

Top buzzwords define essence of the year

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In a year marked by technological leaps and deepened cultural connections, 2023's "words of the year" from both the Chinese- and English-speaking worlds offer a glimpse into the global mood of the era.

From China's "new quality productivity" to the English lexicon's "rizz," these words not only dominated conversations, but also mirrored our evolving narratives.

As 2023 nears its end, these buzzwords reveal how language continues to be a powerful indicator of our changing times, priorities and aspirations.

In China, in a list announced by Shanghai-based literary periodical Yaowen-Jiaozhi, the term 新质生产力 (new quality productivity), coined by Chinese President Xi Jinping, captures a key shift in the nation's economic characters. This concept

represents not just a leap in production methods, but a transformation toward technology-driven, high-quality growth. It's a language reflecting China's stride into an era of digital innovation.

Meanwhile, 双向奔赴 (mutual effort toward a common goal) has evolved from a phrase describing personal relationships to a diplomatic emblem of the Sino-US efforts to find common ground. It's a phrase that has evolved to include the spirit of cooperation between nations, symbolizing the importance of joint endeavors in global politics.

The tech world, too, finds its representation in the lexicon with 人工智能大模型 (large-scale AI models). In an era where AI such as ChatGPT is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, this term signifies the profound impact of machine learning and AI technologies on everyday life.



A rural amateur football tournament in Guizhou Province has been dubbed 村超 (village super league) by netizens. — Xinhua

In contrast to these tech-heavy terms, 村超 (village super league) leads us back to the grassroots level. This term, originating from a rural football tournament in Guizhou Province, highlights the popularity of local sports and reflects a national push toward fitness and rural revitalization. It's a reminder of how traditional community values are finding new expression in contemporary society.

This year also saw the rise of 特种兵式旅游 (commando-style travel), a trend highlighting the modern travelers' desire for efficient and immersive experiences. This term, originating from a military metaphor, showcases the evolving tourism landscape. The quest for diverse and authentic experiences now prevails over leisurely, conventional vacations.

The cultural shift toward celebrating individuality is represented in the phrase 显眼包 (noticeable ones). Once slightly negative, this term now positively identifies those who stand out for their uniqueness. It reflects a societal embrace of diversity and personal expression.

Similarly, 搭子 (companions) represents a new social relationship mode, emphasizing casual, pressure-free

connections. Originating as a term for card-game partners, it now refers to companions in various activities. It highlights how modern relationships are increasingly defined by shared interests rather than traditional bonds.

Reflecting on emotional intelligence, 情绪价值 (emotional value) has transitioned from a marketing concept to describe an individual's ability to influence others' emotions positively. It highlights a growing societal focus on the psychological aspects of human interactions and the pursuit of a more emotionally fulfilling life.

In the English-speaking world, the word that stood out in 2023 was "rizz," a term that describes the charm and allure of an individual, according to Oxford University Press, the world's second-oldest academic press and the publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary.

"Rizz" comes from the middle of the word "charisma" and can be used as a verb, as in to "rizz up," or chat someone up, the publisher said.

The term gained popularity through Internet culture and surged into the mainstream following a Tom Holland interview. The popular actor said in an interview in June that he had "limited rizz." The word

has then grown 15 times in usage over the year following the comment.

It topped "Swiftie" (an enthusiastic Taylor Swift fan), "situationship" (an informal romantic or sexual relationship) and "prompt" (an instruction given to an AI program) in the annual decision by the publisher's experts.

American publisher Merriam-Webster also included "rizz" on its list of the year's top words while giving first place to "authentic." It reflects a growing focus on genuineness in an era dominated by AI, celebrity culture and social media.

The term "deepfake" also spiked in searches, highlighting concerns over digital authenticity. The coronation of Charles III brought "coronation" into the limelight, emphasizing its historical and ceremonial significance, according to Merriam-Webster.

As we turn the page on 2023, these words defined a world grappling with technological advancements, redefining relationships and constantly seeking a balance between the traditional and the modern. They together mark the essence of 2023 — a year of change, challenge, revitalization and cooperation.



"Swiftie," a term for an enthusiastic Taylor Swift fan, is one of the buzzwords this year. — IC