

**Code-switching and linguistic borrowing of English
language by Taiwanese users in contemporary
online discourse**

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Code-switching is a well-known and studied phenomenon in both spoken and written interactions, however the research on bilingual code-switching involving two different writing scripts is sparse. Furthermore, the rapid increase in use of computer mediated communication and online interaction in everyday situations has changed the ways in which language is used. This study aims to fill some of the gaps in the current literature and to examine how the use of language among Taiwanese online users has changed over time.

The goal of this thesis is to examine how users of the Taiwanese online platform Dcard incorporate English language and the Latin script into their Mandarin Chinese discourse. Data was collected over a three-week period from three of the most popular discussion forums on the platform and included 200 posts or comments from each forum. The data was categorized by the type of each item and evaluated on the basis of popular theories regarding the motives for code-switching and previously conducted similar studies on Taiwanese online platforms.

The results showed a variety of ways in which users utilized English language and Latin script, the most common types of items being proper nouns and abbreviations. Motives for code-switching were not always clear, but included economical use of language, clarity, and expressions of creativity and personality. Due to the scope of the data pool some motives or factors may have been accidentally overlooked. For future studies focusing on specific types of data or motives could provide further information on the nature of code-switching in contemporary online spaces.

Key words: code-switching, linguistic borrowing, asynchronous communication, computer-mediated communication, Taiwan

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1 Introduction

Code-switching is the phenomenon of changing one's linguistic behavior, such as language, dialect, or vocabulary, depending on the situation in which communication takes place. Bilingual code-switching occurs when the speaker switches between languages within a message or a sentence, and has been studied widely in the context of spoken language. Language borrowing refers to the - often one-way - adoption of linguistic items, such as vocabulary, between different languages (Hoffer, 2002). Asynchronous communication refers to a type of communication in which the participants are not interacting in real time, such as online discussion boards where messages are left and replied to sporadically (Halim & Maros, 2013).

With the commoditized use of the internet since the 1990s and the increased intercultural interaction that has followed, many non-native English speakers have started to incorporate English syntax and lexicon into their native language when communicating online. A study on Malay-English users' communication on Facebook by Halim and Maros (2013) found various reasons for this type of code-switching, such as switching for emphasis or availability. However, since the data was collected from a platform where the users are typically acquainted with each other outside the online world, the results may have been influenced by pre-existing offline relationships. This study aims to examine the code-switching and language borrowing practiced by Taiwanese users on asynchronous online platforms and to identify the functions of switching and borrowing. The Taiwanese platform Dcard was chosen for data collection since the content posted is mainly in Mandarin and the user base is mostly composed of native Mandarin speakers. Furthermore, on this platform communication is anonymous or usernames are used, and the participants may not have an established relationship with each other, which offers a wider context for use of code-switching and borrowing in online communication.

2 Literature review

Considering the vastness of code-switching as a phenomenon, various theories have been proposed to explain why code-switching occurs. Communication accommodation theory (CAT), as proposed by Giles (Giles & Ogay, 2007), suggests that communication is used as a means for individuals and groups to measure and create either social distance or closeness between, and thus accommodate, each other. In terms of code-switching this would mean switching between dialects or languages to imply a relationship with or association to a certain demographic. The Markedness Model (MM) proposed by Myers-Scotton (1998), on the other hand, suggests that speakers use code-switching differently depending on how their choice of language advances them towards their personal goal in any given situation. Both CAT and MM imply that code-switching is a choice made more or less consciously, used as a means to an end. Auer (1984), however, suggests that there are reasons beyond those proposed by CAT and MM for code-switching. Considering the anonymous nature of many online platforms where code-switching still occurs among bilinguals, it is safe to assume that motives for code-switching are not always merely social or identity-related, but could be due to, for example, limitations of vocabulary or better familiarity with the terminology in one language.

Liu's 2019 study on Chinese-English code-switching and attitudes towards its different types concluded that social likability was rated lower when the speaker switched from Chinese to English than compared to when the speaker spoke only in Chinese. Although viewed less favorable than monolingual speech, interclausal switching - switching language fully to another one when moving onto another clause or sentence - was preferred over intrasentential and intraclausal switching, both of which result in a mix of two languages and occasionally grammar rules within the same sentence or clause. Contrary to what is often suggested as a motivation for code-switching, there was no significant change in judgment of the speaker's socioeconomic background when code-switching was introduced. The participants of the study were native Mandarin speakers from London and four cities in China, thus being of various different socioeconomic, cultural, and academic backgrounds, and were exposed to varying levels of English in their daily lives, yet the results remained fairly similar across the board, suggesting that at least in the case of Chinese nationals code-switching is not necessarily motivated by social factors. Liu suggests that one reason for this could be the association of English as a school subject among many Chinese and its use in daily life is

rather limited. Moradi and Chen (2022) studied the attitudes of both bi- and monolingual Chinese students towards code-switching and -mixing, and found that while the bilingual students' attitudes towards both English and Chinese were similar, the Chinese students viewed the latter more positively in all terms except those regarding academia and employment, and how easy the language was to learn. These attitudes are in line with those found in Liu's study, which suggests that the motives for code-switching among Chinese are utilitarian rather than social. It should be noted, however, that although both are mainly Mandarin-speaking, China, Taiwan, and other Mandarin-speaking regions differ to some extent culturally, and the findings above may not apply to all Chinese speakers.

Current research on code switching focuses mostly on switching within the context of spoken language. Caparas and Gustilo (2017) found that among a Facebook user base consisting of Filipino students and graduates who spoke English, Tagalog, and multiple regional languages, a mix of English and Tagalog - dubbed as "Taglish" - was preferred when communicating online. They suggested this was because it was viewed as equalizing and least discriminating, making joining the discussion more widely accessible. Caparas and Gustilo also noted that the main motivation for code-switching was the requirement to do so due to lack of vocabulary in one language. Other reasons identified were spontaneous expressions via fixed expressions, maintaining specific concepts, and expressions of emotions and affect. Similar results were found in the previously mentioned 2013 study by Halim and Maros on Malay-English code-switching, suggesting that the cultural and linguistic environment may affect the speakers' attitudes towards and motivations for code-switching. The Philippines and Malaysia both have a wide variety of languages that are used on a daily basis, and thus certain languages may carry more stigma or status. In China, on the other hand, Mandarin is the national language and although there are regional dialects and some languages spoken by smaller groups, the environment leans heavily toward monolingualism. In Taiwan, Mandarin is also the most widely used variation of Chinese, however other dialects as well as aboriginal languages are used in daily life outside institutions such as school and work - in fact, many are likely used to code-switching between these languages. This may affect attitudes towards other languages and willingness to adapt them as well.

Existing research on code switching in written language, specifically online, has been most commonly conducted with language pairs that share the same writing system, while research on code-switching between writing systems has been limited. In a 2009 study Huang

examined online code-switching among Taiwanese bilinguals. In addition to switching between languages, she found that users would also switch between three writing systems: standard written Chinese, a phonetic symbol system known as zhuyin, and Latin script. A 2007 research study by Chen examined the frequency and degree of Mandarin-English code-switching on National Sun Yat-Sen University's (NSYSU) online bulletin boards between two groups of college students with different levels of exposure to English language in their academic lives. Chen identified various types of code-switching based on their functions within messages, such as grammatical, referential, and metalinguistic functions. Furthermore, students from the group that were exposed to English regularly in their studies were found to participate in code-switching more frequently and incorporate larger items of English language than those who were instructed mainly in Mandarin. Using Chen's research and findings as a basis, this study aims to explore the phenomena of code-switching and linguistic borrowing in a broader, more contemporary online context. Between the conduction of the aforementioned studies and the current year online interaction has become an increasingly common medium for communication, even replacing face-to-face interaction in certain areas of society. In addition, due to the increased prevalence of the Internet and the subsequent globalization, exposure to languages other than one's native tongue has also increased. In her study Huang specifically pointed out that English is not a language used in daily communication in Taiwan, however with globalization both offline and online this may not be the case anymore. English is used in non-English-speaking areas increasingly more outside of education and academia, while simultaneously non-English online spaces are becoming less culturally isolated.

3 Methodology

The platform Dcard was chosen due to its user base being predominantly Taiwanese, native Mandarin speakers, and mostly anonymous or using pseudonyms. Furthermore, communication on the platform does not necessitate a pre-existing relationship between the users, offering a chance to observe natural communication that is less restrained by social expectations or norms tied to factors such as age, gender, or socioeconomic status. Although the anonymous and semi-anonymous nature of the platform makes defining the user demographic impossible, the majority of the users are presumed to be young adults and adults, between university and early working life. The platform offers various discussion forums based on different topics and interests, and most popular forums are displayed on the site's "Trending" section.

3.1 Data collection

Data was collected by observing written content, including posts, discussions and comments on multimedia posts, on the Taiwanese online social media platform Dcard. The forums chosen for data collection are three of the currently most popular forums, titled 感情 (*"Relationship"*), 心情 (*"Mood"*) and 閒聊 (*"Talk"*). These forums were chosen due to their large user bases and presumed diversity among users. They were also broad enough to allow observation of everyday discussion rather than language specific to a scene or a subculture.

Items of data were chosen based on their inclusion of English language in forms of words, abbreviations and sentences, or inclusion of Latin script. 200 posts or comments from each of the three forums were collected. Some comments were excluded from collection for the purpose of data cleaning. These included cases where the Latin script occurred due to a user mentioning another comment, which are given a code made of numbers and Latin alphabet by the platform, thus not being a conscious choice by the user. Comments including words or terms already used by the author of the original post were also excluded, because they were deemed to occur inorganically. Data was collected over the period of three weeks between March 30th and April 19th, 2025. Users' pseudonyms and other potentially identifiable information was omitted, however a general context may be provided if deemed relevant to the study. Due to the nature of the platform, the length of posts and comments varied widely, and any examples included may be extractions from lengthier texts, however the effort to retain contextual and critical information was made in the process.

3.2 Data analysis

Data was categorized into one of eight groups based on the type of the item. The groups determined were 1) proper nouns, which included names of people, places, brands, websites, and applications; 2) abbreviations, including established acronyms and abbreviations as well as more modern ones, including those considered “internet slang”; 3) words and phrases other than quotations; 4) words or terms that combined both Chinese characters and Latin alphabet, labelled from hereon as “mixed characters”, 5) “other”, which consisted of data that did not fit under other categories but for which the use of Latin script had a clear purpose; 6) emoticons, visual representations of the user’s emotions constructed by the use of Latin script and other characters on the keyboard; 7) uncertain; data that could not be placed into any of the other categories because the meaning or purpose of the Latin alphabet could not be determined, and 8) quotations, both direct and indirect, of what had been said in an outside situation.

Analysis was conducted using the functions and motivations determined and identified by Chen (2007) and Caparas and Gustilo (2017) in their studies as a framework. The frequency of each data type was also measured to gain additional information on the potential motivations and reasons for switching.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Online discourse on open platforms such as Dcard are, by nature, public and open to anyone, and with the added barrier of anonymity and use of pseudonyms asking the users’ consent is not typically done in studies such as this one, and would be challenging. However, measures have been taken to remove possibly identifiable information from any data points before they are used as examples to ensure that there is no risk of identification.

3.4 Limitations

Due to the nature of the platform, the users’ true identity cannot be verified, leaving the possibility of erroneous data open. However, in order for users to engage in discussions, Dcard requires account verification via either an ID application or university email. As a result, many posts will show the name of the user’s university, which can lead to a level of self-censorship or restraint for fear of being identified.

The period of data collection was relatively short and due to external restraints, the nature of collection was rather sporadic. A longer time period with the task of collection being spread

out more evenly could potentially have resulted in data that is better representative of online code-switching habits of Taiwanese users.

Furthermore, considering that I am not Taiwanese nor do I reside in Taiwan, I am also not familiar enough with Taiwanese culture - whether in the physical world or online - to be aware of possible trends, online memes, or events that may have affected the adoption of styles of language usage.

4 Findings & analysis

Across all three forums, the most commonly used type of borrowed item was proper nouns, including their abbreviations, making up 30,3% of the items borrowed. Least common type of item was quotations, being only 1,5% of the total items. Abbreviations other than those of proper nouns counted for 22,2% of the data, words and phrases for 15,2%, mixed characters for 14,4%, emoticons for 5,5% and other types for 6,9%. The functions associated with and potential motivations for code-switching will be discussed more in depth in the next chapter.

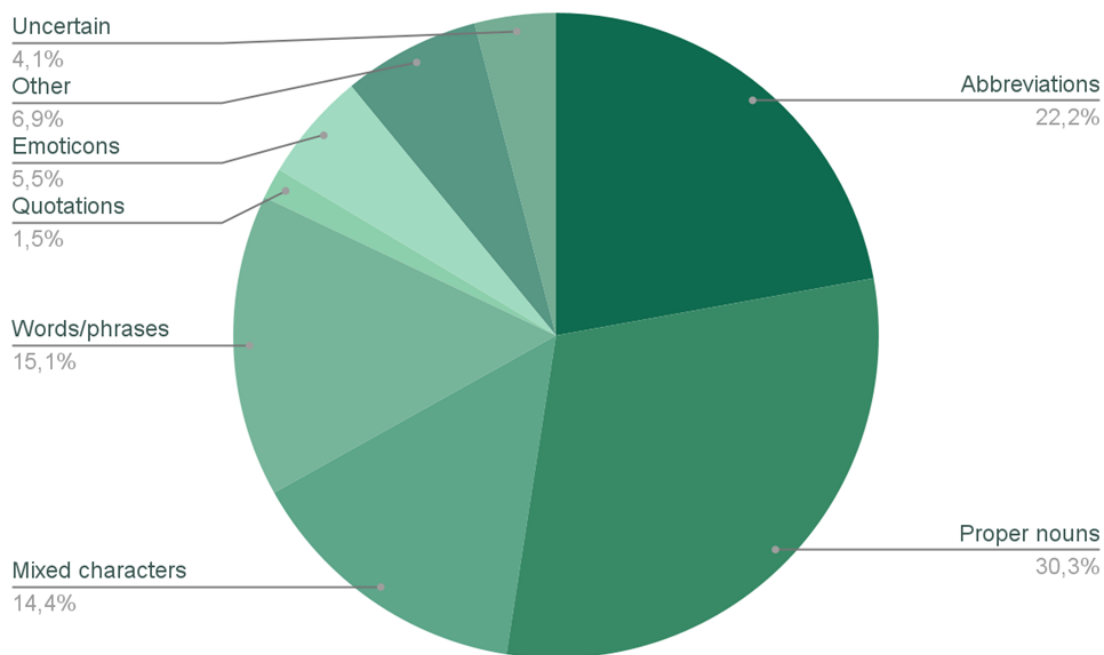


Figure 1. The frequency of each data type visualized in the form of a pie chart.

4.1 Proper nouns

Among proper nouns, most common were names of applications and websites, followed by names of people, animals and groups, and names of brands and models of goods such as cars. Acronyms and abbreviations of proper nouns were also included under this category due to the large overlap between the two groups. The number of abbreviations and fully typed names for most commonly abbreviated items in this group is shown in Figure 2 below, which shows that for commonly used social media sites abbreviating the name was highly preferred over typing out the full name.

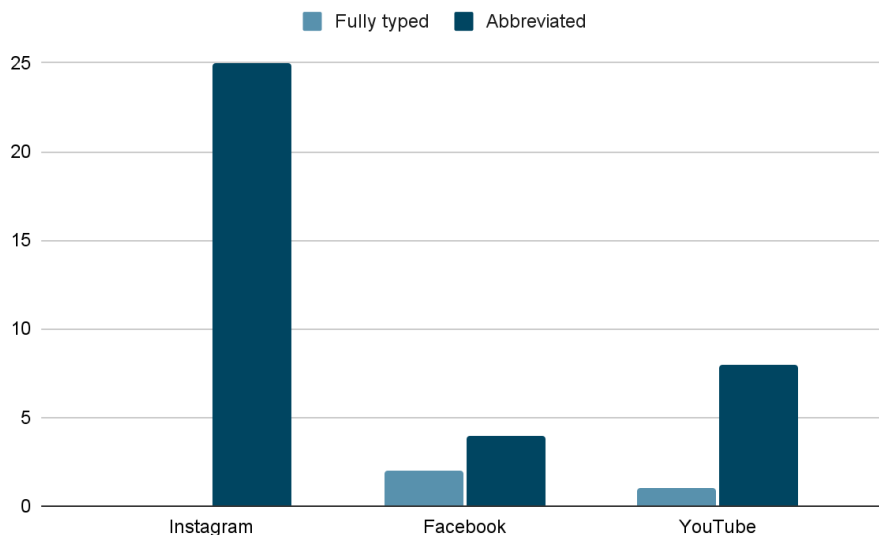


Figure 2. A graph showing the frequency of fully typed and abbreviated occurrences for Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube

4.2 Abbreviations

Established abbreviations and acronyms included widely known acronyms other than those which were included in the previous category of proper nouns. Commonly used, platform-specific abbreviations, such as “po”, were also included. On Dcard, this abbreviation can act as a verb or a noun, as demonstrated in the following examples:

忘記 po 小帳了

Wàngjì po xiǎo zhàngle

Forgot to *post* the account

也太詳細，Po 主小心自身安全呀！

Yě tài xiángxì, Po zhǔ xiǎoxīn zìshēn ānquán ya!

This is too detailed. [*Poster*] please be careful about your own safety!

Other abbreviations included globally known ones, such as those relating to health, science, technology, or other societal matters.

她問我有沒有打過 HPV 疫苗，我說沒有。

Tā wèn wǒ yǒu méiyǒu dǎguò HPV yìmiáo, wǒ shuō méiyǒu

She asked me if I had ever had the *HPV* vaccine and I said no.

其實可以去驗看看 DNA 測序。

Qíshí kěyǐ qù yàn kàn kàn DNA cèxù.

In fact, you can go check out *DNA* sequencing.

說是 AI 合成

Shuō shì AI héchéng

Say it was made by *AI*.

普成這樣到底哪來的自信可以批評別人的啊，你這個頂多 PR40 吧

Pǔ chéng zhèyàng dàodǐ nǎ lái de zìxìn kěyǐ pīpíng biérén de a, nǐ zhège dǐng duō PR40 ba

How can you be so confident to criticize others when you are so ordinary? You are probably *PR40* at most.

Some commonly seen abbreviations were those coming from contemporary popular or online culture.

PUA 大師吧

PUA dàshī ba

PUA master, huh.

PUA standing for “Pick up artist”, a man who teaches other men how to flirt with and seduce women.

搞得我一個喜歡 kpop 的都尷尬死了

Gǎo dé wǒ yīgè xīhuān kpop de dōu gāngà sīle

It makes me as a *K-pop* fan so embarrassed

Kpop, or K-pop, being a shorthand for Korean popular music, especially the type manufactured and produced by large agency companies with strict guidelines for their artists.

我確實剛好是這些 KOL 的受眾/聽眾/觀眾，但我不會無腦護航網紅道德缺失甚至違法的行為

Wǒ quèshí gānghǎo shì zhèxiē KOL de shòuzhòng/tīngzhòng/guānzhòng, dàn wǒ bù huì wú nǎo hùháng wǎng hóng dàodé quēshī shènzhì wéifǎ de xíngwéi

I do happen to be the audience/listener/viewer of these *KOLs*, but I will not blindly support the immoral or even illegal behavior of Internet celebrities.

A little used acronym in English speaking spaces, KOL stands for “key opinion leader”, often referred to in English as an influencer.

做這行我還真沒你寫的這麼多感性和 EMO

Zuò zhè xíng wǒ hái zhēn méi nǐ xiě de zhème duō gǎnxìng hé EMO

In this line of work, I am not as sentimental and *emo* as you write.

Originally used to refer to a genre of music and its listeners, “emo” comes from “emotional”, referring to the brooding and angsty style of the music and lyricism, it can also be used to describe someone’s personality.

Sometimes users also chose to use English abbreviations of time or large numbers rather than their Chinese counterparts, sometimes despite using the Chinese equivalent later in the same message or sentence.

這個差不多一天做 14h 以上 只是薪資單沒寫

Zhège chàbùduō yītiān zuò 14h yǐshàng zhǐshì xīnzī dān méi xiě

This is almost *14 hours* a day, but it is not written on the pay slip.

他只是等我睡起來時間打把遊戲：那場已經打了 40min 不能退你就再等我 10 分鐘

*Tā zhǐshì děng wǒ shuì qǐlái shíjiān dǎ bǎ yóuxì: Nà chǎng yǐjīng dǎle 40min
bùnéng tuì nǐ jiù zài děng wǒ 10 fēnzhōng*

He was just waiting for me to wake up and play a game: I've already played that game for 40 minutes. If you can't quit, just wait for me for another 10 minutes.

看你老公風險承受度多高 我近期股市未實現最高來到-100w

*Kàn nǐ lǎogōng fēngxiǎn chéngshòu dù duō gāo wǒ jìnqí gǔshì wèi shíxiàn zuìgāo
lái dào-100w*

It depends on how high your husband's risk tolerance is. My recent stock market has not reached the highest point and has reached -100w

Abbreviations that have been established and used in writing for a long time, such as those for “postscript”, “example”, and “versus” were also common.

p.s. 狗狗超可愛！風景超漂亮！

P.S. Gǒu gǒu chāo kě'ài! Fēngjǐng chāo piàoliang!

p.s. The dog is super cute! The scenery is super beautiful!

EX: 合身一點的 T 恤上的圖案會變形、穿雪紡洋裝會被當孕婦

EX: Héshēn yīdiǎn de T xù shàng de tú'àn huì biànxíng, chuān xuě fǎng yángzhuāng huì bèi dāng yùnfù

EX: The pattern on a fitted T-shirt will be distorted, and wearing a chiffon dress will cause you to be mistaken for a pregnant woman

大叔我交往過瘦的跟胖的女生 (167/53 vs 162/61) 非常能體會那個差距

*Dàshū wǒ jiāowǎngguò shòu de gēn pàng de nǚshēng (167/53 vs 162/61)
fēicháng néng tǐhuì nàgè chājù*

I've dated skinny and fat girls (167/53 vs 162/61) and I can really feel the difference.

開始思考

os: 他會不會其實很喜歡大奶

Kāishǐ sīkǎo

os: *Tā huì bù huì qíshí hěn xǐhuān dà nǎi*

Starts thinking

os: Does he actually like big tits?

“Os” in this case refers to “off screen”, an abbreviation typically used in screenwriting. The user likely chose this due to the formatting of the text in their post, which also followed that of a script.

4.3 Words and phrases

This category included items in which the writer had chosen to write certain words or terms in Latin script on their own volition (i.e. not because they were quoting what someone had said). The most commonly used was “ok” in place of the Chinese “good” (好 *hǎo*) or “okay” (還好 *hái hǎo*), but others included fixed phrases such as the following.

Who cares 這種事不是常常發生嗎 需要發一篇文?

Who cares *zhè zhǒng shì bùshì chángcháng fāshēng ma xūyào fā yī piān wén?*

Who cares. Doesn't this happen all the time? Does it need a post?

很多喜歡說，如果你家小孩你家狗被咬呢 *blahblahblah*。

Hěnduō xǐhuān shuō, rúguǒ shì nǐ jiā xiǎohái nǐ jiā gǒu bèi yǎo ne blahblahblah.

Many like to say, what if it was your child or dog that got bitten *blahblahblah*.

Here the writer uses an indirect quotation but the “blahblahblah” is their own addition and is used to signal their attitude towards those they are quoting. Another user uses a similar

method, but instead typing “balabalabala”, which is more in line with how it would be typed when using a *zhuyin* input system.

Verbs were also common items to be switched for. Since the classification of words into nouns, verbs, and adjectives is not as clear cut in Chinese as it is in English, nouns were also occasionally used in a manner similar to verbs.

不懂現在還在做中日口譯和翻譯的我為什麼還沒被 fire 掉

Bù dǒng xiànzài hái zài zuò zhōng rì kǒuyì hé fānyì de wǒ wèishéme hái méi bèi fire diào

I don't understand why I haven't been *fired* yet even though I'm still doing Chinese-Japanese interpretation and translation.

這藥真的沒有在 kidding

Zhè yào zhēn de méiyǒu zài kidding

This medicine is really not *kidding*.

The post was regarding the user's surprise at the effectiveness of a medicine they were taking compared to all their previous efforts to alleviate the issue.

看完更新 覺得你廢話好多、小劇場好多 自我打氣好多、長篇大論好多 男生能不能 man 一點

Kàn wán gēngxīn juéde nǐ fèihuà hǎoduō, xiǎo jùchǎng hǎoduō zìwǒ dǎqì hǎoduō, chángpiāndàlùn hǎoduō nánshēng néng bùnéng man yīdiǎn

After reading your updates, I feel like you talk too much nonsense, put on too many skits, encourage yourself too much, and write too many long speeches. Can boys be more *manly*?

Terms that may not have direct Chinese equivalent or are more commonly used in English were often accompanied with an explanation or a definition given in Chinese.

如果手淫太頻繁，特別是一天多次，會導致多巴胺系統過度刺激，之後會進入一種多巴胺低潮期（dopamine crash），這時候會感覺到身心無力、懶洋洋的，甚至有點小憂鬱的傾向。

Rúguǒ shǒuyín tài pínfán, tèbié shì yītiān duō cì, huì dǎozhì duōbā'àn xìtǒng guòdù cìjī, zhīhòu huì jìnrù yīzhǒng duōbā'àn dīcháo qī (dopamine crash), zhè shíhòu huì gǎnjué dào shēnxīn wú lì, lǎn yángyáng de, shènzhì yǒudiǎn xiǎo yōuyù de qīngxiàng.

If you masturbate too frequently, especially multiple times a day, it will lead to overstimulation of the dopamine system, followed by a period of low dopamine (*dopamine crash*). At this time, you will feel physically and mentally weak, lazy, and even a little depressed.

為什麼女生還要仇女啊 Pick Me Girl

Wèishéme nǚshēng huán yào chóu nǚ a Pick Me Girl

Why do girls hate women? Pick Me Girl

A term used primarily online to describe women who undermine other women in pursuit of validation or attention from men.

narcissist? 我畢業其實沒幾年 現在最有興趣的是世代差異的成因研究

Narcissist? Wǒ bìyè qíshí méi jǐ nián xiànzài zuì yǒu xìngqù de shì shìdài chāyì de chéngyīn yánjiū

Narcissist? I graduated only a few years ago. What I am most interested in now is the research on the causes of generational differences.

我是 lesbian

Wǒ shì lesbian

I am a lesbian

Although there is a Chinese term for the word “lesbian”, it is rather long and formal, and the user may not have felt it suitable for the context and rather opted for the English word.

Interestingly, on one occasion “T-shirt” was written fully in English, despite being typically shortened to just “T” or referred to with the Chinese word.

作為一個可以在-5度穿短 T-shirt 跟睡褲出去丟回收跟垃圾的狠人，我的舒適溫度區間落在「-10~ +20」

Zuòwéi yīgè kěyǐ zài -5 dù chuān duǎn T-shirt gēn shuì kù chūqù diū huíshōu gēn lèsè de hěn rén, wǒ de shūshì wēndù qūjiān luò zài -10~ +20'

As a tough guy who can wear a short sleeve *T-shirt* and pajama pants to throw out recycling and garbage in -5 degrees, my comfortable temperature range is "-10 ~ +20".

Conjunctions were also often switched for, seemingly with no reason.

[我只能說，你們是有段緣但你們不適合，所以當妳（or 他）那分情感磨滅到極限，也代表時間到了，那不妨就好聚好散，為下一段準備]

Wǒ zhǐ néng shuō, nǐmen shì yǒu duàn yuán dàn nǐmen bùshìhé, suǒyǐ dāng nǐ (or tā) nà fēn qínggǎn mómiè dào jíxiàn, yě dài biǎo shíjiān dào le, nà bùfáng jiù hǎo jù hǎo sǎn, wèi xià yī duàn zhǔnbèi

I can only say that you two are destined to be together but you are not suitable for each other, so when your (*or his*) feelings have been worn out to the limit, it also means that the time is up, so why not part ways amicably and prepare for the next one

但上課教材的部分，我可以感同身受。anyhow 希望學弟妹實習都能順利！

Dàn shàngkè jiàocái de bùfèn, wǒ kěyǐ gǎntóngshēnshòu. Anyhow xīwàng xué dìmèi shíxí dōu néng shùnlì!

But when it comes to the teaching materials, I can relate. *Anyhow*, I hope that my junior classmates' internships will go smoothly!

4.4 Mixed characters

Items grouped under this category included cases in which Latin alphabet and *hanzi* were combined to form a word, abbreviation, or a term. Some were already established in the language, such as “x-ray machine” and “T-shirt” (included in an earlier example).

台中的看守所印象中有 x 光機

Táizhōng de kānshǒusuǒ yìnxiàng zhōng yǒu x guāng jī

Taichung detention center had an *x-ray machine*

It was also common to drop the “shirt”-part of “T-shirt” and combine a word for style or material with the remaining “T”.

歪個樓，她家的衣服真的偏貴，一模一樣的衣服蝦皮賣 400 她賣 600 多…
（而且是一件大學 T 而已

Wāi gè lóu, tā jiā de yīfú zhēn de piān guì, yīmóyīyàng de yīfú xiāpí mài 400 tā mài 600 duō... (érqiě shì yī jiàn dàxué T éryǐ

Off topic, her clothes are really expensive, the same clothes are sold for 400 on Shopee but she sells them for more than 600... (and it's just a *college T-shirt*

The most commonly occurring item in this group was *原 PO*, which - depending on the context - could refer to either the original post under which the comments were, or, more commonly, the person who posted the first message (“original poster”).

至原 PO: 當妳發現男朋友的這個秘密時

Zhì yuán PO: Dāng nǚ fāxiàn nán péngyǒu de zhège mìmì shí

To the original poster: When you discover your boyfriend's secret

其實原 PO 的顏值算好看啦，就是感覺個性十分差勁

Qíshí yuán PO de yánzhí suàn hǎokàn la, jiùshì gǎnjué gèxìng shífēn chàjìn

Actually, the *original poster* is pretty, but her personality is pretty bad.

Some of the combinations were terms related to society or psychology and presumably relatively new additions to the Chinese - and sometimes English - language.

Z 世代整頓職場?

Z shìdài zhěngdùn zhíchǎng?

Will *Generation Z* clean up the workplace?

M 型化社會導致只有層峰跟社底在生

M xíng huà shèhuì dǎozhì zhǐyǒu céng fēng gēn shè dǐ zài shēng

The *M-shaped* society results in only the top and the bottom of society living.

身為一個宅宅兼大 I 人 是很需要自己的空間的 不管是看動畫還是打遊戲或是放空

Shēn wéi yīgè zhái zhái jiān dà I rén shì hěn xūyào zìjǐ de kōngjiān de bùguǎn shì kàn dònghuà háishì dǎ yóuxì huò shì fàngkōng

As a geek and a big *introvert*, I really need my own space, whether it's to watch anime, play games, or just relax.

The Chinese words describing introversion and extroversion are rather long, and many online users opt to use *I 人* and *E 人* - I-person and E-person - instead.

Another common type of item in this category followed the “A+hanzi” -formula. These terms refer to adult content and the term likely originates from the commonly used “AV” in Japanese, abbreviation of “adult video”. Under this format, the letter A could be followed by type of media to indicate its content, or “female/male” to refer to an actor in the field.

A 片看太多嗎?

A piàn kàn tài duō ma?

Watching too much *porn*?

男子監獄可看 A 書，廁所可尻尻。女子監獄有嗎？好奇。

Nánzǐ jiānyù kě kàn A shū, cèsuǒ kě kǎo kǎo. Nǚzǐ jiānyù yǒu ma? Hàoqí.

In a men's prison you can read *pornographic books* and have sex in the toilet. What about women's prison? Curious.

There was also a form of an abbreviation that used the Chinese character for a number and a Latin alphabet. This was a new form of an established abbreviation that typically uses Arabic numerals.

之後除了偷拍你，跟你上床，要你跟朋友三 p，要你每個月給他錢各種威脅
你會越來越悲慘

*Zhīhòu chúle tōupāi nǐ, gēn nǐ shàngchuáng, yào nǐ gēn péngyǒu sān p, yào nǐ měi
gè yuègěi tā qián gèzhǒng wēixié nǐ huì yuè lái yuè bēicǎn*

After that, besides secretly filming you, sleeping with you, asking you to have a
threesome with your friends, asking you to give him money every month, and
making various threats, you will become more and more miserable.

先去找二 D 跟三 D

Xiān qù zhǎo èr D gēn sān D

Find 2D and 3D first.

Based on the context of the message, this likely refers to generations, D standing for 代 (*dài*),
meaning second and third generations in the family lineage.

Finally, sometimes Dcard was referred to as *D 卡* (*Dkǎ*), combining the letter D with the
character that was equivalent to “card” both phonetically and semantically.

我們這一群在 D 卡上的

Wǒmen zhè yīqún zài D kǎ shàng de

We are on *Dcard*

4.5 Other

Items categorized as “other” included those in which the purpose of use of Latin alphabet was
clear, but did not fit any of the established categories. For example, the letters X and O were

sometimes used to censor a part of a three-syllable name or - among other letters - act as a stand-in for a hypothetical name, as seen in the examples below.

是不是叫 XX 逸

Shì bùshì jiào XX yì

Is it XX Yi?

去，然後大聲詢問其他家長「你家小孩有給用手機嗎？上次 XXX 來我家偷了手機跟智慧手錶+錢，結果他家人說是我給小孩給太好，想問說你家小孩也有使用嗎？是真的我給太好嗎？」

Qù, ránhòu dà shēng xúnwèn qítā jiāzhǎng `nǐ jiā xiǎohái yǒugěi yòng shǒujī ma? Shàng cì XXX lái wǒjiā tōule shǒujī gēn zhìhuì shǒubiǎo +qián, jiéguǒ tā jiārén shuō shì wǒ gěi xiǎohái gěi tài hǎo, xiǎng wèn shuō nǐ jiā xiǎohái yěyǒu shǐyòng ma? Shì zhēn de wǒ gěi tài hǎo ma?'

Go, and then loudly ask other parents, "Do your children have mobile phones? Last time XXX came to my house and stole a mobile phone, smart watch and money. As a result, his family said that I gave them to his child too well. I want to ask if your children also use them? Is it true that I gave them too well?"

今年 4 月初，忍不住去問共同好友 A 和 B，才得知她不喜歡老公和她有在備孕，這兩個可能的原因。

Jīnnián 4 yuèchū, rěn bù zhù qù wèn gòngtóng hào yǒu A hé B, cái dé zhī tā bù xīhuān lǎogōng hé tā yǒu zài bèiyùn, zhè liǎng gè kěnéng de yuányīn.

In early April this year, I couldn't help but ask our mutual friends A and B, and only then did I learn that she didn't like her husband and she were trying to get pregnant, and here are two possible reasons.

There was also an occasion in which X and O were used to represent “hugs and kisses”, a practice that has been used by English speakers in writing for a long time.

加油 xoxo

Jiāyóu xoxo

Come on *xoxo*

Combined with the encouraging statement at the end of their comment the commenter emphasises their well wishes to the original poster.

The letter X was also used to censor controversial or potentially upsetting words, or as a stand-in for what presumably were meant to be profanities.

在國外都要求政治正確有夠 XX 我很不喜歡也不適應更不認同

Zài guó wài dōu yāoqiú zhèngzhì zhèngquè yǒu gòu XX wǒ hěn bù xǐhuān yě bù shìyìng gèng bù rèntóng

It's so XX that people in foreign countries demand political correctness. I don't like it, I don't adapt to it, and I don't agree with it.

天殘自 X 後，ig 發文

看完新聞去滑當事人 ig，結果自殺前設定排程貼文，雖然知道是排程，但還是覺得好恐怖喔

Tiān cán zì X hòu, ig fāwén

kàn wán xīnwén qù huá dāngshìrén ig, jiéguǒ zìshā qián shèdìng pái chéng tiē wén, suīrán zhīdào shì pái chéng, dàn hái shì juéde hǎo kǒngbù ō

After Tiansan's *suicide*, there was an ig post.

After reading the news, I checked out her ig and found she had scheduled a post before committing suicide. Although I know it was scheduled, it still feels scary.

In this case, the word “suicide” was only censored in the title of the post, but not the post itself. This was potentially done to avoid the post getting taken down or to avoid causing distress to other users who may want to avoid content dealing with such topics.

你這等級的我 X 過好幾個

Nǐ zhè děngjí de wǒ Xguò hǎojǐ gè

I've *fucked* many people at your level

N was also used as a stand-in for a number, as is the typical practice in science and mathematics.

我 N 年前也讀過

Wǒ N nián qián yě dúguò

I also read it [*some*] years ago

The symbols & and \$ were also chosen to be included, because they stood for words that could have been typed in *hanzi*, but were chosen not to.

我覺得台灣社會很注重學歷跟\$\$（此指人脈跟有錢動用關係），人品跟態度好像沒什麼重要的。

Wǒ juéde táiwān shèhuì hěn zhùzhòng xuélì gēn \$\$ (cǐ zhǐ rénmai gēn yǒu qián dòngyòng guānxì), rén pǐn gēn tàidù hǎoxiàng méishénme zhòngyào de.

I feel that Taiwanese society places a lot of emphasis on academic qualifications and \$\$ (this refers to connections and the ability to use money), and character and attitude don't seem to be important.

Other purposes in this category included pronunciation instruction for a language with a writing system different from both English and Chinese, and using Latin alphabets in mathematical equations and for other scientific purposes.

可以講

저는 대만사람이에요

Jeo Neun Dae Man Sa Lam Yi E Yo

我是台灣人的意思]

Kěyǐ jiǎng

저는 대만사람이에요

Jeo Neun Dae Man Sa Lam Yi E Yo

wǒ shì táiwān rén de yìsi

You could say

저는 대만사람이에요

Jeo Neun Dae Man Sa Lam Yi E Yo

It means “I am Taiwanese”

我認真說，你可以先測基因，如果 y 單倍群是 O-F155 或其下游分支，那你大概率真的是劉邦的後代

Wǒ rènzhēn shuō, nǐ kěyǐ xiān cè jīyīn, rúguǒ y dān bèi qún shì O-F155 huò qí xià yóu fēnzhī, nà nǐ dàgài shuàizhēn de shì liúbāng de hòudài

I’m serious, you can test your genes first, if the Y haplogroup is O-F155 or its downstream branches, you are most likely a descendant of Liu Bang.

Here the Latin alphabet is a part of scientific terminology, Y likely standing for male and O-F155 being a code for a haplogroup.

某天洗完澡剛從浴室（4F）走出來 我就非常明顯聽到客廳（2F）電視開超大聲…

Mǒu tiān xǐ wán zǎo gāng cóng yùshì (4F) zǒu chū lái wǒ jiù fēicháng míngxiǎn tīng dào kètīng (2F) diànshì kāi chāodà shēng …

One day, when I walked out of the bathroom (4F) after taking a shower, I could clearly hear the TV in the living room (2F) turned up very loud...

One common inclusion of the Latin alphabet was sizing, especially the sizing of breasts and bra cups, the common convention being that the size is given as a letter.

後面每次也都是我主動提的 我的身材... 肉肉的（160/60-65/36E）

Hòumiàn měi cì yě dū shì wǒ zhūdòng tí de wǒ de shēncái... Ròu ròu de (160/60-65/36E)

I was the one who took the initiative to bring it up every time afterwards. My figure is... chubby (160/60-65/36E)

我 b 做到 e 還是說因為這樣婆婆才一直找我碴？真的氣死欸

Wǒ b zuò dào e háishì shuō yīnwèi zhèyàng pópó cái yīzhí zhǎo wǒ chá? Zhēn de qì sǐ ǎi

I went from *B* to *E*. Could it be because of this that my mother-in-law always picks on me? I'm really pissed off.

Other purposes for Latin script in this group included jokes and online memes, such as the following.

我的車車.gif

Wǒ de chē chē.gif

My car.gif

A common way to react to a funny picture by giving it a title and following it with the “.jpg” file format indicator.

等等 iWIN 可能要順著網路線爬過去找你了 「你今天 WIN 了嗎？」

Děng děng iWIN kěnéng yào shùnzhe wǎng lùxiàn pá guòqù zhǎo nǐle `nǐ jīntiān WINle ma?'

Wait, *iWIN* may have to crawl along the Internet to find you. "Have you *WIN* today?"

iWIN being a game company, the user made a bilingual pun using the word in the company's name.

對，它看起來像嘉明 A 味道，但它不是

Duì, tā kàn qǐlái xiàng jiāmíng A wèidào, dàn tā bùshì

Yes, it looks like the essence of *Jiaming A*, but it is not.

A reference to a scene in an old Taiwanese drama series, possibly also referring to the use of “A” in reference to adult content that was mentioned in an earlier segment.

It was also not uncommon to use the repetition of the letter “w” to represent laughter. This practice originates from Japanese online spaces. The Japanese word for “laugh” is *warau*, which is then reduced to its initial and repeated for emphasis. It can be likened to how laughing is often typed out as “hahaha” in English.

太溫馨搞笑了 www

Tài wēnxīn gǎoxiàole www

So warm and funny www

4.6 Emoticons

This category included emoticons - character combinations resembling a face to convey the writer’s feelings - that employed Latin alphabets within them. Sideways emoticons commonly used in Western countries and emoticons aligned with the direction of the text (also known as *kaomoji*), originating from Japanese online forums, were both included.

!!! 這時數!!!! 根本超恐怖=w=!!!!!!

!!! Zhèshí shù!!!! Gēnběn chāo kǒngbù =w=!!!!!!

!!! This number!!!! It's so scary =w=!!!!!!

Here the “w” represents a mouth in an uneasy position while the equation marks are eyes squinted, almost closed.

去搜了一下什麼是 gk 笑出來……而且怎麼那麼貴 ㄥ(°A°)ㄥ

Qù sōule yīxià shénme shì gk xiào chūlái ……érqiě zěnme nàme guì ㄥ(°A°)ㄥ

I searched what gk is and laughed...and why is it so expensive ㄥ(°A°)ㄥ

Here the letter A and other characters form a person who seems to be standing and looking in shock or surprise at their discovery.

One commonly seen type of item that should be mentioned specifically is the “QQ” or “qq”. As He (2022) explains in his article, in Taiwan, these two letters can have different meanings depending on the context; they may be used to describe a chewy or sticky texture in a food, or to represent two crying eyes (especially when capitalized). However, based on the contexts all the items I came across seemingly fell under the latter meaning, hence why they were categorized as emoticons.

原來發發也是受害者 QQ

Yuánlái fā fā yěshì shòuhài zhě QQ

Turns out FaFa is also a victim QQ

4.7 Uncertain

Data grouped under this category included items that could not be categorized otherwise for a number of reasons.

她男友也是高富帥 之前很有名的 pptsai

Tā nányǒu yěshì gāofù shuài zhīqián hěn yǒumíng de pptsai

Her boyfriend is also tall, rich and handsome. He was previously the famous
pptsai

This could be an abbreviation of a name, but looking further into the context there were no clues.

現在蠻好奇沈一開始的轉發 是在影射劭中嗎 (me too) 還是其實是先知知道內幕在影射張藝

Xiànzài mán hàoqí shěn yī kāishǐ de zhuǎnfā shì zài yǐngshè shào zhōng ma (me too) háishì qíshí shì xiānzhī zhīdào nèimù zài yǐngshè zhāng yì

Now I am quite curious about whether Shen Yi's first repost was meant to refer to Shao Zhong (*me too*) or was he actually a prophet who knew the inside story and was referring to Zhang Yi

In this case it is uncertain whether the “me too” is a reference to the #MeToo -movement or whether the writer agrees with the earlier sentiment.

4.8 Quotations

Quotations included both direct and indirect quotations from media as well as discourse between individuals.

「喜劇，是悲劇加上時間。（Comedy is tragedy plus time.）」美國著名作家馬克吐溫曾這樣說。

Xǐjù, shì bēijù jiā shàng shíjiān. (Comedy is tragedy plus time.)' Měiguó zhùmíng zuòjiā mǎkè tǔ wēn céng zhèyàng shuō.

"Comedy is tragedy plus time." The famous American writer Mark Twain once said this.

In Taiwan, I don't say”文組”. I say “天賦異稟” and I think that's beautiful.

In Taiwan, I don't say”wénzǔ”. I say “*tiānfù yìbǐng*” and I think that's beautiful.

In Taiwan, I don't say”liberal arts”. I say “extraordinarily talented” and I think that's beautiful.

This sentence format comes from an online meme where users share the habits or ways of their cultural or social group by starting with “In [place], we don't say [X], we say [Y] and I think that's beautiful”. The meaning of this comment was somewhat difficult to understand and translate since it includes a Chinese idiom that is typically used to describe a person, but likens it to a field of study. The translation “beyond the ordinary” could also be applied here, and in that case it could be understood as the commenter holding liberal arts in a high regard.

原文有寫 bad dog，突然想到的一個用詞，就刪了吧

Yuánwén yǒu xiě bad dog, túrán xiǎngdào de yīgè yòng cí, jiù shānle ba

The original text said *bad dog*, but I suddenly thought of a word to use, so I deleted it.

In this case the user presumably quoted themselves, having previously written in an English term but later coming up with another way to word it and changing it.

4.9 Summary

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of the switched items across all three forums were proper nouns, especially those related to other online platforms and commercial brands. Using abbreviations was very common, which is understandable considering the ease of not only typing, but also reading, when compared to typing out full names. When switching for English words, phrases, or terms, the usage was typically in line with grammatical conventions, however the reason for the choice was not always clear. Potential motivations will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5 Discussion

As previously mentioned in the literature review, there are differing views as to what are the motivations behind code-switching. While the proponents of CAT and MM would argue that speakers engage in code-switching to reach a certain goal in communication - be it in relationships or employment -, Auer proposes that the reasons for code-switching are much more varied. This is partially supported by the findings of Liu (2019), in which code-switching was regarded more negatively than monolingual speech, thus likely rendering the speaker at a social disadvantage. However, this was not the case for bilingual speakers, as was demonstrated by the results of Moradi and Chen (2022). It could be argued that some of the findings of this study, specifically those in which code-switching is present in the form of a joke or a meme, also support Auer's theory. Jokes and memes can be seen as an expression of creativity as well as modern online culture, thus indicating a motive that is less utilitarian, and more related to identity and self-expression. These are also adjacent to the group and individual identities emphasized in CAT, which could be indicative of the fluctuating nature of the motives behind code-switching. Another use of code-switching that would argue for the theories supporting relationship-building and socially driven motives was the ways in which “原po” was used when referring to the original poster in the thread. It was often used as a stand-in for either a name or a personal pronoun, depending on the commenter's affect towards the original poster. When positive, the commenters would typically use it to refer to the original poster directly, but when negative, it would be used to address the original poster in the third person. The latter is understandable due to the anonymous nature of the platform, but the choice of 原po instead of “you” when directly addressing the original poster indicates a different motive, perhaps one that attempts to create a closeness between the poster and the commenter.

Caparas and Gustilo's (2017) findings suggest that code-switching can be used to even out inequalities among users, which could be found in the data of this study as well. Oftentimes when using an English term or a lesser known acronym the user would explain it briefly in Chinese, offering access to information for those whose English skills may not be sufficient to follow English-language media on their own. In this case, the user offering the explanation does not gain anything from it, especially if they use the platform anonymously, which supports the claim that code-switching can occur without an ulterior motive. Again, this behavior can also be viewed as accommodating for the other users on the platform, linking

back to CAT and group dynamics. In this case choosing to explain the terms would make the behavior inclusionary, with the user signaling not only their own but other users' belonging to the same in-group.

Sometimes code-switching occurs because it is a more "economic" way to use language - for example, the word is shorter in another language, thus making typing it faster and easier to fit the message in a short space, especially on platforms with character constraints. However, while this may be the case for some of the data - especially those combining Latin alphabet with *hanzi* - switching between scripts on a keyboard takes additional steps regardless of the input system. This would not be as big of an issue for someone who is accustomed to the switching, but may still affect the user's language choices.

Compared to the previous studies on Taiwanese online platforms, the amount and types of loaned items have increased significantly, which is understandable considering the advancements in technology and integration of Internet and online communication in everyday life. At the same time, functions of switching have likely changed as well. Many of the functions determined by Chen (2007) can still be found in today's online discourse, such as the repetition of a single word for emphasis or clarification, metalinguistic function in direct quotations, and referential function when using terms with no direct equivalent in Chinese. However, sometimes users choose an English word despite a Chinese equivalent existing. This could be due to a variety of reasons; perhaps the context surrounding the message veered the user towards the English word, or they are more used to hearing or seeing the English word in daily life. The latter could be especially true for brands. For example, the technology brand Apple can be referred to as 蘋果 (*Píngguǒ*), however the advertising, packaging, and logos still have the English name. Using the original name could also help avoid confusion between the brand and the fruit in contexts where it is not clearly specified which one the speaker is referring to. This does not explain why some users chose to use English conjunctions or words with a readily available Chinese equivalent, which may suggest that sometimes code-switching occurs with no specific reason, providing some evidence against CAT and MM, and supporting Auer's theory. However, as discussed earlier, the lines of these theories may not be as rigid as previously believed, and one's motives for switching may be multifaceted. Furthermore, while the user may not consciously recognize any clear reasons for why they choose to code-switch in any given situation, there may be unconscious motives, such as social biases, guiding their behavior that they are unaware of.

6 Conclusion

The main findings of this study demonstrate that Taiwanese users of the online platform Dcard code-switch between English and Chinese often and use English and the Latin script in their messages in various ways, especially when referring to foreign places, brands, and names. The findings can help bridge the gap in research regarding code-switching in written form and between languages using different scriptures. They may also be helpful to those interested in code-switching on anonymous online platforms. One of the major limitations of this study was the short time period for data collection, especially when considering the scope of the data pool. Future studies could benefit from focusing on one type of data, such as proper nouns or English abbreviations, and comparing the frequency at which it occurs in English and Chinese. Hopefully this study offers a general overview into the code-switching habits of Taiwanese users on a Mandarin-speaking platform and how they have changed over the years with the increase of online discourse.

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