Language choices as audience design strategies in Chinese multilingual speakers’ Wechat posts

Kaiwen Liu
Xi’an University of Posts and Telecommunications, Shaanxi, China

Abstract
This current study reports three multilingual Chinese students’ audience design strategies on a populated Social Networking Site (SNS), WeChat. Considering the importance of audiences in shaping multilingual speakers’ language choice (Bell, A. (1984). Language style as audience design. Language in Society, 13(2), 145–204) and the potential hazard of conflated audiences in social media, as well as the comparative lack of research on WeChat which has different technical affordances from the well-researched SNS, Facebook, this article aims to shed new light on how multilingual speakers harness their linguistic repertoire to cope with the “context collapse” (Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. New Media & Society, 13(1), 114–133) in semi-public SNS. Data collection and analysis follow an online ethnography method consisting of 588 initial posts from participants’ WeChat Moments during 1 year and semi-structured interviews. Theoretically informed by Androutsopoulos’s (2014b; Language when contexts collapse: Audience design in social networking, Discourse, Context & Media, 4–5, 62–73) audience specification framework, the findings reveal that although the default language in both online and offline interactions is Chinese, Wechat users have a very high sensitivity to different patterns of Chinese–English code-switching and grammatical and lexical choices in English. Meanwhile, Chinese multilingual speakers usually developed highly nuanced audience design strategies to target or partition specific groups of audience, which are far more complicated than the audience design strategies found in previous research on Facebook.

Corresponding author:
Kaiwen Liu, Department of Foreign Languages, Xi’an University of Posts and Telecommunications, Weiguo Road, Chang’an District, Xi’an 710061, China.
Email: kevenliu@xupt.edu.cn

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In the earlier private, one-to-one online communications such as messaging and email, people usually have a specific audience to assess the appropriateness of their presentation and language style (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). With the rapid development of online social media, asynchronous one-to-many communications have become pervasive (Baron, 2010). Therefore, a wide range of audience who are usually isolated and affiliated to different social ties in offline communications are brought into a single social network site (SNS) which requires users to adopt novel strategies of communication to target a specific audience or a group of audiences.

The interrelationship between people’s perception of audience and their changes in language style is well explained in Bell (1984, 1999, 2001) “audience design” framework. He states that people’s language style is audience-oriented not only on the phonological, lexical, and syntactic level but also on the language choice. In face-to-face conversations, the interaction between language style and audience are straightforward and instant. The audience is typically visible and dynamic. Therefore, from the perspective of language choice, multilingual speakers tend to select mutually shared language. Otherwise, it would be considered as a sign of exclusion from the conversation. However, as for online communication, the lack of specific audience would pose tremendous difficulty on online multilingual users in selecting and designing their language style and language choice.

Despite the growing understanding of computer-mediated discourse (CMD), how people cope with the simultaneous existence of diverse audiences in one platform and design their language style are still poorly understood. Technological affordances in different SNSs may pose both possibilities and constraints in online communications (Lee, 2007). Affordances, a term initially introduced by Gibson (1986: 127), is employed here to refer to the possibilities and potential constraints that a new technology offers or, to be more specific, to users’ interpretations of what is afforded, based on their technical competence and communicative intent (Lee, 2007: 226–227).

Facebook is one of the most researched semi-public SNS in the previous studies, leaving other semi-public SNSs which have different affordances under-explored.

With the ever-increasing number of Chinese overseas students, they may constantly negotiate their self-representation both online and offline, especially in the period of transnational mobility. Blommaert and Backus (2011) indicate that the periods of transnational movement are likely to encourage dramatic increase in linguistic and semiotic repertoire. Rather than combing the new resources to the existing repertoire, multilingual speakers usually develop and reshape their repertoire in a creative way (Androutsopoulos, 2014a). Transnational mobility may also pose difficulties to multilingual speakers in online management of multiple self-presentations given that different social norms and various affiliations are converged into a single platform.

Bearing in mind the ongoing debate, the main purpose of the current study is to provide a descriptive account of the complexity of code-switching in Chinese SNS to manage the effects of context collapse. The second purpose is to offer an analysis of the interrelationship between audience design strategies and language choice among Chinese multilingual online users. Two research questions are examined in the current study:

1. What are the characteristics of language choice among transnational Chinese multilingual social media users?
2. What specific language choice strategies are employed by Chinese multilingual users to maximize and partition audiences on semi-public media sites?

**Multilingual speakers in transnational contexts**

Transnational is often associated with transnationalism which, in its broad sense, refers to the networks and relationships across national borders (Vertovec, 2009). The increased mobility and fluidity caused by transnational movement are naturally interwoven with applied linguistic research. With the rise of Internet and social media, it is available for globally mobile multilingual speakers to maintain relationships and develop new connections in host country, which greatly contributes to the diversity in online language practices and complexity of self-presentations (Vertovec, 2007). Androutsopoulos (2014a) observed the networked language practices of two transnational Facebook uses, revealing that the shifts in transnational trajectories lead to uses’ more nuanced selection and negotiation of their expanded linguistic resources in online communications. However, the author only briefly mentioned the importance of audience in shaping participants’ linguistic practices. Han (2020) investigates the function of translanguaging among a group of transnational Chinese visiting scholars. By analyzing their Wechat moments, he identifies three functions of expanded repertoire including intertextualising the local voice, constructing identities as a language learners and global citizens, and enacting the roles of “ethnic messengers” and “culture broker.” The study, nonetheless, focuses on how multilingual speakers construct their identities through linguistic practice without elaborating on how they manage the much more conflated online space due to the transnational mobility. According to Lam (2013, p. 820), “new contexts of migration and mobility call for reevaluation of our understanding of how people engage in communicative practices.”

**Language choice as audience design in offline communications**

It is generally known that people usually orient their self-presentation to specific context, communicative purpose, as well as to their audience (Bell, 1999). It is vividly described by James (1890) “We do not show ourselves to our children as to our club companions, to our masters and employers as to our intimate friends” (p. 294). It seems that what we say and how we say are determined by to whom we say. Bell argues that “speakers design their style primarily for and in response to their audience” (Bell, 2001, p. 143). To further specify the different roles of audience, Bell notes that addressee has the major influence on speaker’s linguistic choice and the influence decreases progressively in auditor and then overhearer.

Although Bell admits that other factors such as topic and setting could affect language style as well, he states that audience is the fundamental consideration when making stylistic-shift. Bell’s framework lays the theoretical basis for investigating CMD since the audience design framework interprets online interaction from an interpersonal, dialogic perspective. However, there are still immense differences between offline and online communication. First, the audiences described in Bell’s model refer to offline face-to-face speakers while online interactions take place in the form of written mode. Second, different affordances of online communication and the time delay between the post and response may greatly influence the extent to which the model can be applied to online interactions. Last but not least, due to the “context collapse” (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), the potential audience involved in online communication are usually imagined or constructed (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2014b; Sargeant, Tagg & Ngampramuan, 2012), which will be further discussed in the next section. Considering that SNS creates an innovative way of communication and an
unconventional concept of audience, special attention should also be paid to the potential impact of technological design on audience and language choice (Herring, 2007).

Affordance of SNS and “imagined audience”

The term “affordance” was first introduced by Gibson (1986: 127) in his interpretation of perception. Since it has a wide range of applications, in the specific context of (CMD), it refers to “the possibilities and potential constraints that a new technology offers” (Lee, 2007, p. 226–227). The way people negotiate with the new possibilities and constraints created by the technical affordances on SNSs may be closely related to the structure of their communications and the linguistic resources they mobilize (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). As Seargeant et al. (2012) note that “language choice appears to be motivated by expectations around the likely audience as this is created by the affordances of the technology and the social practices that form around these affordances” (p. 516).

In private settings, people would have less difficulty in variable self-presentations due to the unambiguity of context and target audience. However, in online communication, the boundaries of time and space become much blurred (Baron, 1998; Crystal, 2001). Litt (2012) points out that “Characteristics of public social media alter the size, composition, boundaries, accessibility, and cue availability of our communication patterns” (p. 332). In SNSs such as Twitter and Facebook, the unique characteristics of online communication provide unprecedented opportunity for us to engage in a wide range of communications. However, the potential hazard for the mass communication is that online audiences who are usually separated in offline communications are brought together in a single social media site simultaneously and the communicative contexts which should be tailored to individual interactions are conflated in to one, which phenomenon is described by Marwick and Boyd (2011) as “context collapse” (p. 10).

One of the direct impacts of context collapse is that online users do not have specific concept of audience to gauge the appropriateness of their language style, cultural referents, context, and so on (Boyd, 2008). Moreover, posters could never be certain who will read and comment on the post. In other words, the real audience is invisible (Boyd & Marwick, 2011; Litt, 2012; Meikle, 2016). Given the lack of sufficient knowledge about the actual audiences in online communications, participants tend to employ an “imagined audience” (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p. 115) and tailor their language styles and other linguistic resources. Marwick and Boyd also note that the imagined audience could be totally different from the actual readers.

Audience in semi-public SNS

The notion of “imagined audience” is proposed based on Marwick and Boyd’s observation of online interactions in Twitter, a populated public SNS where participants can choose to “follow” Twitter accounts without requiring the permission and authentication from posters. Therefore, audience on Twitter is technically limitless and their backgrounds and relations to the participants could be superdiverse. Androutsopoulos (2014b) offers a critique of the hypothetical quality of the online audience and points out that in semi-public SNSs such as Facebook, online audience “consists of limited number of members and is therefore not imagined in the same way as the large, anonymous audiences of broadcasting” (p. 63).

In a semi-public SNS, the accessibility of user’s posts is limited to those authenticated ‘friends’, meaning the user may have pre-existing social connections or offline acquaintances with online audiences. Thus, it is highly likely that audiences in semi-public SNSs are not totally diverse or unpredictable as in public SNSs but are selected and filtered by user’s offline networks, individual
experiences, and mutual friendships (Tagg & Seargeant, 2016). The limited diversity or the predictability of the audience composition in semi-public SNSs is defined by Tagg and Seargeant (2016) as “intradiversity” (p. 215) to be in contrast to “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2007). They note that the intradiverse SNS is also distinctive from traditionally defined community in the sense that people in traditional community usually are geographically adjacent or share common interests or goals, whereas audience in intradiverse SNSs are separated in time and space. Moreover, their relationships with the user are more diverse than that in traditional community. Therefore, the density of audience in semi-public SNSs may be higher given that people’s diverse offline social networks and multiple identities are brought into a single site. For example, “friends” in WeChat may not only include real friends, but also family members, colleagues, schoolmates, or people with only fleeting acquaintances during a vacation. As the result, in order to negotiate collapsed contexts in semi-public SNSs, online users may develop highly nuanced audience design strategies to design their multiple self-presentations according to more concrete images of audience and navigate to different segments of audiences within the intradiversed networks (Boyd & Marwick, 2011).

**Language Choice as Audience Design**

Language choice is generally a broad conception concerning codes or linguistic resources available to online communication. In this study, “language choice” is defined as three multilingual Chinese students’ choice between his or her first language, Chinese and, most of the time, English for WeChat posts. Previous studies on language choice have discussed its relationship with other variables such as identity (e.g., Lee & Barton, 2011; Warschauer, El Said, & Zohry, 2002), topics and settings (Fahmee & Yong, 2016), and symbolic meanings (Hinrichs, 2016; Holmes, 2004). Despite the general recognition of the influence of the perceived audience on language style and the potential consequence of context collapse, relevant research on the relationship between online audience and language style is far from sufficient.

Takahashi (2010) examined Japanese users’ language choice on Myspace and Mixi, a popular SNS in Japan. The result shows that language choice plays an important role in dividing audience and distinguishing different identities. Takahashi notes that participants use predominantly English in Myspace in an attempt to orient to foreigners or “outsiders” while using primarily Japanese on Mixi to address Japanese audiences, the “us.” Instead of a bifurcation of language choice, Tagg and Seargeant (2014) identify that language choice is an addressivity strategy to target different audience roles. For example, based on Facebook data collected from three multilingual users, they found that English is perceived as lingua franca and is employed to address their wider audience circle (similar to overhear in Bell’s framework), whereas the mixed linguistic codes are generally employed to address a group or groups of their active friends (similar to auditor in Bell’s framework).

Seargeant et al. (2012) examined Facebook exchanges among a group of Thai speakers. Although the participants’ default language is Thai in offline communications, their online interactions exhibit a great complexity of code-switching into English. They argue that code-switching should not be seen as an alternation of different language systems but rather a “shared semiotic resources” including both English and their first language (p. 528, 529). They also conclude the patterns of code-switching act are tailored to target a specific group or groups of audience and represent their identities accordingly.

Androutsopoulos (2014b) made a first attempt to associate the audience design strategies with multilingual users’ language choice. He argues that in a heterogeneous network where users’ linguistic repertoires only partially overlap, the fundamental concern in selecting language style should be to make the post accessible to as many audiences as possible. After analyzing four
multilingual speakers’ Facebook posts, he identifies three language choice strategies to maximize the audiences: (i) choosing a lingua franca; (ii) replicating contents in multiple languages; and (iii) avoiding using linguistic resources altogether (p. 66). For those patterns of language choice not accessible to as many audiences as possible are considered as the strategies to partition audiences. The significance of Androutsopoulos’s framework is that it offers a clear-cut categorization of different patterns of language choice in relation to specific audience design. However, specific strategies for partitioning audiences are not elaborated in his study. Hinrichs (2016) draws upon Androutsopoulos’s framework to investigate six multilingual users’ language choice in initial posts and concludes that the use of English is largely for the purpose of maximizing audiences whereas audience partitioning is often achieved through switching to other languages that are neither their primary language nor English.

Overall, the previous studies show that, audience, whether imagined or real, is a major factor influencing multilingual users’ language choice. Considering a general lack of research in audience design and language choice in semi-public SNS, a clear picture of different audience designs achieved through the design of language choice is yet to form. Taking into consideration the pervasiveness of online interaction worldwide and the increasingly multilingual and multicultural society we live in, investigations of how different language choice strategies is associated with perceived audiences in online communication would unquestionably provide insights into the interrelationship between our offline live trajectories and online performances. A close analysis of audience design strategies in online communication will also update our previous knowledge and assumption about language choice.

A discourse-centered online ethnography approach to audience design

Previous studies on language choice and code-switching have provided comprehensive linguistic analyses in terms of its pattern and structure. However, online multilingual interactions pose distinctive features on the ground that many offline monolingual speakers tend to deploy several language codes to interact. Apart from analyzing linguistic patterns of language choice, it is necessary to associate online multilingual practices with the actual social context so as to understand from the users’ perspective motivations of code-switching. Therefore, ethnographic approach would be more effective in linking online discourse text with offline real activities and interpreting online language choice from a more personal and detailed perspective.

Comparing with early research on online social media discourse focusing on collecting de-contextual online data, ethnographical research provides a more holistic view by linking the offline lives with online activities. The advantage of ethnographic approach is well illustrated in Lam’s (2009) study where he largely adopted ethnographic methods such as recording interviews and observations of their offline lives to reveal the process of constructing participants’ second language learner identities. This ethnographic approach contextualizes the online interactions by revealing the actual social activities and practices in relation to online discourse. The ethnographic approach has also adopted and developed in Androutsopoulos’ study (2006) discussing identity construction process on musical social media sites. He combines close observation of online communication practices with interviews to gain more insiders’ perspectives. In another study on context collapse (2014), he still draws on ethnographic approach to interpret online data from a more holistic and interactive way. The combination of online data, offline observation, diary of digital media use, and semi-structured interviews creates constant interactions and interpretative contexts.
Context and method

There is still much scope for investigating the interrelationship between multilinguals’ online language choice and imagined audience. Blommaert (2007) emphasizes the unique significance of adopting digital ethnography approach that, instead of reducing complexity, it addresses complexity of social events comprehensively. Without aiming to find the clear-cut distinction between online and offline activities, the present study intends to reveal how the offline trajectories are related to people’s online self-presentations. To be more specific, the present study adopts an online ethnographic approach to examine three Chinese multilingual speakers’ language choices in a Chinese indigenous SNS, WeChat. The section begins with an introduction to the technical affordances of WeChat. Then the participants’ background information and the composition of their WeChat contacts are presented before moving on to the description of data collection process.

Site of the study: WeChat

WeChat is the fourth largest social media platform worldwide (Statista, 2017a, 2017b). Although it is a Chinese indigenous SNS, according to the latest statistics, WeChat has attracted more than 963 million monthly active users (Statista, 2017a, 2017b) from more than 200 countries and regions in the world (Yan, 2015). A survey conducted by Global Web Index in 2014 shows that WeChat is the most popular messaging application in the Asia-Pacific region. With the dramatic increase of overseas Chinese students worldwide, WeChat has become the major digital social media for transnational Chinese students and immigrants to communicate with various social ties in China and to establish new networks overseas (Zhou, Wen, Tang, & DiSalvo, 2017). In WeChat’s public social platform, Moments, users often narrate their lives, post photos and share links which by default are visible to all of their authenticated WeChat friends. The interface of WeChat “moments” is illustrated in Figure 1.

In the light of the fact that WeChat is predominantly used in China, and the default language in most online communication is Chinese, the major technical affordances of WeChat are introduced in terms of connection, users’ profiles, friends, and comments and sharing.

The primary method to add WeChat “friends” is through exchanging phone numbers. Although WeChat supports limited Web-based interaction, it is primarily a mobile-based instant messaging and calling application which enables users to find potential WeChat friends through their mobile contacts. As a result, the mixture of offline acquaintances with WeChat “friends” may limit the diversity of WeChat audiences and attract homogeneous social networks.

The personal profile in WeChat reveals only minimum information of a user, including a profile photo, name, gender, region and a “what’s up” section. Wang (2016) reports a survey that among 48 Shanghai citizens, 71% of them applied real names or identifiable nick names and 82% posted real portrait photos as profile photos. The result may also indicate the close offline–online connections in the way that users feel secure and necessary to reveal their real identities.

Similar to Facebook, WeChat requires reciprocal confirmation for friendship. However, WeChat poses stricter rules for traversing beyond the mutual friendship. The friend list is invisible even to the authenticated friends. It shows that public display of connections is not encouraged in WeChat (McDonald, 2016).

The disclosure of public connections is also manifested in the extent to which “comments” and ‘sharing’ are available. Unlike Facebook where comments from “friends” are visible to the public, reposting is not allowed and comments can only be seen by the poster, addressee, and their “common friends” who refer to those who are authenticated friends in both poster and addressee’s friend lists.
Taken together, the technical constraints posed on WeChat users may, to some extent, shape their “friends” compositions and self-presentations. The latest report released by China Channel (https://chinachannel.co) displays that over 57% of WeChat contacts are from the work-related acquaintance, 20.97% are from friends and family members, and only 7.38% are strangers met in online gaming.

Compared to Facebook, WeChat is a more private SNS (Lin, Fang, & Jin, 2017; McDonald, Nicolescu, & Sinanan, 2017), in the way that it limits the access to online interactions to those who have pre-existing offline acquaintance (Wang, Li, & Tang, 2015). Weintraub (1997) defines privacy as something “individual, or pertains only to an individual” (p. 4, 5). Hence, WeChat should still be considered as a SNS with lower degree of openness rather than a withdrawal from others, in other words, a semi-public SNS.

Most of previous research on WeChat gravitates toward its novel linguistic features and styles (e.g. Botha, 2017; Han, 2020). However, most data collected were elicited from WeChat’s instant messages which denote specific audience or group of audiences. The shared public posts in Wechat’s Moments seldom drew researchers attention except for the research conducted by Wang (2016). Adopting an ethnographic approach, Wang discussed the impact of social media on adult working population in China with a focus on the dialectical relationship between online and offline presentations. However, the special affordances of Wecat Moments and their influence on users’ language choice and self-presentation is rarely brought into attention.

**Data collection and analysis**

The primary data consists of their posts in WeChat Moments from July 2016 to August 2017, offline observations and semi-structured interviews discussing their motivations that may influence their
language choice and interpretations of particular posts (e.g. why English was used when describing a particular photo; do you have a specific audience in mind when posting). The underlying reason for choosing the specific period is that participants were going through a dramatic transnational movement which may bring huge impact on their online activities. For example, the expanded friend circle entails more complicated strategies to address distinct groups of audience and they are more likely to constantly shift and negotiate between different self-representations.

As Georgakopoulou (2017) suggests, it is advisable to ethically scrutinize the researchers’ social media when conducting an online ethnographic study. To this end, I use my personal WeChat Moments as the site for investigation. Given that WeChat is a more private community, being a part of the community would allow me to gain more ethnographic knowledge of the participants and to approach the issue from insider’s perspective. However, considering the fact that it is uncertain whether posts on Moment should be regarded as private or public, I obtained consent before screenshoting participants’ posts.

First, I chronologically retrospected the Moments of three friends who lived in Melbourne during the period of conducting the study. Since the study only focuses on language choice, any initial posts without posters’ textual contributions and those contain only a direct quote from the posted content were excluded. As a result, 588 initial posts in total were collected for further analysis. Given that the three participants are classmates and reciprocal WeChat friends, they have shared friends in offline communications as well as online networks. Their mutual friends are exclusively classmates in Melbourne University. Therefore, the WeChat data generally consist of three individual social networks with a small amount of overlaps.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face after the completion of online data collection. The three interviews are 1 hour long on average. The primary aims of conducting the interview are, first, to clarify who are the intended audiences in selected initial posts; second, to contextualize selected posts, especially those contain code-switching. In addition, general questions about their life trajectories, linguistic repertoires, history of using WeChat, and WeChat friends’ composition were also asked in the interview. Full written consent from the participants was obtained prior to the study.

What should but noted is that the interviews were conducted in Chinese. Since the researcher and participants are Chinese native speakers, speaking Chinese would ensure full comprehension. Another consideration is that most of their posts are written in Chinese and some of their Chinese expressions do not have equivalent English translations. Therefore, interviewing in Chinese helps me to interpret the meaning of the posts. The interviews were selectively transcribed into English. The Chinese or other languages appeared in the selected initial contributions are translated in italics.

The analysis consists of three steps. First, a quantitative analysis of collected linguistic repertoire was carried out. Each post was coded for language choice. Coding for language choice focuses on distinguishing four major types. First, the main language in participants’ repertoire (Chinese). Second, language shared by most of their WeChat contacts (English). Third, the combination of features from two languages (code-switching between Chinese and English). Fourth, languages besides Chinese and English. By comparing the number of each type in each month, the changes of preferred types were recorded for further analysis. Second, representative posts were identified. The criteria for selection were, first, posts should cover the whole research period. In other words, the number of selected posts should not be disproportionately higher in several months while no posts from other months; second, the posts should represent each types of language choice. Third, a semi-structured interview was carried out to clarify the specific imagined audience in each selected posts. The questions in the interview mainly concern about the specific contexts of each post, the intended
audience, received responses, the reason of selecting particular language choice, and their changes in offline and online networks.

**Participants**

Three participants (Amy, Angela, and Lan, by their pseudonyms) were recruited for the current study. All participants met the selection criteria: (i) they are Chinese native speakers with high proficiency in at least English; (ii) they have been an active WeChat users for 5 years and they regularly post updates in Moments, revealing their willingness to display themselves in a semi-public social media platform; (iii) WeChat is their most frequently used SNS for online communications and includes the majority of their online audience; (vi) they have experienced transnational mobility during the data collection period.

Amy, Angela, and Lan are postgraduate students in Melbourne University and have been in Australia for over 14 months. Considering the intradiversity (Tagg & Seargeant, 2016) in semi-public SNSs, the participants’ life trajectory and personal networks would be the determining factor of the composition of their WeChat audience. To have a better understanding of the interrelationship between intended audience and language choice, participants’ individual experiences and linguistic repertoire are summarized in Table 1.

Amy, Angela, and Lan’s WeChat networks included 672, 451, and 261 contacts, respectively, during the period of data collection (October, 2017). Despite the fact that the size of their WeChat contacts varies to some extent, they all reported that they had established pre-existing offline relationships with their WeChat “friends” from all eras of their lives. According to their reports, almost all of their WeChat friends have Chinese as their first language; around 90% of their WeChat friends have studied English to at least higher education level in China. Small discrepancies of their individual WeChat friends’ compositions will be presented in the data analysis section.

Despite the small number of participants, they are socially active in WeChat Moments during the time of study, generating a large number of data with diverse patterns of language choice. Moreover, through careful scrutinizing of all posts in my personal WeChat Moments before targeting the participants, I noticed that multilingual online users usually target at four major types of imagined audience during the period of transnational mobility which include friends and relatives in China, overseas friends with similar transnational experience, new affiliations in Melbourne, and absence of particular audience or groups of audience. The three participants’ posts encompass the four types of imagined audience. Therefore, the audience design strategies they deployed may have the generalizability among different multilingual online users, especially those in a semi-public social media site.

**Data and analysis**

The analysis mainly centers on two purposes. First, to display the overall quantitative changes in their language choice and to reveal the interrelationship between their online practices with their offline activities. Second, to identify their potential audience behind their posts and to classify the patterns of language choice or code-switching together with other linguistic features based on different audience design strategies.

**Overall language choice and intended audience**

Amy. Figure 1 recorded Amy’s overall frequency of her language choice. The patterns of language choice are classified into four categories, Chinese (C), English (E), code-switch between Chinese
Table 1. Participants’ relevant ethnographic information.

| Participant | Gender | Bachelor Degree | Dominant language choice in initial posts | Additional language used | Additional study experiences<sup>a</sup> | Work experiences | No. of contacts on Wechat | No. of initial posts | No. of Chinese posts | No. of English posts | No. of code-switching posts |
|-------------|--------|-----------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Amy         | Female | Teaching of Chinese as a foreign language | Chinese | English, Japanese, German, Korean | Having exchanged to a university in the United States for one | An intern in the international exchange office in a university for a month | 672 | 280 | 134 | 12 | 110 |
| Angela      | Female | Japanese Language and Literature | Chinese | English Japanese French | None | An intern in a branch of British Council in Shanghai for a month | 451 | 108 | 42 | 20 | 36 |
| Lan         | Male   | English Language and Literature | Chinese | English French German Latin Esperanto | Having exchanged to university in Taiwan for a semester | None | 261 | 200 | 121 | 15 | 43 |

<sup>a</sup>In addition to the study experience in the universities where they received their bachelor degree and in Melbourne University.
and English (C + E), and other languages (OL). During her first 5 months in Melbourne, Amy chose to post more mixed codes between Chinese and English. In the interview, she confirmed the observation and explained “When I first came to Melbourne, I want to adapt to the new environment as soon as possible. So, I try to use more English to express myself” (Interview, October 15, 2017).

The increase of mixed codes in her post seems to show her embrace of the local community and her new identity, a transnational Chinese student. New networks which are dominated by her Chinese friends and classmates in Melbourne were added into her WeChat “friends,” which may further complicate her audience design. Amy commented on her codeswitching in the earlier period, “The English words I used in the posts are quite simple. I don’t think my friends in China would not understand them” (Interview, October 15, 2017). It seems that the use of code-switching between Chinese and English should be seen as a way to negotiate different self-presentations in the sense that it implies her new transnational identity. Meanwhile, the code-switching posts are not an act of exclusion of most of her friends in China.

One salient shift in her language choice is that she switched to Chinese in most of her posts from December 2016 to February 2017. She reported that the majority of posts published during that time were tailored to her schoolmates and teachers in China. During that period of time, she was on her summer vacation. Instead of flying back to China, she took a part-time job in Melbourne and traveled to British. Posts about her Melbourne living experiences were almost all written in Chinese. In the interview, she explained:

> Before I came to Melbourne, my teacher in China once told me to post more about lives and studies in Melbourne. Because many of my schoolmates or even teachers don’t have the opportunity to study abroad and some of my junior schoolmates may want to apply for foreign universities. I think I should tell them what I see and how I feel (Interview, October 15, 2017).

Her reflection shows that her language choice is directly related to the shift in her perceived audience. Posting in Chinese would ensure the full comprehension from her schoolmates in China.

From April to June 2017, roughly the time duration of her second semester, the number of code-switching posts increased significantly, even became the primary language choice in May. When asked who are the intended audiences in most of her code-switching posts, she commented:

> As I stay longer in Melbourne, I seems to be less attached to friends in China. I feel more comfortable talking with my previous friends who are also studying abroad and friends in Melbourne because they know what I’m talking about (Interview, October 15, 2017).

It seems that the increase in code-switching during her second semester is related to her stronger attachment to the local community and the transnational community formed by her previous friends who have similar transnational experiences. Her comments in the interview also show her attitude about code-switching between Chinese and English: “For example, I said ‘我去 Woolworth 了’ (I went to Woolworth), it’s not because I want to code-switch, but it’s a word I see and use every day” (Interview, October 15, 2017).

Angela. In the first 5 months in Melbourne, Angela did not show a predominant preference to a particular language choice which is shown in Figure 2. It may be partly due to the fact that she grew up in Shanghai, a cosmopolitan city in China, where code-switching between Chinese and English and simple and formulaic expressions of English are commonly used along with Chinese. It is also confirmed by Angela. She commented "It’s pretty common to mix Chinese and English when I talk
with my friends. We sometimes also changed English pronunciation into Chinese characters, that was so funny” (Interview, October 17, 2017). Therefore, the posts written in Chinese, code-switching between Chinese and English and short, formulaic English seem to be unable to distinguish different segments of her audiences.

What is noticeable is that she posted regularly in English since January 2017. Although the amount is still less than the posts written in other linguistic codes, it shows a slight increase in the next 7 months. According to Angela’s remark, most of the posts written in English have concrete intended audiences who are friends in the local Christian community in Melbourne. As Angela reflected, they have diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Although some of them are Chinese native speakers, they chose to speak English in group activities. With the increased participation in the activities organized by the local community, she gradually oriented some of her posts to the particular group of audience. When asked why she still chose to post in English considering that some of her friends in the local Christian community are Chinese native speakers, she explained:

Yes, they can understand Chinese. But when we were hanging out with other friends, we usually chose to speak English. Another reason is that actually I don’t want my WeChat friends who are not members in this community to comment on my posts (Interview, October 17, 2017).

For Angela, English in some cases has specific partitioning function in her WeChat communications. Further analysis would be presented in the following section.

Lan. As indicated in Figure 3, Lan had a strong preference to Chinese, particularly in the first 6 months in Melbourne. As he recalled, the main consideration of posting in Chinese is to introduce his life in Melbourne to his friends in China. Unlike Amy who chose to post with mixed codes, Lan still stuck to Chinese when addressing friends in China. In the interview, he acknowledged that he did not prefer to code-switch unless it is inevitable. He explained,
I am more concerned about the consistency in language style. Speaking in different languages seems to represent different identities. A word in two languages does not always have the identical connotation. So, I would not switch between two languages in a sentence unless some words are unable to be translated into another language (Interview, October 14, 2017).

His attitude toward code-switching may explain the generally unchanged amount of code-switching posts during the 1-year period. In the interview, he said that he felt less attached to his friends in China as he stayed longer in Melbourne (Figure 4). When I asked him if he felt more connected with friends in Melbourne, he commented “I did have some friends in Melbourne, but not that close. Because we just had the same subjects last semester. In this semester (the third semester), we seldom see each other” (Interview, October 14, 2017). It seems that he gradually lost the sense of affiliation to a certain group. Posting in WeChat becomes a place for him to record and entertain rather than a platform to communicate. It is illustrated in his comment:

I used to think people would pay attention to my updates. Gradually, I found that it is not the case. I don’t have a lot of WeChat friends and they don’t care what you said. It (WeChat) is more like a dairy or recording for myself (Interview, October 14, 2017).

The sense of isolation and absence of audience are manifested in his language choice. Most of Lan’s English posts are apparently longer and more complex in syntactic and lexical level comparing to those in Amy and Angela’s WeChat Moments. Lan remarked:

I knew that my English posts and posts in other foreign languages are sometimes hard to understand. People don’t comment on those posts. But they (languages other than Chinese) are what first come to my mind (Interview, October 14, 2017).

For Lan, online language choice seems not to be a rational and audience-oriented decision but a natural voice. In response, his WeChat audiences also see those posts as a sign of exclusion.

![Figure 3. Angela’s overall language choice frequency.](image)
Although their language choices are individualized to some extent, it shows a general tendency that the amount of Chinese posts decreased while the amount of other linguistic codes, English and mixed codes, increase to a different degree.

As for the online audiences, all participants reported changes in their intended audiences during the 1-year period. They all reported to be gradually less attached to their previous WeChat friends in China. However, their new affiliations become diverse. The changes in target audience are directly associated with the frequency of certain types of language choice. The following section will elaborate the relationship between particular patterns of language choice and audience design strategies.

**Language choices as audience design strategies**

Based on Androutsopoulos’s (2014b) audience design framework, any type of language choice that is departure from poster’s primary language use is a result of maximizing or partitioning audiences. Since the WeChat users in current study are Chinese native speakers and their primary language is also the lingua franca in WeChat, using the default language, Chinese, already maximize audiences. Therefore, the current study will mainly focus on the partitioning strategies identified in the available data. The maximizing strategies mentioned in Androutsopoulos’s study will be selectively examined in the context of WeChat. In addition, since the study only focuses on linguistic variations, the third strategy for maximizing audience will not be discussed.

**Maximizing audiences.** In contrast to Facebook communication where users have diverse first languages and a common language spoken by the majority of participants are crucial for maximizing audiences, WeChat is a more homogenous SNS in the sense that users’ linguistic repertoires do not vary dramatically. Taking the homogeneity in WeChat into consideration, the two maximization strategies will be reexamined.

![Figure 4. Lan’s overall language choice frequency.](image-url)
Choosing a common denominator language. Since Chinese is the common denominator language in WeChat, writing in Chinese would serve as a maximizing strategy. However, several exceptions (Example 1) were found in the data.

Example (1) Amy’s Moments, August 2017
猫本时间7.36
猫宁
[Chinese] Melbourne time 7.36
Morning

The combination of Chinese characters, 猫 (mao, “cat”), 本 (ben, “notebook”) and 宁 (Ning, “peaceful”) originally carries no literal meanings. Chinese teenagers creatively combine linguistic resources to form new words especially on the Internet (Zhang, 2015). Instead of translating Melbourne into the official corresponding Chinese which is 墨尔本 (‘mo er ben’), 猫本 is a much more populated expression used specifically by Chinese youths in Australia. It supports Androutsopoulos’s (2014b) finding that English, as lingua franca in his study, “speaks to a very ‘local’ Facebook audience” (p. 67). The lingua franca in WeChat sometimes can also represent local membership.

Replication of content in more than one language. In WeChat Moments, replicating the content in more than one language seems to be unnecessary for the sake of maximizing audience. However, several instances of replication were identified in the data. For example,

Example (2) Lan’s Moments, July 2016
Hac noce latinitatis cursus aestatis cecidit. Gratias magistris et amicis pro eruditione praesidoque. Valete!
为期十天的课程结束了，感谢老师们，感谢同学们。再见啦! [Latin] Tonight, the summer Latin class ends. Thanks to my teacher and friends for the teaching and help. [Chinese] 10-day course ended, thank teachers, thank classmates. Goodbye!

Lan chose to post in both Latin and Chinese about his graduation from a 10-day Latin intensive course. Considering none of his WeChat friend is Latin monolingual speakers, his replication certainly did not serve as a maximizing technique. In the interview, he explained that the original idea was to show his minimum proficiency in Latin as well as for self-entertainment. As Lan recalled, the comments all centered on the Chinese part of the post. It seems that both poster and audiences are aware of the homogeneity nature in WeChat. The parallel existence of more than one language, especially when the additional language is minority language, is not considered as an exclusion or maximization but rather a way of self-entertainment.

Androutsopoulos (2014b) suggests that replication of contents in more than one language is motivated by “positive politeness in the sense that addressing as many segments of the networked audience in their ‘own’ language” (p.67). Although exact replication in multiple languages for this purpose was not found in WeChat data, some mixed code posts serve the similar end. For example:

Example (3) Angela’s moment, August 2017
Have a fun night wiz a big family! #特别鸣谢服化道摄影都承包的美vivi !还有风雨无阻给我lift的美劳拉!
Have a fun night with a big family! [Chinese] Especial thanks go to beautiful Vivi who is responsible for the costume, makeup and photographing! And Flora who give me a lift despite of the bad weather!

In her post, Angela described a party she participated in Melbourne. Given that the default language in the party was English and some of her WeChat friends who also participated in the party were English speakers, she chose to write in English to express her general feeling about the party. She then switched to Chinese when she intended to express special appreciation to her Chinese friends in the party. It seems that she intentionally selected two languages to address different scale of audience, English for general while Chinese for specific.

**Partitioning audience.** According to Androutsopoulos (2014b), partition aims to limit the accessibility of audience by selecting specific language(s) (p. 67). Given that the participants in his study were multilingual speakers who had Facebook friends speaking German, Greek, and Chinese, selecting one minority language would automatically target particular segments of audience. For example, Dema, one of the participants in his study, tended to use German to record her lives in Hamburg while Greek for interactions with her friends in Greece or Hamburg. Given its clear-cut division, Androutsopoulos did not summarize the strategies for partitioning. However, the partitioning techniques in the context of WeChat are more complicated in the sense that the primary language is available to almost all WeChat audiences while languages other than Chinese and English would become intelligible for almost all WeChat audiences considering most of them are monolingual or bilingual (Chinese and English). Due to the limited linguistic repertoire, English becomes an important resource for partitioning. The partition strategies will be divided into two dimensions based on the extent to which audiences are excluded.

**Complete partition.** I feature complete partition as a way to target particular individual or a small fraction of audiences. The language choice together with other linguistic features would greatly limit a large number of audiences’ access and therefore result in only handful of responses or no response at all. Three strategies were identified: English with complex syntactic structures and low frequency words and languages other than English and Chinese. Those techniques are self-evident in the way that most of their WeChat contacts have limited proficiency in English. However, the lack of proficiency is not the only reason resulting of the partitioning effect. Take the following two initial posts for example:

**Example (4), Lan’s Moments, August 2017**

People follow conventions to celebrate a membership. They force themselves to believe something they could otherwise not believe. Human.

**Example (5), Amy’s Moments, May 2017**

Time to test your Chinese

# barrage - comments on screen of a video#

1’ It started from Japan, but becoming extremely popular in China.

2’ Based on construction and deconstruction of attention, the Barrage an still keep consumers’ attention on that website, to some extent, making boring parts of a movie much more interesting.

3’ To some extent, the virtual reality builds up a community or a sense of belonging for consumers. In particular, for watchers who watch a movie alone, barrage plays a role of an interactive platform. For
example, it is interesting to see the conversations as barrages: “is anyone watching” “yeah I am watching on 5 May 2017” (Sounds a bit silly).

In example (4), the lexical difficulty would greatly hinder comprehensibility and, therefore, acts as a partition strategy. Lan recalled that he received no comment. In example (5), Amy summarized the content of a Chinese webpage in English in order to explain the notion of “barrage” to an English native speaker who is her classmate in Melbourne and her WeChat friend. Despite the straightforwardness of the sentences, she only received a comment from her target audience. The examples show that the complexity and the length of English in a post would act as an exclusion of almost all audience.

However, given that there is still considerable amount of audiences who are highly proficient in English or English native speakers in their WeChat “friends,” the lack of English proficiency alone cannot account for the complete partition effect. Another possible reason is that even those audience who are highly proficient in English would not perceive themselves as potential readership. In a monolingual-dominant SNS, complex English usage seems to rarely imply a sense of membership in a community nor be encoded with a group identity among those transnational Chinese students.

Besides posting in English, other languages which appear in initial posts, such as German and French, could also function as a partition strategy but to different extents. In the available data, all the initial posts written in languages other than English and Chinese are short or formulaic. I initially anticipated that it would exclude a substantial majority of audiences given that the unfamiliarity with a language would create a sense of alienation. However, the data show that the degree of partition depends on the genre in which the language is used.

Example (6), Lan’s moment July 2016
Chez les kangourous
[French] at kangaroo’s house

Example (7), Angela’s moment June 2017

[Japanese] [candy][rain] rain/candy [rain][candy]

In example (6), the French phrase may be difficult to comprehend for most of Lan’s WeChat audience. However, in the following interview, Lan did not consider the French phrase as an exclusion on the account that the French word “kangourous is similar morphologically to English word ‘kangaroo’”. He also mentioned that in addition to the post, a location tag, “澳大利亚- 墨尔本 (Australian - Melbourne),” was attached to further assist the comprehension. As Lan expected, he received comments from a wide range of audience.

On the contrary, in example (7), Angela received no response. It appears that using foreign languages for general descriptions which are disengaged from interpersonal interactions would be perceived as a complete partitioning strategy. Nonetheless the combination with other semiotic modes such as location tag, picture of general interest would greatly undermine the partitioning effect in foreign language posts.

**Limited partition.** Limited partition is characterized as a way to orient a post to the majority of WeChat friends. In the WeChat data, code-switching was found to be commonly used to address
their major part of audience. Since the participants are transnational students, switching from Chinese to English for education-related words exists all the time. Living in an English-dominant society, they prefer to use English terms directly such as *Coles* and *Melbourne Central* to describe daily encounters rather than translate to Chinese equivalents. The intra-sentential code-switching between Chinese and English is repeatedly found in initial posts. Examples are given:

Example (8), Amy’s Moments, October 2016

感 觉 班 上 的 “老 师” 都 在 吐 槽 学 生 不 care feedback 总 是 犯 一 样 的 错 作 为 学 生 真 是 麻 封

[Chinese] I feel that ‘teachers’ are all complaining that students don’t *care feedback* and always make the same mistakes. As a student, really embarrassed.

Example (9), Amy’s Moments, July 2016

据说因为天气冷澳洲的£不下蛋鸡蛋要 sell out 了 Excuse me?!

[Chinese] *It is said that because of the cold weather, Australian chicken did not lay eggs. Eggs are going to sell out. Excuse me?!!*

Example (10), Lan’s Moments, February 2017

曲 径 通 幽 处 , old arts 草 木 深

[Chinese] *The winding path leads to a secluded place, the grass and trees in old arts are thriving.*

Inter-sentential code-switching posts found in data usually choose Chinese as the matrix structure, interspersed with English words or phrases. Considering that most of participants’ WeChat friends had learned English to the higher education level, the simplicity and small portion of English expressions reduce the partitioning effect and signal as an involvement rather than exclusion. Code-switching between Chinese and English is common not only among transnational Chinese students but also among those educated Chinese adolescents especially in the urban area of China. It seems that code-switching can best target audience who have similar backgrounds and living history regardless of their geographical locations.

Inter-sentential code-switching between Chinese and additional languages appears occasionally in their posts. The sentences written in additional languages are often short, formulaic, and are not loaded with key information. An example is given:

Example (11), Angela’s Moments, May 2017

La Derniere Classe 😘 Vous me manquerez! 💖’ #图为我可爱可爱最可爱的法语老 师 😘 &同样可爱的同班小伙伴

[French] *the last class I shall miss you all!* [Chinese] *the picture is my lovely lovely the loveliest French teacher and equally lovely classmates*

The post in example (11) was accompanied by photos of her French teacher and classmates. Therefore, audience can easily interpret the meaning of the post based on the Chinese part and attached photos. In the interview, Angela elaborated the reason of switching between Chinese and French:

“La Derniere Classe” (the last class) is a very famous literature I learned in high school.
My last French class reminded me of it. “Vous me manquerez” (I shall miss you all) is to express my feelings. I really like my French teacher. If I said it in Chinese, it is kind of too formal. You know, we (Chinese people) seldom express strong emotions. It is kind of weird to say I miss you in Chinese (Interview, October 17, 2017).

It seems that, for Angela, switching from Chinese to French is motivated by mainly two considerations. First, quoting the original version preserves its cultural connotation. The Chinese equivalent may only preserve the literal meaning and could be interpreted as stating a fact that it was the last French class. Therefore, the code-switching should not be conceived as a rational choice between two languages, but as a way to mobilize potential semiotic resources to express oneself more accurately. Second, as Marwick and Boyd (2011) suggest that participants in social media sites with large audiences “post only things they believe their broadest group of acquaintances will find non-offensive” (p. 9). Angela’s uncomfortableness of revealing emotional feelings in Chinese shows her own assessment of what is appropriate in particular social media platform. Switching to French to express personal feelings could be seen as a linguistic maneuver to balance the privacy and publicity on a homogeneous semi-public SNS.

The intra-sentence code-switching between Chinese and other languages was not found in the data. The possible explanation would be the participants are aware that it requires audiences to have larger linguistic repertoire in order to fully interpret a sentence, which would be perceived as a partition with specific focus on a small number of audiences.

Writing posts in simple English sentences or phrases is another way to address the majority of WeChat audiences. For example,

Example (12), Angela’s Moments, October 2016
Beautiful, isn’t it?

Example (13), Lan’s Moment, July 2016
Visit the city have find something new

The two posts were all accompanied with photos of Melbourne landscapes. The English sentence or phrase which is usually short and simple in lexical and syntactic levels, along with photos of general interests such as food and landscape often could be seen as a demand for interactions rather than a self-entertainment.

Discussion and conclusion

Through examining three multilingual users’ language choice in WeChat Moments, the study shows that audience in online communication still pose major influence on multilingual users’ language choice. The result is in a line with previous sociolinguistic studies on language style and audience (e.g. Bell, 2001; Lee, 2014; Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). Considering the unique technical affordances of WeChat and WeChat users’ homogenous linguistic repertoires, the current study adapted Androutsopoulos’s (2014b) audience specification framework to investigate multilingual WeChat users’ language choice. The analysis distinguishes between “complete” and “limited” partitions on account of the scale of exclusion and categorizes different types of language choice accordingly. What is noticeable in the current findings is that English has become an essential linguistic or semiotic resource for audience design in a SNS where English is not the lingua franca.
Androutsopoulos (2014b) and Hinrichs (2016) conclude that English used by a group of non-native speakers is for the purpose of maximizing audience. However, English is mainly used for partitioning different segments of audiences in WeChat. It seems that online users and audiences have a very high sensitivity of the different patterns of Chinese–English code-switching and grammatical and lexical choices in English, which helps multilingual users to achieve highly nuanced audience design strategies in WeChat, which can hardly be found in heterogeneous digital social networks.

The findings also suggest that transnational mobility allows new online networks and patterns of language choice to be integrated into existing social networks, which reminds of Androutsopoulos’s (2014b) emphasis on the impact of offline mobility on further context collapse on social media. The current study clearly illustrates that the multilingual participants chose to alternate their language choices in response to different segments of audience. Facing the greater extent of context collapse resulting from transnational mobility, the participants show generally two distinct ways to deal with context collapse. Amy and Angela chose to shift between different intended audiences through changing their language styles. For example, Amy adopted the code-switching between Chinese and English in the earlier phase of her transitional experience to show her membership in a new environment. She then switched to Chinese when her intended audiences changed into her schoolmates in China. Lan seems to be more self-oriented when facing larger context collapse. He shows no interest in affiliation to local networks and less attention to his previous community. He tends to be less attentive to his WeChat audience, which is manifested in his frequent use of “complete” partitioning strategies.

In contrast to the notion of “imagined audience” (Litt, 2012; Marwick & boyd, 2011), the findings reveal that WeChat audiences are much more concrete. Apart from some posts in which posters target specific real audiences, most of posts with unexpected language choice oriented to a group or groups of real audience whom the poster met in offline settings. The result provides supplementary evidence for the claim that semi-public SNS is more intradiverse with higher degree of predictability in audience composition (Tagg & Seargeant, 2016).

The study is among the first attempts to examine the language choice on WeChat in response to audience design. Since Chinese is overwhelmingly used in WeChat and its technical affordances limits the publicity, WeChat is traditionally considered as more private, predominantly monolingual social media. However, with the prevalence of English in China and the increasing number of transnational Chinese students and immigrants worldwide, the research findings show that the language practices on WeChat are much more diverse and complex than previously anticipated. As Zhang (2015) comments “in China today, what is worth noticing is that many young people who are English literate and technology savvy, are mixing English with Putonghua and varieties of Chinese with ludic effect on various Chinese social websites” (p. 232). Considering that English is not the lingua franca in WeChat, the multiple functions and prevalent use of English are remarkable in the data. Three participants all acknowledged that English is not a rationale choice between languages, but a “first response” (Interview with Angela, Oct 17, 2017). Therefore, multilingual online users’ language choice should not be regarded as a shift between languages, but as Seargeart et al. (2012) suggests “drawing in various ways on a shared set of semiotic resources” (p. 528). The categorization of different types of language choice as audience design in the present study should not be considered as a fixed typification of existing language styles among Chinese youths, but as a guidance to explore the underlying reason of associating particular language style to specific “imagined” or “knowing” audiences, for example, group identities and symbolic meaning associated with particular language style.
Limitations and directions for future studies

The major limitation of this study is that it only examined the initial contributions in online interactions rather than the whole event which includes multi-authored sequence of contributions (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003). The combination of initial and responding contributions may render more valuable insights into the complete process of context construction and its relation to language choice. Moreover, the participants are those who have lived in abroad for just 1-year period. Although the underlying rationale for choosing “newcomers” is that they may encounter more problems in managing the increasingly collapsed context in intradiverse SNS, the time period may be too short for them to associate with local communities and establish new networks. Therefore, the data did not provide a whole picture of how transnational mobility influences the audience design online. The future study could undertake a longitudinal study with longer time period.

Another possible area for future research would be investigation of language choices in those SNSs where English is not the lingual franca. With the trend of globalization, English is no longer indexed with a singular value or ideology. Investigating English use in those SNSs may provide insights into how English is operated in both local and global levels.

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ORCID iD

Kaiwen Liu  https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0449-7486

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Author biography

Kaiwen Liu is a Lecturer at School of Humanities & Foreign language, Xi’an Posts and Telecommunications University.