces of “人工智能+” belong to different professional fields, namely the current popular “artificial intelligence” technology and the mathematical operation symbol “+”. The elements existing in the two input spaces are mapped through the generic space and integrated in the blended space, generating the unique new meaning of the term “人工智能+”.

The three translations are highly consistent in rendering Input Space 1 of the original text, all using “AI” or “Artificial Intelligence”. This consistency aligns with the original Input Space and effectively conveys relevant elements such as intelligent systems and algorithmic models contained in Input Space 1 of the original text.

However, regarding the translation of the numerical symbol “+” in Input Space 2, T2 retains the numerical symbol “+”. Since Chinese and foreign readers share a consistent understanding of numerical symbols, T2 fully corresponds to the mathematical properties of the original “+” and also includes core elements such as integration and expansion. Both T1 and T3 translate it into the English word “Plus”. Although “Plus” can also convey the meaning of integration implied by “+”, as a word, it weakens the sense of cross-border connection inherent in

the original symbol “+”. On the whole, the T2 is better able to restore the conceptual integration of the original text.

#### **Example Four: The Internet Buzzword “含金量还在上升”**

T1: The “gold content” is still rising.

T2: Its value/worth is still on the rise.

T3: The value/quality is still on the rise.

“含金量还在上升” refers to the gradual increase in the value of a person or thing over time. For this internet phrase, its Input Space 1 consists of elements related to the traditional “gold content”, such as the gold content in a material or the value of a thing; Input Space 2 includes elements associated with “rising”, such as the dynamic increase of something. These two input spaces map onto each other and initiate integration under the influence of the generic space, generating a new meaning in the blended space after combining the elements from both input spaces.

In translating Input Space 1, T1 directly translates it as “gold content”. Although “gold” is a metal existing in nature, both Chinese and foreign readers have similar perceptions of it and can intuitively understand the meaning of “preciousness” associated with gold, however, in the English-speaking world, the term “gold content” is more often used as a technical term in the metal field and is rarely extended to colloquial usage like the Chinese gold content. Therefore, Input Space 1 in the translation, “gold content”, contains more elements related to the metal industry, such as gold smelting technology and gold density, and fails to highlight the meaning of “the significance and value of things” that “含金量” refers to in the original internet term.

Meanwhile, T2 and T3 translate “含金量” into words like “value”, “worth”, or “quality” that express the meaning of “value”. Although they omit the imagery of gold in the original text, they successfully embody the core element in Input Space 1: “the significance or value of things”.

Regarding the translation of Input Space 2, all three versions use the word “rise” to render the original “上升”. This consistency between the translations and the original text in Input Space 2 enables them to restore the conceptual integration process of the original expression.

Overall, the translations by T2 and T3 are better. On the basis of accurately translating Input Space 2, their translations of Input Space 1 are more in line with the core meaning referred to by the original term “含金量”, and thus can more completely convey the concept and emotion of the original text.

#### **Example Five: The Internet Buzzword “City不City”**

T1: city or not city

T2: city or not

T3: Is it very trendy or not?

The buzzword “City不City” blends Chinese and English to express the meaning of “Is this place fashionable enough and interesting enough?”. Input Space 1, the English word “City”, encompasses elements associated with “city” such as fashion, high-rise buildings, and a fast-paced lifestyle. Input Space 2 is the Chinese sentence pattern “xxx不xxx?”, which is typically used to connect adjectives, for example, “美不美” (beautiful or not) and “好不好” (good or not). As an interrogative structure, it functions to seek the other party’s viewpoint, carrying a conversational tone that invites feedback. Under the influence of the generic space, these two input spaces map onto each other and initiate integration. In the blended space, “City不City” generates a new meaning, expressing affirmation of a place being fashionable and modern.

In terms of the translation of Input Space 1, both T1 and T2 retain the original word “City”, ensuring that the translation contains similar elements to those in Input Space 1 of the original text. T3 replaces “City” with “trendy”. Nevertheless, the elements associated with “City” are not limited to the attribute of “fashion”, and there are other elements such as high-rise buildings and a fast pace of life. Therefore, confining the elements of City to “fashion” reduces the elements in the original Input Space 1, which has a negative impact on the subsequent integration.

In translating Input Space 2, both T1 and T2 adopt the concise structure of “or not”. The word “not” directly corresponds to the meaning of “不” in the original text, and “or” embodies the sense of choice, thus restoring the interrogative tone of the original text. Moreover, while the T1 makes the English phrase grammatically complete, it weakens the colloquial tone of the original text. T3 translates this buzzword into a fully structured interrogative sentence, which expresses a clear sense of doubt and fails to convey the implicitly mild affirmation implied by the original pattern. Overall, T2 is better and more in line with the original text’s intention and overall style.

#### Example Six: The Internet Buzzword “班味儿”

T1: office worker vibe

T2: the vibe of office work

T3: workplace atmosphere

The buzzword “班味儿” vividly expresses the sense of exhaustion among contemporary office workers. Its Input Space 1 consists of elements related to the work scenario, such as the office as the workplace and the act of clocking in and out for work. Input Space 2 refers to the traditional meanings of “味儿”, such as smell, atmosphere, and so on. In the blended space, the term “班味儿” takes on a new meaning, referring to the lack of vitality due to the experience of going to work. It is often used by office workers for self-mockery. In the blended space, the term

“班味儿” takes on a new meaning. It describes a person who is exhausted and lacking in vitality due to work, and is often used by office workers for self-mockery.

In terms of translating the work scenario elements in Input Space 1, T1 renders it as “Office Worker”, focusing on the workers in the workplace; T2 translates it as “office work”, centering on the jobs within the offices; and T3 translates it as “workplace”, emphasizing the location. All three translations effectively correspond to Input Space 1 in the original text.

In translating “味儿” in Input Space 2, both T1 and T2 render it as “vibe”. According to the New Oxford Online Dictionary, “vibe” is defined as “a person’s emotional state or the atmosphere of a place as communicated to and felt by others”. This corresponds to the meaning of “a person’s state” conveyed by “味儿” in the original text, thus sharing similar elements with Input Space 2 of the original.

T3 renders it as “atmosphere”. However, “atmosphere” is more inclined to mean “a surrounding mood or feeling”, and is often used to describe external environments, such as “the atmosphere of the Spring Festival” or “a warm atmosphere”. Therefore, the elements contained in Input Space 2 of T3 differ significantly from those in the original text.

Overall, the translations by T1 and T2 are better, while T3 is slightly inferior to theirs due to the deviation in the correspondence of core elements in Input Space 2.

#### Example Seven: The Internet Buzzword “偏偏你最争气”

T1: You, of all people, stepped up.

T2: It’s you who turned out to be the most promising.

T3: Out of everyone, you’re the one who really proves yourself.

The internet buzzword “偏偏你最争气” is often used to express that among many objects, only “you” have shown superior performance beyond expectations, conveying the evaluator’s appreciation. The two input spaces of this buzzword consists of elements related to “偏偏” and “争气” respectively. In the blended space, elements unique to “偏偏你最争气” are integrated. For instance, this expression not only emphasizes the uniqueness within the scope of comparison but also conveys appreciation.

In translating “偏偏” in Input Space 1, T1 renders it as “you, of all people”, where “of all people” clearly conveys the scope of “among all people”; T2 uses the emphatic sentence pattern “It’s ... who...” to highlight the person “you”; T3 translates it as “Out of everyone, you’re the one”, employing the structure “Out of ...” to correspond to “among all people” and emphasize the status of “you”. All three translations can effectively correspond to the core elements of Input Space 1.

In translating “最争气” in Input Space 2, T1 uses



“stepped up”, which effectively captures the elements like positive action and good performance in the original Input Space 2. T2 translates it as “turned out to be the most promising”; however, the word “promising” focuses more on potential ability, which has a weak connection with the elements “outstanding performance in reality” in the original Input Space 2. T3 renders it as “really proves yourself/outdoes yourself”; through “proves yourself”, it recaptures the core elements of “争气” in the original Input Space 2, thus being more consistent with the elements of the original Input Space 2.

Therefore, in terms of the correspondence of elements in the input spaces, T3 handles both input spaces more in line with the original text, making the overall expression more accurate.

#### **Example Eight: The Internet Buzzword “浓人淡人”**

T1: intense person

T2: people with strong personalities

T3: intense person

Since the conceptual blending process of “浓人” and “淡人” is identical, the author will only select the term “浓人” for analysis here.

The buzzword “浓人” has formed a unique meaning through cross-domain conceptual integration. Elements in Input Space 1 consists of physical attributes of concentration, such as high saturation, strong smell, and thick texture. Elements in Input Space 2 consists of physical properties related to “concentration”, such as high saturation, strong odor, and thick texture. Input Space 2 consists of attributes related to “people”, such as a person’s personality, social preferences, and so on. Under the influence of the generic space, the two input spaces initiate mapping. In the blended space, the physical attribute merges with personality traits, referring to personality types that are distinctive in character, strong in presence, and expressive in emotions, thus generating a unique meaning exclusive to the term “浓人”.

Regarding the translation of Input Space 1, both T1 and T3 translate it as “intense”. “Intense” means “strong” or “concentrated”, which can reflect the elements implied in the original input space. T2 translate it as “strong personalities”, restricting the elements contained in the original Input Space 2 to the description of “personality”.

For the translation of the element “人” in Input Space 2, T1 and T3 both render it as “person”, while T2 translated it as “people”. All three translations directly refer to the object “人” and can effectively correspond to the elements in Input Space 1.

On the whole, the translations by T1 and T3 are better. They have well reproduced the elements of the two input spaces and are more in line with the original text on the whole. However, T2’s translation is slightly inferior to the other two because it narrows the connotation of “浓” too much in Input Space 1.

#### **Example Nine: The Internet Buzzword “松弛感”**

T1: sense of relaxation

T2: a sense of ease

T3: a sense of relaxation

“松弛感” is a popular new concept nowadays, referring to the ability to maintain a calm mindset and respond positively when facing challenges and pressures. For this buzzword, Input Space 1 is the physical state “松弛”, which contains elements such as elasticity, a state of muscle relaxation, or mechanical parts not being tense. Input Space 2 is the abstract state of human “feelings”, including elements like atmosphere and perception. Under the influence of the generic space, the two input spaces map the physical state of relaxation to the dimension of human perception. In the blended space, “松弛感” not only retains the characteristics of the input spaces but also breaks through the original usage boundaries of the input spaces. It specifically refers to a life state of being unforced and untensed, reflecting an attitude of calmly coping with life.

Regarding the translation of the abstract perception “感” in Input Space 1, all three have translated it as “a sense of”, which accurately conveys the core elements of the original input space and can effectively correspond to Input Space 1. For the translation of “松弛” in Input Space 2, both T1 and T3 translated it as “relaxation”, while T2 translated it as “ease”. The word “relaxation” focuses on “being relaxed and free from tension”, and “ease” emphasizes “being calm and effortless”. Although they approach from different angles, both cover the key characteristics of “松弛” and can effectively convey the key elements of the two input spaces in the original text. To sum up, all three have effectively restored the conceptual integration process of the original word.

#### **Example Ten: The Internet Buzzword “主理人”**

T1: curator

T2: manager

T3: manager

The term “主理人” originally referred to the owner or manager of a trendy brand, and later gradually came to be used by young entrepreneurs in various fields. The two input spaces of “主理人” belong to different role categories of “founder” and “manager”. The elements contained in these two input spaces are mapped through the generic space and integrated in the blended space, generating the unique new meaning of the buzzword “主理人”.

For the translation of this internet buzzword, T1 renders it as “curator”, while T2 and T3 translate it as “manager”. According to the Collins Online Dictionary, “curator” is defined as “a person in charge of a museum, art gallery, etc.”, which includes elements such as initiating, planning, and managing things, and has a connection with the elements contained in the two input

spaces of the original term. Meanwhile, “curator” carries the element of “museum or art gallery”, so using “curator” to translate the founder of a trendy brand can better reflect the sense of cross-border. T2 and T3 translate it as “manager”. “Manager” is more oriented towards “a person who manages”, focusing on daily operations and handling affairs. Therefore, it is insufficient in restoring elements such as originality in Input Space 1. Therefore, the version by T3 can better restore the original term.

## CONCLUSION

This study verifies the applicability of using conceptual integration theory to analyze internet buzzwords and their translations, providing a new perspective for AI translation research on emerging buzzwords.

The research findings indicate that although AI systems vary in handling the translation of internet buzzwords, they are generally able to well restore the conceptual integration process of the original text. Specifically, DeepSeek and Wenxin Yiyan can more accurately identify the input spaces of the original words in most cases and effectively restore the subsequent conceptual integration process. They perform particularly well when dealing with words with Chinese characteristics, such as “新质生产力”. Doubao, on the other hand, excels in handling spoken expressions like “City不City”. In addition, the quality of AI translation is closely related to the restoration of the core elements of the two input spaces. In the future, AI systems can enhance their deep learning of internet buzzwords, thereby effectively determining the input spaces and achieving a more consistent conceptual integration with the original words in translation.

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