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Investigating translanguaging strategies and online self-presentation through internet slang on Douyin (Chinese TikTok)

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Abstract: This study explores the translanguaging strategies used in internet slang on Douyin, a popular social media platform in China. By analyzing 331 examples (encompassing 313 translanguaging strategies), we investigate how individuals utilize various translanguaging resources, including multimodal, multilingual, multisemiotic, and multisensory resources, to manage their online self-presentation. Our findings suggest that multilingual resources, such as new Chinglish, Pinyin initialism, and hybrid words (combining Chinese, English, and Arabic numerals), were the most frequently used strategies. Additionally, we found that multisensory resources, including homophonic puns and modal particles, were also commonly utilized. In contrast, multimodal resources, such as emojis, and multisemiotic resources, such as keyboard-generated emoticon, hashtag, and punctuation mark, were less frequently employed. These findings reveal that Chinese internet users display a high degree of creativity and adaptability in their online communication, drawing on a wide range of linguistic and semiotic resources to express their identities and project their desired image. Overall, this study highlights the importance of translanguaging in online communication and its role in shaping self-presentation in the digital age.

Keywords: translanguaging strategies; internet slang; Douyin; self-presentation; multimodal resources

1 Introduction

Since the inception of the internet, online self-presentation has generated considerable interest among researchers and users alike (e.g., Kendall 2003; Stallabrass

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1995; Turkle 1997, 2005; Wakeford 1999). Self-presentation, a complex process involving diverse goals such as creating impressions or establishing a personal brand (Goffman 1959; Schlenker 1980), has been significantly impacted by the rise of social media platforms. Internet slang, prevalent on platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit, plays a crucial role in self-presentation through linguistic and semiotic means.

In China, short video platforms like Douyin (known as TikTok outside China) provide ample opportunities for users to employ linguistic repertoires and creative communicative strategies for self-presentation. One such phenomenon that has emerged in this context is “translanguaging”. Originally rooted in a language revitalization movement in Wales (Williams 1994), translanguaging has evolved into a dynamic and fluid use whereby bilinguals or multilinguals exploit a multiplicity linguistic resources across different languages and modalities for creative and critical meaning-making (García and Li 2014; Li 2018). And during such integrated utilization of diverse sense-making resources, a translanguaging space (Li 2011) emerges, which provides a platform for language users to blend social environments and their associated linguistic codes, which were traditionally kept separate due to differing practices in various contexts.

While the bulk of translanguaging research has primarily flourished within educational settings (Baker 2011; García et al. 2021; Garcia and Li 2014; Lewis et al. 2012; Li 2018; Li 2022), with some also extending to linguistic contexts (Ren and Guo 2022; Tomei and Chetty 2021; Zhang and Ren 2022), investigations into translanguaging practices on social media, particularly on short video platforms, remain limited. To address this gap, the present study investigates the use of translanguaging strategies in internet slang for self-presentation on Douyin, a popular Chinese short video platform.

The importance and originality of this study lie in its unique focus on the intersection of translanguaging strategies and internet slang in the context of self-presentation on social media. This research contributes to the existing literature by investigating how users employ these strategies on a popular Chinese platform, thus broadening the understanding of the relationship between language use and self-presentation in online environments. Additionally, the findings of this study offer insights into the current practices of translanguaging and further elucidate the intricacies of internet language culture in China.

Specifically, this study adopts a theoretical framework that combines translanguaging theory (García and Li 2014) and self-presentation theory (Goffman 1959). Translanguaging theory provides insights into the fluid and dynamic nature of language use, while self-presentation theory helps explain how individuals construct and present their identities through linguistic means. Regarding the research method, this study employs a mixed-methods approach using both qualitative and quantitative content analyses of examples collected from Douyin, a popular Chinese

short video platform. By analyzing examples of internet slang and translanguaging strategies, this approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in question.

The following research questions guide our inquiry:

1. What translanguaging strategies are employed by Douyin users for online self-presentation through internet slang?
2. What are the reasons underlying the prevalence of translanguaging strategies in internet slang used for online self-presentation on Douyin?

2 Literature review

2.1 Online self-presentation and translanguaging practices

The emergence of social media and short video platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Douyin, has significantly influenced language and communication, providing users with innovative opportunities for self-presentation and interaction (Hogan 2010; Marwick 2013). These platforms have revolutionized communication by promoting more creative and dynamic linguistic expressions, transforming how individuals meticulously construct their online personas through various means, encompassing language use and translanguaging.

Goffman's theory of self-presentation (1959) highlights the importance of managing one's public image in social interactions. This concept, which entails the strategies individuals employ to control how they are perceived by others, has found renewed relevance in the digital age. Specifically, users of social media and short video platforms engage in self-presentation to align their online personas with both their desired self-image and societal expectations (Hogan 2010; Marwick 2013).

Another concept, "translanguaging", enables individuals to access their entire linguistic repertoire for self-presentation and identity construction, facilitating navigation of complex social identities and affiliations, both online and offline, and engagement with diverse linguistic communities (Lewis et al. 2012; Li 2011; Nguyen 2019; Regnoli 2019; Schreiber 2015).

Building on this concept, "translanguaging space", as conceptualized by Li (2018: 23), refers to "a space that is created by and for translanguaging practices", such as social media. It empowers users to draw upon a diverse array of linguistic resources for self-presentation. This concept emphasizes the fluidity and hybridity of linguistic practices on social media, facilitated by advanced digital technologies and globalized cultural flows that foster user-generated content creation and exchange (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Li and Lee 2021). By adopting translanguaging

practices, individuals can ingeniously merge linguistic resources from multiple languages, cultures, and modalities to construct their online identities and effectively communicate with varied audiences (Li 2018).

In fact, social media users deeply consider their audience's perceptions when curating and interacting with online content (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve 2018). The platform's features influence this context, while unseen audiences shape content decisions. Additionally, tags and comments from connected users significantly impact one's self-presentation. Further contextualizing this, Zheng et al. (2020) explored the dynamics of self-presentation on social media in relation to the user's relationship with the audience. They found that individuals typically convey an idealized self-image to a broad audience. Yet, the degree of authenticity in shared content, like the acknowledgment of personal flaws, varies depending on how close users feel to the viewing audience. Similarly, Attrill-Smith et al. (2019) explores the notion of the online self, focusing on the ways individuals construct their online identities to the audience through both voluntary and involuntary information sharing. The online self may represent either an individual's ideal self or an extension of their offline self, offering advantages such as asynchronous communication and the ability to edit self-presentation.

Androutsopoulos (2007) identified three salient themes in the innovation of digital written language that are: conceptual orality, semiotics of compensation, and linguistic economy. "Conceptual orality" captures how informal spoken language elements appear in written form, reflecting a blend of oral-like qualities in online writing. "Semiotics of compensation" refers to the use of standardized keyboard inputs and typefaces to substitute for non-verbal cues absent in text. "Linguistic economy" describes the use of concise language forms, driven by the need for quick and cost-effective communication. These themes illuminate the potential strategies through which translanguaging practices and internet slang might be employed for self-presentation on platforms like Douyin.

In summary, social media serve as translanguaging spaces, allowing for inventive and dynamic linguistic practices, thereby transforming language and communication. This transformation is closely related to self-presentation in the era of social media, emphasizing the necessity for further research in this domain.

2.2 Internet slang and translanguaging strategies

Translanguaging research, historically anchored in the realm of education, boasts seminal contributions from preeminent scholars (Baker 2011; García et al. 2021; Garcia and Li 2014; Lewis et al. 2012; Li 2018, 2022). These scholarly works emphasize the crucial role of translanguaging in educational settings. Yet, the digital realm has

extended the scope of this discourse. Within the vast digital terrain, internet slang – a distinct fusion of innovative and often multilingual expressions – stands out as a manifestation of translanguaging strategies in online interactions. This constantly evolving vernacular, marked by its inventive blend of languages and cultural nuances (Crystal 2006), offers a dynamic tapestry for analyzing translanguaging in digital ecosystems.

Dumrukcić (2020) underscores this intersection, positing that the fusion of internet slang with translanguaging might fortify second language (L2) acquisition. With ubiquitous exposure to translingual expressions online, learners are increasingly enticed to assimilate linguistic fragments from diverse origins. This blending is prevalent in today's digital era, largely fueled by "internet slang" where L1 elements interweave with L2 contexts, as noted by Liu et al. (2019).

Similarly, Chan and Chou (2022) reveals how students in an English remedial class employ translanguaging, including internet slang, to engage in co-learning activities and construct their individual image and identity. This process allows them to navigate multiple roles and relationships with their peers and teachers.

While abovementioned studies are undoubtedly pivotal in understanding the educative value of internet slang and translanguaging, there is a palpable need to explore its wider sociolinguistic and cultural implications. Zhang and Ren (2022) venture into this expansive arena, illustrating how internet slang enables intricate cultural expressions. Their scrutiny of the term "skr" on Weibo divulges how global phrases undergo a transformative relocalization, epitomizing Chinese online users' ingenuity and evolving literacy practices.

Despite the valuable insights provided thus far, there still seems to be a relative lack of research in this area and even more so, the study of translanguaging strategies involving Chinese internet slang across social media platforms and contexts remains unexplored. Further studies are essential to delve into the multifaceted roles of internet slang in online self-presentation. A closer look at the reasons for the dominance of translanguaging strategies, especially within the context of Douyin, will shed light on the nuanced interplay between language, self-presentation, and identity on this platform.

As such, our study aims to fill the existing gap in literature by focusing on the specific context of Chinese social media and the unique aspects of internet slang. By situating our research on this prominent Chinese social media platform, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of both the contemporary manifestations of translanguaging and the nuances of internet language culture in China. This, in turn, enhances our understanding of the interplay between language and self-presentation in the dynamic realm of social media.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

In this study, data was collected from Douyin (<https://www.douyin.com>), a popular short video app commonly recognized as the Chinese counterpart of TikTok in China. As reported by e-commerce agency GMA (2023), Douyin stands out as China's leading short-video platform with over 700 million monthly users, most of whom are under 30. Interestingly, around 70 % of these users reside in China's first and second-tier cities, emphasizing its urban appeal.

We selected Douyin as our primary research platform for a multitude of compelling reasons. Predominantly catering to a younger audience, Douyin serves as a hotbed for linguistic innovation, evident across a myriad of features such as video captions, descriptions, dialogues, storytelling, and comments, positioning it ahead in terms of translanguaging practices compared to other Chinese social media platforms like Weibo. Moreover, Douyin demonstrates its linguistic versatility by employing multimodal, multilingual, multisemiotic, and multisensory elements through a seamless integration of video, audio, effects, filters, and other visual and auditory tools. Additionally, the platform's captivating content and interactive design ensure sustained user engagement, making this dynamic ecosystem a fertile ground for observing numerous translanguaging instances. These collective attributes render Douyin an exemplary medium for our research endeavors.

To collect data, 34 Douyin users from a university in Shanghai were asked to search for and collect examples of translanguaging strategies of internet slang on Douyin, including captions, descriptions, video content, user-generated comments, and private messages. We utilized the etic approach (Pike 1954), which is often framed as a “deductive” method, contrasting it with the emic approach that delves into cultural phenomena from an insider's perspective. This research method aims to understand a particular culture or linguistic group from an external and analytical perspective, focusing on objective, observable aspects of the language. The benefit of this method lies in its attempt to minimize the influence of researchers' own cultural or linguistic biases, as it employs generalized categories or theories (Kramsch 2009). We chose this approach to enable a more neutral and broad analysis of translanguaging practices across diverse Douyin users.

A total of 331 translanguaging examples of internet slang were collected from the 34 Douyin users, with each contributing approximately 9–10 examples. However, 30 of these examples were excluded as they did not involve the use of translanguaging strategies, resulting in a final dataset of 301 valid examples. To maintain data authenticity and validity, we presented the collected internet slang in the form

of screenshots, which cannot be modified or altered once captured, and their time-stamping function is useful in cases where a social media post is deleted or a user's account is deactivated. Additionally, to clarify internet slang with ambiguous meanings, we undertook rigorous online searches using prominent search engines like Baidu, Bing, and Google. After determining the most commonly accepted interpretations, we annotated the original meanings alongside the respective examples.

Ethical considerations were addressed in this study by omitting sensitive and identifiable information. Two primary issues were considered: Firstly, we took utmost care to safeguard privacy during the processes of note-taking, data cleaning, storage, and dissemination by excluding specific details such as user ID, gender, and date of birth. Even though users might not always employ their real names or other primary identifiers, it is crucial to understand that personal details can often be inferred from unique or collective attributes present in the data. Second, to ensure anonymity, we obscured sensitive and identifiable information. For instance, users' geographical data, which could be accessed if they had location services activated on their Douyin device, was blocked.

3.2 Data analysis

In this study, we conducted both qualitative and quantitative content analyses on the examples collected from Douyin. The qualitative content analysis allowed us to identify and categorize the different translanguaging strategies used in the examples, providing a comprehensive understanding of the types of strategies employed and how they were used to convey ideas and emotions. Meanwhile, the quantitative content analysis enabled us to calculate the frequency and percentage of each translanguaging strategy, offering a numerical representation of their relative frequency and facilitating comparisons between strategies.

Following the findings of García and Li (2014) and Li (2018), the content of translanguaging not only refers to the mixture of languages, but also indicates four main translanguaging categories, namely, multimodal resources, multilingual resources, multisemiotic resources and multisensory resources. The intricate nature of these categories demanded an analytical approach that was both comprehensive and versatile – hence our decision to employ a mixed-methods strategy. Quantitatively, we aimed to discern patterns, frequency, and distribution of these categories. However, the depth, context, and nuanced implications of such patterns required qualitative exploration.

Given the complexities of translanguaging within internet slang, our unit of analysis was a specific internet slang term. An “instance” of translanguaging was identified whenever a slang term met the following criteria:

- (1) The term has garnered recognition and usage among a broad spectrum of the online populace.
- (2) The term finds mention in esteemed online lexicons or slang repositories.
- (3) The term demonstrates a marked presence, either through trending or frequent mentions, on platforms exemplified by Douyin.

For our analysis, we employed Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software tailored for such intricate evaluations. The initial phase involved an unbiased perusal of the internet slang, coding strategies without harboring preconceptions. Our strategies surfaced post rigorous discussions, numerous amendments, and cross-references with prior internet slang research, ensuring alignment with the data gathered. Once the strategies were identified during the open coding process, those with similar characteristics were grouped under the same category. The culminating step, empowered by Atlas’s analytical capabilities, was a tabulation of each strategy’s occurrences, enabling a visualization of their distribution and relative frequency within the realm of internet slang.

Several points related to the coding process warrant attention. First, we created a coding manual that defined the categories and codes used in the analysis. This manual was clear and consistent, ensuring coherence in the results by providing guidance for all coders. Both authors independently conducted the open coding process, resolving any discrepancies through case-by-case discussions. The inter-coder agreement was 98 %, with a favorable Cohen’s kappa coefficient ($k = 0.91$, 95 % CI: 0.86–0.97). Second, we identified 12 examples that incorporated two distinct translanguaging strategies. In these cases, both strategies were separately coded for each example, leading to a final dataset comprising 313 translanguaging strategies.

4 Findings

The present study examined 313 instances of translanguaging strategies of internet slangs on Douyin, and Table 1 presents the relative popularity of these strategies based on their frequency and percentage. The results indicate that multilingual resources, including new Chinglish, Pinyin initialism, and hybrid words (Chinese + English, English + Arabic numeral, and Chinese + Arabic numeral), were the most frequently used strategies (35.78 %). This was followed by multisensory resources (32.27 %), such as modal particles and homophonic puns. Multisemiotic

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of translanguaging strategies of Internet slang.

Translanguaging strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Examples
Multimodal resource	47	15.02	
Emoji	47	15.02	 
Multilingual resource	112	35.78	
New Chinglish	16	5.11	no zuo no die
Pinyin initialism	35	11.18	YYDS
Hybrid word	61	19.49	
Chinese + English	32	10.22	打call
English + Arabic numeral	16	5.11	U1S1
Chinese + Arabic numeral	13	4.16	老铁双击 666
Multisemiotic resource	53	16.93	
Keyboard-generated emoticon	25	7.99	>_<◇
Hashtag	23	7.35	#灌篮高手
Punctuation mark	5	1.59	《》and
Multisensory resource	101	32.27	
Homophonic pun	84	26.84	歪膩
Modal particle	17	5.43	卧槽
Total	313	100	

The total number of valid examples was 301.

resources (16.93 %), such as keyboard-generated emoticons, punctuation, and hashtags, and multimodal resources (15.02 %), such as emojis, were less frequently utilized, with the latter being the least frequently used strategy. These findings suggest that Chinese online users present themselves in a more creative and dynamic manner, rather than relying solely on traditional written forms.

4.1 Multimodal resources

Multimodal resources refer to the integration of diverse modes of communication within a single medium or text. These resources combine textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual modes to convey messages, offering a rich and layered means of communication and comprehension (Li 2018). In this study, emojis are recognized as the sole multimodal translanguaging strategy employed in internet slang. Emoji (a visual mode), coupled with text (a linguistic mode), serve as bridges connecting diverse languages, cultures, and modes of communication, allowing users to express themselves inventively and facilitating enhanced understanding among individuals in online interactions. According to our analysis of the data, emojis accounted for 15.02 % of the translanguaging strategies observed in the dataset, indicating the importance of multimodal resources in online communication.

4.1.1 Emoji

Emojis, defined as small digital images or icons employed to convey ideas, emotions, or sentiments in electronic communication, frequently serve as a visual shorthand for articulating complex emotions or ideas in a succinct manner (Danesi 2016). As a simple yet remarkably expressive collection of visual characters, emojis have gained immense popularity as a means of communicating emotions, moods, and feelings in Computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Kelly and Watts 2015), as exemplified in Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the utilization of emoji in the captions of short videos to communicate the persona of G.E.M. Deng Ziqi, a distinguished Chinese singer, to the audience, as evidenced in our dataset. The left screenshot presents G.E.M. Deng Ziqi performing her most recent song, “Goodbye”, on the Douyin platform. The caption “original singer is here” is accompanied by an interactive emoji 🤗 (Smiling face with open hands) beneath the video, engaging her fans. This particular emoji portrays a yellow face smiling with open hands, as if extending a hug.

In the right screenshot, Deng Ziqi incorporates a hashtag to highlight her personal photography skills, with the caption “star’s camera skills” and the inclusion of

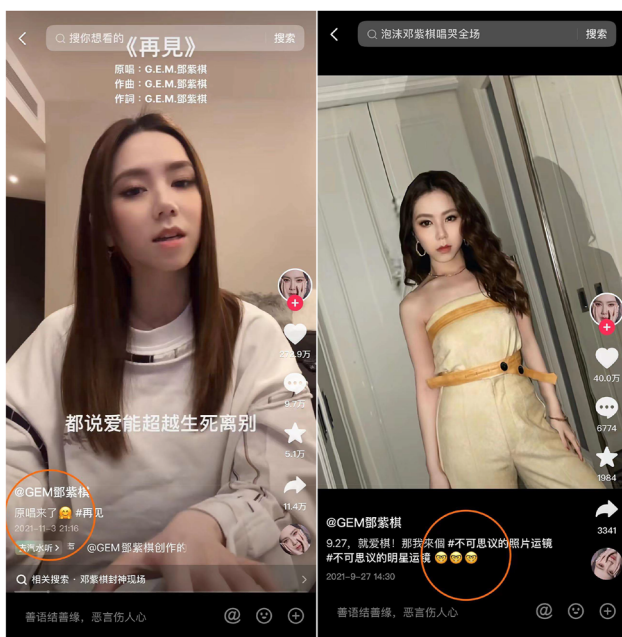


Figure 1: The usage of emoji by G.E.M. Deng Ziqi, a pop star in China.

the emoji 🤓 (Nerd face). This emoji presents a smiling yellow face with glasses and teeth, initially portrayed as buck teeth on most platforms. The integration of non-verbal and textual content in a single phrase establishes a contemporary communication method. Our research findings indicate that this translanguaging strategy, bridging the gap between words and emojis, demonstrates a correlation between the use of certain emojis and self-image.

4.2 Multilingual resources

In this study, multilingual resources are defined as the use of language elements from different languages or language varieties in online communication. These resources facilitate the creation of unique and creative messages that reflect the users' linguistic backgrounds, cultural affiliations, and personal identities. Specifically, we classify multilingual resources into three categories: new Chinglish, Pinyin initialism and hybrid words. We will examine these strategies in detail below.

4.2.1 New Chinglish

New Chinglish, as elucidated by Li (2016), constitutes a distinct form of English characterized by the incorporation of Chinese regional accents and cultural elements, the re-appropriation of English words and phrases, and the emergence of Shitizen Chinglish, which encompasses innovative English words and expressions constructed from Chinese characters. This unique linguistic variety has arisen from the reconstitution, re-appropriation, re-semiotization, and re-inscription of English by Chinese speakers in the realm of new media.

In Figure 2, a young individual has dyed their hair a vibrant red, eliciting vehement disapproval from their parents who insist on reverting the color or shaving the head. The youth employs the new Chinglish phrase “no zuo no die” in the video caption to convey regret. Derived from the Chinese proverb “不作死就不会死” (*bù zuò sǐ jiù bù huì sǐ*), the phrase “no zuo no die” roughly translates to “you won’t die if you don’t do something stupid” or “you won’t get into trouble if you don’t do anything reckless”. Here, the Chinese term “作” (*zuò*) is transliterated into English as “zuo”, while the English words “no” and “die” convey the meaning of the original Chinese phrase.

The fusion of Chinese and English elements in expressions like “no zuo no die” generates a unique and playful linguistic invention, highlighting the creativity of its users and illustrating the innovative potential of language combinations. The proliferation of phrases such as “no zuo no die” as modern Chinglish expressions indicates the ongoing evolution and influence of Chinglish in the digital age,



Figure 2: The use of “no zuo no die”.

particularly in online communication and social media platforms. These expressions exemplify the fluidity of language use and rapidly gain widespread acceptance, mirroring the ever-evolving linguistic landscape amidst globalization and digital communication.

Examining this phenomenon through the lens of self-presentation theory, the young person may utilize the phrase “no zuo no die” to convey humor and self-awareness about their situation. By adopting this Chinglish expression, the individual demonstrates familiarity with internet slang, signifying membership in a specific online community or subculture. Moreover, employing this phrase functions as a form of self-presentation, as it enables the individual to portray themselves as someone capable of laughing at their own mistakes and accepting responsibility for their actions, rather than appearing overly defensive or troubled by their parents’ disapproval.

4.2.2 Pinyin initialism

As a characteristic feature of CMC, initialism refers to an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of words in phrases (Crystal 2008). Unlike acronyms, which are pronounced as words, initialisms are usually pronounced as individual letters

(Jones and Schieffelin 2009). Since Chinese is a morpho-syllabic language, with each character corresponding to a syllable and a morpheme in spoken Chinese (Ren 2018), this strategy often appears as Pinyin initialism, which typically refers to the use of the initial letters of each syllable of a Chinese phrase to create an abbreviation in pinyin, the official romanization system for Mandarin Chinese.

The video clip depicted in Figure 3 aims to promote Chinese domestic animation by showcasing images and text. The publisher chose to use two images of an anime character named “女帝” (female emperor) who is seen writing with a brush and ink and riding a horse across the battlefield. The accompanying caption reads, “女帝 YYDS, 文能提笔安天下, 武能上马定乾坤!” (*Nǚdì YYDS, wén néng tí bǐ ān tiānxià, wǔ néng shàng mǎ dìng qiánkūn!*), which recognizes her wisdom and heroism. The term “YYDS” used in the compliment is a popular Chinese internet buzzword that stands for “永远的神” (*yǒngyuǎn de shén*) and translates to “eternal god”. As is reported by China Daily, “YYDS” has become a common catchphrase for the post-00s.

In this context, the use of “YYDS” highlights the character’s exceptional qualities and accomplishments, elevating her as a symbol of excellence and an object of admiration. This example illustrates how internet slang can effectively be utilized in advertising to promote a product or character, engage the target audience

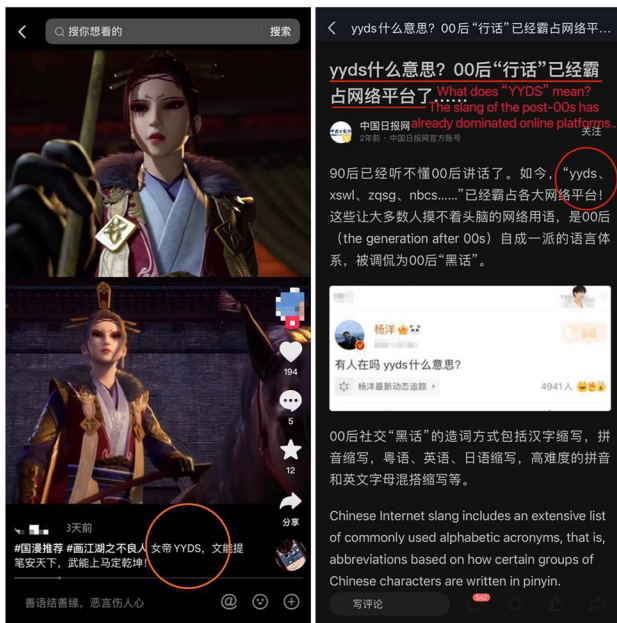


Figure 3: A video clip recommending domestic animation for young audiences.

(including the young, especially the post-00s), and enhance their emotional connection with the content. To summarize, the use of “YYDS” in this sentence serves to express admiration and recognition for the female emperor’s extraordinary abilities, positioning her as a figure of inspiration and reverence for the audience.

4.2.3 Hybrid word

Hybrid words are linguistic constructions that consist of parts derived from multiple languages or writing systems, and they offer individuals a creative means of expression, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of language. These hybrid words allow individuals to combine semiotic resources from different linguistic systems, resulting in unique and playful expressions. In our study, we identified three types of hybrid words: Chinese + English (10.22 %), English + Arabic numerals (5.11 %), and Chinese + Arabic numerals (4.16 %). These examples are illustrated in the images on the left, middle, and right of Figure 4.

The image on the left of Figure 4 provides an exemplary instance of trans-languaging by utilizing the internet slang “老铁双击666” which combines Chinese and Arabic numerals. This linguistic construction is often used by online streamers. The term “老铁” (*lǎo tiě*) literally means “old iron”, but in slang, it is used to address close friends or individuals with whom the speaker shares a strong bond, similar to



Figure 4: Examples of hybrid word.

the English slang “bro”. On the other hand, “双击666 (*shuāng jī 666*)” means “double-click 666”. In Chinese internet culture, the number “666” is used to express approval or admiration, similar to the English expressions “awesome” or “cool”. When combined, “老铁双击666” conveys the streamer’s desire for approval and praise from the audience.

The middle image of Figure 4 showcases another prevalent hybrid word, “打call” which fuses a Chinese word “打” (*dǎ*) with the English word “call” to signify “cheering for you”. This term has its origins in Japanese concert live support culture, where fans would perform dances, give pep talks, or wave light sticks to encourage their idols. In this example, the commenter cheers for Maria (メイリア or 美依礼芽), a Japanese female singer known for her representative work “極楽浄土” (*Gokuraku Jodo*) with over 220 million views on Bilibili (a popular Chinese video-sharing platform), by saying “打call”. Through using this novel expression, Chinese Douyin users embrace and participate in this fan culture. This enables individuals to demonstrate their linguistic competence, cultural knowledge, and creativity, ultimately shaping their online identity and public image.

The image on the right of Figure 4 pertains to the category of English + Arabic numeral hybrid words, where U1S1, signifying to tell the truth, is commonly employed in online communication. The use of U1S1 can be attributed to the high value placed on honesty and sincerity in Chinese ethos, enabling individuals to underscore their veracity in digital communication. These hybrid expressions, including U1S1, B4, 3ks, 3Q, U2, and me2, are informal yet prevalent modes of expression utilized in online communication. Such hybrid expressions reflect the evolving linguistic landscape of contemporary society, where individuals creatively combine linguistic resources from different languages and cultures to convey their personal perspectives and image.

4.3 Multisemiotic resource

In contrast to multisensory and multilingual resources, dynamic multisemiotic resources, which involve the combination of various semiotic elements to create meaning, were used less frequently (16.93 %) by Douyin users in daily talk. Among these resources, keyboard-generated emoticons led the pack (25 instances), followed by hashtags (23 instances) and creative punctuation marks (5 instances).

4.3.1 Keyboard-generated emoticon

Keyboard-generated emoticons, short for “emotion icons” and also known as emotes, are visually captivating representations of facial expressions that employ

multisemiotic resources, such as punctuation marks and transformed symbols. These innovative visuals add an emotional “tone” to text-based communication, creating a unique and engaging experience for users.

In Figure 5, the commenter utilized the emoticon “>◡<” to playfully express their delight at the blogger’s adorable poses and actions. The emoticon “>◡<” creatively portrays a happy face engaged in “卖萌” (acting cute). This striking visual representation conveys the commenter’s appreciation of the blogger’s content, capturing the attention of other users.

The commenter employs this visual element to radiate a positive and playful aura, targeting both the content creator and fellow viewers. The deployment of this emoticon acts as a self-presentation tactic, signifying their admiration and fostering a congenial ambiance in the comments realm. In utilizing this strategy, the commenter not only manages the impression they project to the video creator and other viewers, but also potentially captures the attention of the content creator, thereby influencing the perceptions held about them by the wider community.



Figure 5: Engaging emoticons spark lively comment sections.

4.3.2 Hashtag

Hashtags, defined as “a string of characters preceded by the pound symbol #” (Caleffi 2015: 46), empower Douyin users to add metadata to their videos, increasing their visibility and reach. Moreover, some interpersonally-oriented tags directly contribute to the way users craft and present their online personas, reinforcing specific aspects of their self-presentation.

In Figure 6, which is a screenshot featuring the hashtag “#灌篮高手” (スラムダンク or SLAM DUNK), we observe a vibrant virtual community centered around the eponymous Japanese animated film. This hashtag fosters a dynamic online space where fans can connect and support one another by wearing film merchandise and identifying as dedicated followers of the franchise, thus joining a broader community of like-minded individuals.

Within this virtual environment, fans have the opportunity to enhance their self-concept through their affiliation with the community, in line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). By discussing, sharing, and celebrating aspects of the film, including its release, plotlines, and characters, fans can reinforce their sense of belonging and derive a positive social identity from their membership in the group.



Figure 6: Film hashtags foster camaraderie.

Furthermore, engaging in cosplay, such as embodying their favorite film characters, allows fans to express their admiration and respect for the work while strengthening their connection to the community. For instance, when typing “#灌篮高手” into the search bar, one of the displayed video clips features a blogger cosplaying “流川枫” (るかわ かえで or *Rukawa Kaede*), a main character in the film. The blogger adopts Rukawa’s distinctive clothing and hairstyle, showcasing his enthusiasm for both the character and the Slam Dunk franchise.

4.3.3 Punctuation mark

Punctuation traditionally serves to clarify and enhance written language. However, innovative uses of punctuation marks have emerged in recent years, both to convey attitudes and intensify tone. For instance, repetition, as demonstrated in studies like Ren and Guo (2022), shows how punctuation marks can be used to convey additional meanings beyond their conventional roles. In another deviation from traditional usage, our study reveals an interesting trend: the double angle brackets (《》), traditionally reserved for book titles in China, are now being used in tandem with ellipsis (.....) to impart a sense of irony and sarcasm, as depicted in Figure 7.



Figure 7: The creative use of “《》” and “.....”.

In a Douyin video clip (Figure 7), a mother motivates her daughter before the College Entrance Exam with the statement, “加油!上大学就轻松了” (Keep it up, things will be easier once you get to college!) However, the reality of college life can often be more challenging than high school. In response to this statement, a Douyin user incorporated both the double angle brackets (《》) and an ellipsis (.....) in their comment, crafting “《上大学就轻松了.....》”. The double angle brackets convey irony and sarcasm towards the mother’s optimistic assertion, while the ellipsis adds a touch of speechlessness, reflecting the user’s disbelief or exasperation at such a naive viewpoint. The commenter aimed to emphasize that the mother’s statement was unrealistic and misleading, as entering college was merely the start of a demanding academic journey that necessitates hard work and perseverance. This example demonstrates how innovative uses of punctuation marks can be used to express attitudes and intensify tone beyond their original grammatical functions.

4.4 Multisensory resource

Multisensory resources involve at least two or more of different sensory learning styles, such as sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste, creating a holistic sensory experience. And now, these resources have been applied to online learning and social media environments. Douyin users employ multisensory resources, such as homophonic puns and modal particles, to create internet slang, with homophonic puns being utilized more frequently (84 times) compared to modal particles (17 times).

4.4.1 Homophonic pun

Homophonic puns refer to a type of pun that plays with words or phrases that share the same (or very similar) pronunciation but have different meanings and spellings. The degree to which a homophonic pun engages multiple senses can vary depending on the specific context and presentation of the pun. On social media platforms, Chinese young people frequently employ homophonic puns to create jokes that rely on the audience hearing the spoken words and observing the gestures made by the bloggers. This combination results in an immersive experience that evokes emotional responses and establishes context. Besides circumventing internet censorship, homophonic puns can add euphemism or new meaning to messages, making them a popular and versatile form of communication among the younger generation.

Figure 8 features a screenshot of a video in which a blogger expresses her affection for her audience in a subtle manner by employing the Mandarin Chinese internet slang phrase “歪膩” (*wāi nì*) as a homophonic pun for “我爱你” (*wǒ ài nǐ*), meaning “I love you”. In the video description, she also uses crab emojis, a playful nod to the word “蟹蟹” (*xiè xiè*), which phonetically resembles “谢谢” (*xiè xiè*) – the Chinese phrase for “thank you”. This pun is further accentuated as she simultaneously conveys gratitude by making a heart gesture through dance. Although “歪膩” and “我爱你” have completely different meanings, with the former roughly meaning “annoying” or “fed up”, the pun has gained popularity in Chinese internet culture as a playful and euphemistic way to express affection, fondness, or closeness between individuals.

This linguistic creativity enables indirect expression when direct statements might be deemed inappropriate, showcasing Douyin users’ linguistic and multisensory capabilities. By transcending traditional linguistic codes and rules, they assign new meanings and symbolic values to their translanguaging practices, further enriching online communication and interaction.



Figure 8: Video caption “歪膩 (我爱你)”.

4.4.2 Modal particle

Modal particles, a category of uninflected words in linguistics, function to convey subtle nuances such as emphasis, doubt, affirmation, or politeness within a sentence. These particles serve to modify the tone or mood of a sentence, and are often used in conjunction with body language or facial expressions to enhance the intended meaning or emotion.

Figure 9 features a screenshot of a video in which a young man creatively demonstrates the versatile use of the Mandarin Chinese internet slang modal particle “卧槽” (*wò cáo*), which can be translated as “What the hell” or “Dear god” in English, to convey various emotions. As is well known, Chinese is a tonal language, and this linguistic feature is skillfully employed by the young man to express emotions such as anger, confusion, regret, admiration, comfort, and shock by using different tones and intonations of “卧槽”. Figure 9 demonstrates specifically that, to convey regret, the man tightly closes his eyes while saying “卧槽” mirthlessly, and an accompanying illustration of wiping tears is added below the video to further emphasize the man’s emotional state. This inventive use of “卧槽” exemplifies the dynamic nature of language and communication in the digital age, as it highlights

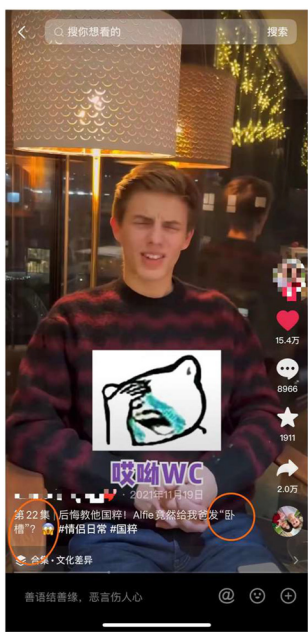


Figure 9: “卧槽” with facial expression.

the multisensory practice of combining visual, verbal, and auditory modes. The young man's versatile use of “卧槽” showcases the complex interplay between these modes in conveying various emotions effectively. Facial expressions, gestures, and tonal variations all work together to create meaning, emphasizing the importance of understanding how these multiple modes contribute to communication in online environments. This research underscores the continuous evolution and re-appropriation of linguistic expressions in the digital age.

5 Discussion

In this section, we will first briefly recap the main findings from our research results and then delve into the role of those sub-field translanguaging strategies on Douyin, and hypothesize the underlying factors that contribute to the pervasiveness of translanguaging strategies in Internet slang on Chinese social media.

5.1 Self-presentation through sub-field translanguaging strategies used in internet slang

The result shows that among the examples collected, multilingual resources (e.g., new Chinglish, Pinyin initialism and hybrid word) are the most frequently used, accounting for 35.78 % of cases, followed by multisensory resources (e.g., homophonic pun and modal particle), 32.27 %. However, multisemiotic (e.g., keyboard-generated emoticons, hashtag and punctuation mark) and multimodal resources (e.g., emoji) only account for 16.93 % and 15.02 % respectively. These different translanguaging strategies have been demonstrated to have the potential for self-presentation.

5.1.1 Multimodal resources

Our research results revealed that emojis accounted for 15.02 % of the translanguaging strategies observed in the dataset, highlighting the significance of multimodal resources in online communication. It is important to consider that this percentage might have been influenced by several factors, including the fact that only one multimodal strategy, the use of emojis, was observed in the study, and the possible underrepresentation of other multimodal resources in our dataset.

Drawing from Goffman's self-presentation theory (1959), self-presentation is not merely an individual tactic, but also a structured process informed by linguistic mechanisms. Emojis serve as pivotal tools in this paradigm, assisting individuals in

defining their personas (Ge-Stadnyk 2021) and playing an instrumental role in molding “the self”. Taking this into the realm of celebrity culture, Deng Ziqi’s strategic use of emojis exemplifies Goffman’s principles in a modern digital context. Her strategic deployment of emojis, more than just symbols, curates an image of herself as amiable, insightful, and grounded. These emojis not only humanize her public persona, making her more relatable and approachable, but also amplify her appeal. Moreover, these symbols moderate the tone of her messages, underscoring her affable and genuine nature.

Goffman’s concept of “self-presentation” further elucidates how individuals craft their image in the eyes of those they interact with. These individuals always employ a spectrum of strategies – overt or subtle – tailored to their intrinsic traits. For celebrities, their primary audience for such presentations is their fans. While their meticulously sculpted public personas might paint them as detached, the judicious use of emojis makes their outreach feel more sincere and accessible. For instance, the 😊 emoji conveys warm, positive feelings, gratitude, and support, while 🙄 often signals expertise interspersed with self-deprecating humor. By leveraging these emojis, celebrities manifest a camaraderie with fans, illustrating that beneath the glamour, they share common emotions and are not too different from them.

However, it is worth noting that the interpretation and use of emojis can vary depending on factors such as culture and age, which may influence how different audience members perceive a celebrity’s self-presentation (Danesi 2016). For example, the interpretation of the “smile emoji” 😊, often referred to colloquially as the “death smile”, has generated divergent perceptions across different age groups and cultural contexts. This demonstrates that context and audience demographics not only influence how emojis are perceived but also impact the online persona that is subsequently constructed or perceived (Herring and Dainas 2020). Furthermore, this self-presentation is often temporary, as celebrities’ self-presentation typically aims at promoting interaction and connection with fans in specific contexts (Goffman 1959). This can involve consciously highlighting their positive attributes, downplaying their flaws, and presenting themselves in a manner that is consistent with social norms and expectations.

5.1.2 Multilingual practices

As suggested by previous research (Matras 2009; Muysken 2013), multilingual practice, which involves integrating words and phrases from various languages, can generate a novel form of communication that is more accessible to a wider audience. It is plausible that the availability of multilingual resources enables the efficient communication of ideas and self-images, regardless of language barriers. These

factors may explain why this practice occupies the largest proportion (35.78 %). This study identified new Chinglish, Pinyin initialism and hybrid word as multilingual practices.

The data revealed the use of new Chinglish is the least frequently used strategy in multilingual resources, probably for its lack of standardization, limited audience (mainly young Chinese speakers), but it has potential for self-presentation and identity expression. “New Chinglish” phenomenon fully reflects the fluidity and dynamism of language as well as the complexity and creativity of social linguistic phenomena in the context of globalization (Wang et al. 2014). This opinion has been supported by Widdowson’s critique (1997) of Kachru’s model (1982, 1985), which indicates that this model overlooks the diversity among language users and perpetuates the notion that languages should remain pure and unchanged. By utilizing a hybrid form of language that combines features from both English and Chinese, these speakers may be signaling to others their proficiency in creativity and adaptability when it comes to language. Furthermore, New Chinglish is not intended for international communication and the ownership is firmly in the hands of the Chinese speakers (Li 2016), so this self-presentation strategy reflects a kind of group identity, where new Chinglish is indeed a uniquely “Chinese understood” language form, particularly for those who speak Chinese as their first language and are part of the global Chinese diaspora.

In addition to new Chinglish, initialism realized by Pinyin is also used by the Douyin users in this study. Although Pinyin is traditionally as a phonetic transcription system for Chinese characters, social media also provides opportunities for users to type Pinyin using keyboards in a more creative way. We noticed Douyin users usually utilize the Pinyin syllable to replace a certain character, meanwhile, the use of Pinyin initialism can allow for more flexible internet slang with specific meanings, such as admiration. While some Pinyin initialisms that are easy to understand may spread beyond “the specific circle of the young” and be used and accepted by the general public, there are still a considerable number of such words that remain within the range of young generation, especially the post-00s. These words serve as an important factor for the post-00s to identify and differentiate themselves from similar groups or communities. Specifically, the post-00s use these words to distinguish themselves from those who they believe are “utterly ignorant of certain initialisms” and to identify with “congeners” inhabiting the same “consensus space”. These Pinyin initialism enthusiasts believe that they have concepts, symbols, discourses, meanings and value systems that deviate from the mainstream. This divergence is not just a matter of linguistic choice, but a profound reflection of group consciousness and identity. In a dialogue, these initialisms take on the role of cryptic slang, serving as “code words” exclusive to in-group members, reinforcing group cohesion and intimacy. The use of these Pinyin initialisms reflects the

self-image of the post-00s who value individuality, creativity and self-expression, through which their group identity get expressed and voiced.

Finally, hybrid word, being the most prevalent strategy among multilingual resources, showcases the adeptness in harnessing varied linguistic repertoires. Undoubtedly, this underlines the speaker's profound linguistic agility in invoking diverse linguistic resources. As Goffman (1959) remarked, "When an individual plays a part, he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression being portrayed before them". Network anchors exemplify this by constructing a robust personal brand and image, cemented by their trustworthiness and reliability, a sentiment echoed in phrases like "老铁双击666". They typically draw upon this trustworthy facade to wield social influence, whether it is for persuasion, motivation, inspiration, or to relay information in line with their objectives. This not only lures and retains fans but also augments opportunities for monetization during live streams, such as user contributions and e-commerce. To further bridge the gap with their audience, online anchors regularly employ internet slang and popular catch-phrases, curating a persona that is both reliable and accessible. It is evident that this cultivated image is a meticulously chosen portrayal, an "ideal self", aiming to resonate with their audience and garner their admiration, validation, and accolades.

Similarly, fandom culture or cheering culture (应援文化 *yīngyuán wénhuà*) reflected by "打call" is meant to support and cheer for stars or idols. It usually showcases self-presentation through various ways, such as wearing merchandise related to the stars or idols, making slogans or posters to express support and encouragement, creating and sharing videos, photos, and audio to show love and support, participating in online or offline activities with other followers, and posting articles or comments on social media to discuss the stars or idols' news and share experiences and feelings with each other. Besides, "U1S1" (有一说一 *yǒu yī shuō yī*), is a typical example of linguistic economy, which includes any strategy of shortening the message form. This theme is most clearly attributed to the necessity of speed in synchronous exchanges, to financial considerations or to constraints on the size of message. The use of "U1S1" in online communication can contribute to self-presentation by indicating that they are being honest and straightforward in their communication which create a positive impression of the person as someone who values honesty and directness. This abbreviation, therefore, plays a dual role: it bolsters efficient communication while simultaneously shaping the communicator's image as forthright and self-assured.

5.1.3 Multisemiotic practices

All linguistic resources (given their involvement with signs) fall under the overarching category of semiotic resources, however, in order to emphasize the

specialties of the mix of various linguistic varieties, we have chosen to analyze multisemiotic resources separately. In our findings, we observed that multisemiotic practices involve the utilization of various semiotic resources, such as keyboard-generated emoticon, punctuation mark and hashtag. These practices are used less frequently in this study, likely because non-linguistic signs, such as these, often exhibit ambiguity when compared to linguistic signs like words and phrases and can be difficult to spell or type accurately which may pose challenges for users who are unfamiliar with the specific emoticon or have limited typing skills.

Emoticons, as indicators of affective states to convey non-linguistic information, have been described as “visual cues formed from ordinary typographical symbols that, when read sideways, represent feelings or emotions” (Rezabek and Cochenour 1998: 201). In this context, the stance-taking theory of American linguist DuBois (2007) helps us understand how the primary use of emoticons in Douyin comments may be to indicate stance, rather than merely expressing emotions. This means that when users interact through emoticons, they take a stance while presenting their self-image, attitudes, evaluations, and judgments. For example, the emoticon “>_<◇” mentioned in the findings section serves as a reaction to the video, indicating the commenter’s positive evaluation of the blogger’s cuteness. Such instances underscore the instrumental role emoticons play in self-presentation within the Douyin platform.

Initially, hashtag, as an illocutionary force-indicating device (IFID), was launched to perform the communicative functions of labelling content, enacting relationships and organizing text (Zappavigna 2015). There is no doubt that the function of hashtags in this study can be summarized as an IFID, which places the illocution of the content in the hashtag on record. However, the main function of this inter-personally orientated tags has much more to do with adopting particular dispositions involved in expressing different kinds of particular identities, except aggregating posts into searchable sets. People who find similarities with those features categorise themselves as that certain social group whilst the feature let out-group members distinguish between groups. This unified identity serves as a form of communal formation for all the people involved. Since the identity the fans gain from supporting one film or film character is often durable once a choice has been made, their identity and affiliation to that film or film character translate to how they behave when there is a fan meeting or film premiere, how they dress, and how they speak. All the behaviors they intend to show to the public is the process of self-presentation aimed at expressing the identity of crazy fans towards a film.

In the end, the use of recontextualized punctuation mark can also play the role of “semiotics compensation” (Baron 1984) to further intensify the attitudes of an online user in their texts so as to show others his or her. Double angle brackets (《 》), originally used as punctuation marks to indicate the titles of books, articles,

newspapers, files, operas, songs, pictures, etc., can even convey subjective attitudes such as irony and sarcasm in Chinese online culture. This use of punctuation mark is sometimes called “the detachment within brackets” or “bracketing irony”. Essentially, this signifies that the enclosed text should be read with an interpretation contrary to its literal meaning. Alongside the double angle brackets, the ellipsis (.....) has also found unique contextual significance in online Chinese communication. Traditionally signifying an intentional omission or pause, its presence in digital discourse often connotes a sense of speechlessness or being at a loss for words, adding a layer of exasperation or disbelief to the message. Compared to expression methods prevalent in other languages, the combination of double angle brackets with ellipsis to signify irony is a relatively unique Chinese phenomenon. When used to convey irony or sarcasm, these punctuation marks shape an image of the user as witty, irreverent, humorously critical, skeptical, and even analytical, challenging prevailing opinions or beliefs.

5.1.4 Multisensory practices

As demonstrated in Section 4.4, multisensory practices found in the present study take the form of homophonic pun and modal particles, which highlight the complex interplay between visual, verbal, and auditory modes in effectively conveying various emotions. This observation is in line with previous findings that multisensory resources evoke stronger empathy than single-sensory resources and add an additional layer of meaning to online communication in a more succinct manner (Morgan 2019; Vatakis and Spence 2007). Engaging multiple senses enables online users to more effectively process and retain linguistic information, further emphasizing the importance of multisensory practices in the digital age. The homophonic pun accounts for 26.84 % of all translanguaging strategies in the study, making it the highest percentage among all the strategies. The modal particle has a relatively lower percentage, accounting for only 5.43 % of the strategies.

It is worth noting that the degree to which a homophonic pun engages multiple senses can vary depending on the specific context and presentation. Homophonic words are often used to express indirectness and euphemism, as speakers avoid using certain words in specific contexts to avoid offense or discomfort. For example, in Chinese, the word “马德”(mǎ dé) is often used as a euphemism for the taboo phrase “妈的”(mā de) in polite conversation. Similarly, “杯具了”(bēi jù le) serves as a euphemism for “悲剧了”(bēi jù le), meaning “a tragedy has occurred”. The use of homophonic words allows speakers to convey meaning without using potentially offensive language, helping to avoid conflicts and preserve the persona of the interlocutor.

These indirect and face-saving languages are closely related to “Face theory” proposed by Goffman (1959), which explains how people’s self-concept and social identity are linked to their “face” or public image, in social interactions. Through signaling a desire to avoid causing offense or being perceived as rude, this translanguaging practice of euphemism indicates one’s personality trait of agreeableness, which refers to how an individual interacts with others. Individuals high in agreeableness tend to have a personal identity characterized by empathy, thoughtfulness, and a desire to get along with others.

In addition to the use of homophonic puns, modal particle in social media is another multisensory practice which combines verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Bußmann (1990) lists various names for this particle class, which is primarily defined according to the semantic-pragmatic functions: softening particles, sentence particles, illocutionary particles, and attitudinal particles. In general, modal particles usually modify the illocutionary force of a sentence or express a certain attitude towards the proposition. They may relate to the speaker’s and addressee’s knowledge and refer to their common ground, for example, the German modal particle “*doch*” (illocutionary particle) can be used to convey emphasis or contradiction, while the Japanese modal particle “*ne*” (attitudinal particle) can be used to soften a request or express agreement. Our findings indicate that the attitudinal particle “卧槽”, pronounced in various ways, conveys different nuances in attitude. When pronounced as “*wō cào*”, it implies appreciation with the meaning “It’s so good”. “*wō cào*” suggests astonishment, akin to “It’s unbelievable!”, while “*wò cào*” conveys surprise with “Oh my goodness, you scared me!”. “*wǒ cào*” is an exclamation of frustration or annoyance, equivalent to “Damn it!”, and “*wō cāo*” denotes contempt. Though different intonation brings different auditory experience, they either modify a proposition or express an attitude towards the proposition. Through this verbal communication management, speakers can convey their attitudes towards a proposition and present a specific emotional state or attitude to their audience (Goffman 1959). Therefore, individuals may use modal particles as a deliberate attempt at presenting themselves, with the goal of influencing how others perceive them. It is important to consider the context and intention behind the use of modal particles in order to accurately interpret their function in communication.

5.2 On the pervasiveness of translanguaging strategies in internet slang

Our research shows that the application of translanguaging in internet slang is pervasive in self-presentation on Chinese social media platform Douyin. It is possible

to hypothesize the following underlying factors for the pervasiveness of translanguaging strategies for self-presentation on Douyin.

To begin with, the internet and digital communication has popularized an informal style of writing that deviates from formal standard language in several ways, enhancing communication convenience and interactive fun in self-presentation. The rapid increase in informal writing brought on by the internet has extended written language repertoires at the individual and societal level, which implies a reconfiguration of written language norms and the emergence of new indexical regimes, and fragments the locus of normative authority. Haase et al. (1997) conclude with the insight into the tendencies of innovation and change in CMC: a loss of morphosyntactic complexity, largely attributed to technical constraints for language production, is counterbalanced by an increase in pragmatic complexity, as writers attempt to contextualize joint production of discourse and manage relationships among spatially (and temporally) distant interlocutors. In CMC, “linguistic economy” (Grice 1975) and “conceptual orality” (Havelock 1963) are achieved, because online users may reduce complexity and increase informality to make communication easier to understand, which may reflect a tendency toward casual and informal language use that does not require as much grammatical skill or careful word choice. This is one of reasons why translanguaging strategies used in internet slang so frequently appear in self-presentation.

In addition, translanguaging practice in internet slang suggests the ability to convey nuanced meanings and mental activity through the connotations or associations of different linguistic resources, making self-presentation more effective and comprehensible. Drawing on multiple languages and dialects allows people to create in-group signaling and convey subtle shades of meaning, which involves a process of creative and critical socio-linguistic mediation that brings together various meaning-making resources and personal cognitive capacities. This kind of innovative and subversive play (Li and Zhu 2019) reveals a linguistic creativity in internet slang, despite its informal or non-standard nature. This creativity enables online users to make ture “semiotics of compensation” (Baron 1984) which gives them access to idioms, expressions, and words that are more specific or expressive than those available in a single language.

Another reason is that the translanguaging space enables users to get access to rich linguistic repository and utilize it in a different way to present themselves. This “rich linguistic repository” gives people access to diverse vocabulary, grammatical elements, and styles that can be combined in new ways. A translanguaging space, as Li (2018) noted, emerges as a social site where the integrated use of diverse sense-making resources fosters creativity and criticality, consequently blurring the distinctions between politically defined and non-politically defined languages, as well as their respective varieties. Such creativity involves pushing and breaking

boundaries between old and new, conventional and original, acceptable and challenging, while criticality refers to the ability to evaluate cultural, social, and linguistic phenomena, challenge and question received wisdom, and express oneself appropriately in response to situations by using evidence appropriately, systematically, and insightfully (Li 2011). In the context of our examination of internet slang on social media, the above potentialities can be noticed through the openness of Douyin which allows for the availability of various linguistic resources, such as emoji, various languages and their varieties, semiotic resources, auditory mode and so on, creating a playful environment that allows for the mixing and breaking of well-established rules in order to creatively utilize these resources. So translanguaging spaces may foster a type of linguistic complexity, even if it is different from more formal standard languages.

In the end, the potential of translanguaging in internet slang for self-presentation meets the dire need of presenting selves by Douyin users. Undoubtedly, in the realm of digital communication, there is an urgency for people to present themselves on social media. This urgency can be attributed to several factors: the highly visible nature of self-image on social media, the constant feedback provided by likes, comments, and other reactions, and the evolving role of social media as a tool for self-promotion or personal branding. Together, these factors create a pressure to actively shape one's self-image and present an idealized version of oneself to the online world, rather than self-acceptance or truly expressing who they are.

6 Conclusions

In this study, we explored how translanguaging strategies are used in internet slang on Douyin, and analyzed how these strategies differ across four sub-components: multimodal, multilingual, multisemiotic and multisensory. We also discussed how these sub-field translanguaging strategies are used for self-presentation, and reasons for pervasiveness of these strategies.

Our study found that multilingual resources, including new Chinglish, Pinyin initialism, and hybrid words, were the most frequently used translanguaging strategies on Douyin. In contrast, multimodal resources (emoji) and multisemiotic resources (keyboard-generated emoticons, hashtag, and punctuation mark) were used less frequently. These sub-field translanguaging strategies contribute to self-presentation and identity expression on social media.

Despite its contributions to the literature, our study has limitations. It focused solely on Douyin, so generalizability to other platforms is uncertain. Future

research could explore self-presentation through translanguaging in a wider range of contexts and topics, such as politics and education, on various social media platforms like Wechat and Instagram.

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