CULTURE, IMAGINED AUDIENCE, AND LANGUAGE CHOICES OF MULTILINGUAL CHINESE AND KOREAN STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

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60% of the world population are **multilingual speakers**

1,050,000 **international students** in the U.S.

39% of these students are **Chinese & Korean**

Should I use L1 (native language) or English?

LANGUAGE CHOICE

- audience
- context (situation and topic)
- social standards

Fishman, J. A.. (1965). Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?. La Linguistique, 1(2), 67–88.

LANGUAGE CHOICE ON SNS

- audience -> invisible and imagined
- context collapse
- social standards -> subjective

Fishman, J. A.. (1965). Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?. La Linguistique, 1(2), 67–88.

David: (*in Korean*) Jay Kim, you are becoming good looking. What are you taking? Lol

Jay: (*in Korean*) Saudi sandstorm lol Anyhow, this is someone else's post so if we speak Korean it's awkward [for the non-Korean poster]

David: don't care :)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. How does **the topic and the content** of the post affect the language choice of multilingual international students on Facebook? What role does **culture** play in the decision?

RQ2. How does the **imagined audience** affect the language choice of multilingual international students on Facebook?

PARTICIPANTS

19 participants

- 8 Chinese, 11 Korean
- 11 males, 8 females
- age range: 20-40 years (mean = 25.53, s.d. = 4.31)
- length of stay in the U.S. in years (mean = 2.32, s.d. =1.29)

METHODOLOGY

Pre-experiment

online scenario

Part 1

Facebook post survey

Part 2

Exploratory Visualization

Part 3

Semi-structured Interview

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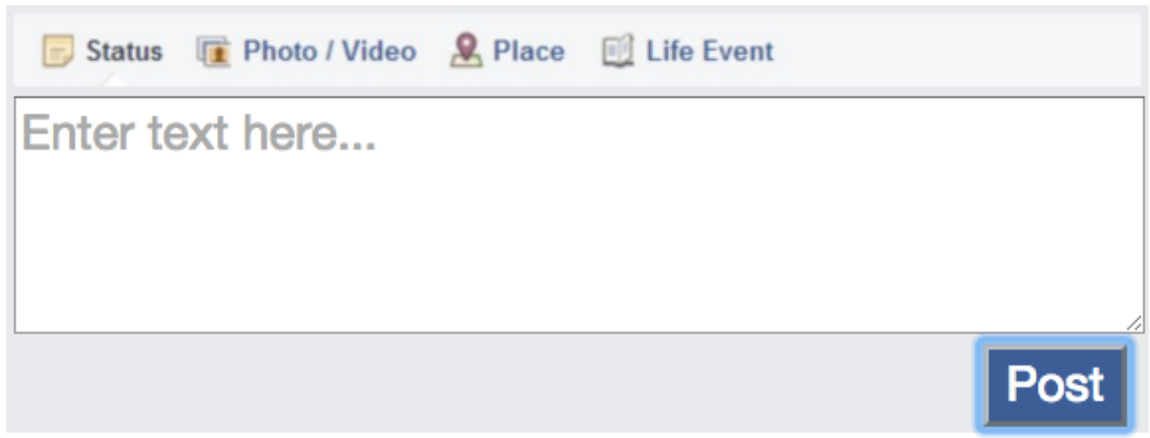
Languange Choices of Bilingual Users on Facebook

Scenario 2

You just got back from your 3 day trip to New York. On that trip, you saw the Statue of Liberty and Wall Street Charging Bull, and took this picture of Times Square. Write a post that would go along with the picture you took.

你刚刚去纽约市玩了三天。这趟旅行中你参观了自由女神像，华尔街金牛，并且在时代广场拍了一张照（下图）。请发表一条关于这张照片的状态。



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Status Update

Hidy Kong
Fri, 26 Oct 2012 21:03:25

i wish i could fix repo this morning...

3. If so, who were they? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Family
- ☐ Work (ex. classmate, professor, collegue, teammate)
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Hobby (ex. school clubs, online communities)
- ☐ Neighbor (ex. local community, roommate)
- ☐ Religious (ex. church friends)
- ☐ Everyone
- ☐ Other (please state below)

4. Why did you write this post in English?

- ☐ English is more appropriate for expressing the content
- ☐ To address a specific audience
- ☐ To quote something
- ☐ Habitual Expressions (ex. greetings)
- ☐ Didn't know the terms/appropriate expression in Korean
- ☐ Other (please state below)

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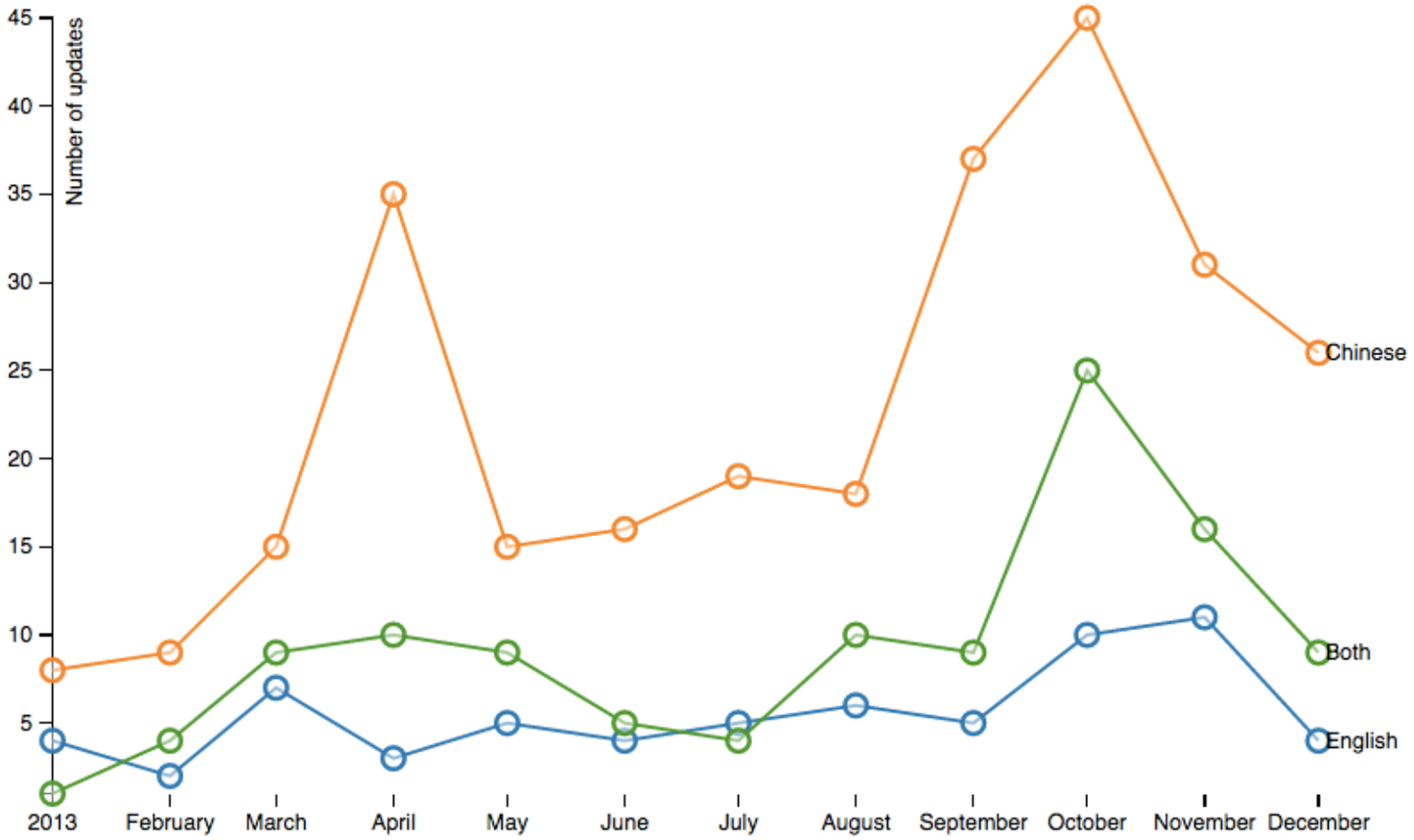
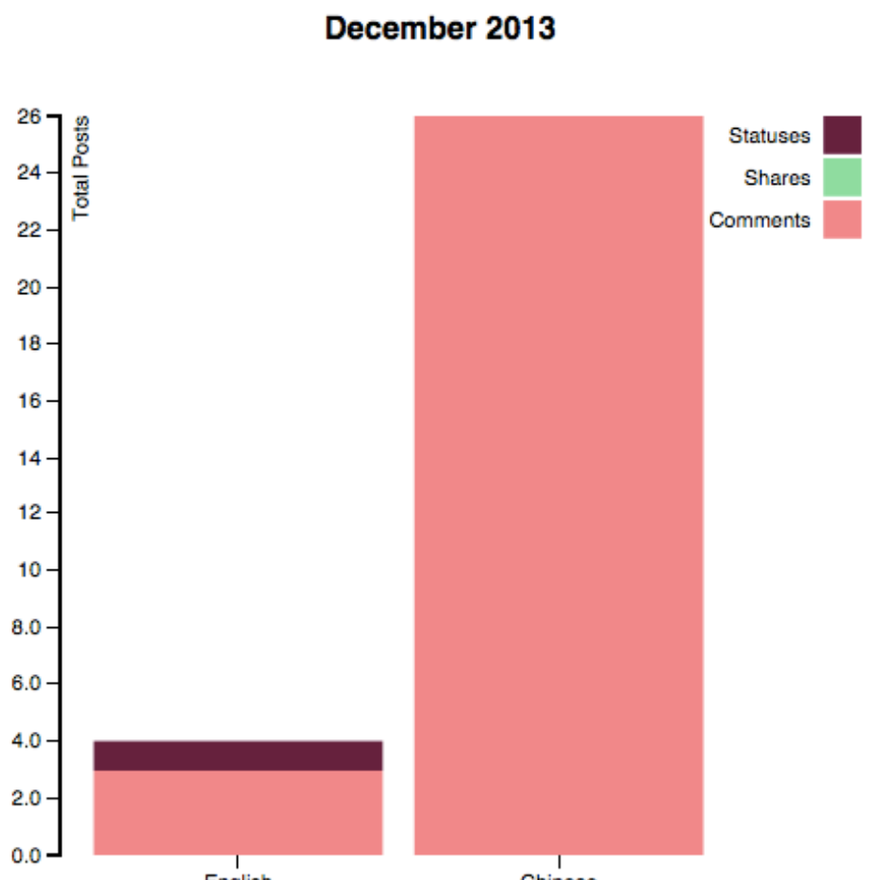
2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014





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RESULTS

	appropriate	audience	quote	habitual	knowledge	other
Eng	22	16	2	6	2	3
L1	24	12	1	4	3	6
Both	23	8	3	4	4	2

Responses for Q4. What were your reasons for choosing this language?

COLLECTIVISTIC CULTURE

- Group welfare
- High-context communication
- Interdependence

COLLECTIVISTIC CULTURE

- Group welfare
- High-context communication
- **Interdependence**

Maybe I’m more used to complaining in Chinese […] I think it is also **related to the culture**. I think in RenRen, a lot of people express their negative **feelings**. In English, few people complain. It’s more common to complain in Chinese.

-P10

“

I just want to introduce some Chinese culture to my American friends and international friends. In English class, we have some classes about different cultures. Everyone introduced his country’s special culture to others. It’s very interesting.

-P16

8 SCENARIOS

Hypothesis

L1

1. Chinese/Korean New Year
2. Homemade food at a friend's house

English

3. Group meeting for a final project
4. Christmas greeting

Both

5. Selling a car
6. Thanking people for Birthday greetings

Exploratory

7. Professor singing 'Let it go'
8. Three day trip to New York

8 SCENARIOS - RESULTS

	New Year	Food	Meeting	Christmas	Car	Birthday	Professor	NYC Trip
Eng	4	6	12	12	9	7	6	5
L1	10	13	7	5	6	7	13	13
Both	6	0	1	3	4	6	0	2
Hypo.	L1	L1	English	English	Both	Both	Either	Either

	family	work	friends	hobby	neighbor	religious	everyone	other
Eng	5	6	19	0	2	3	8	1
L1	3	5	23	1	2	2	9	1
Both	5	10	31	3	4	5	9	0

Responses for Q3. Who was your target audience for this post?

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

- (Self-perceived) English proficiency of the poster
  - phrasing (ex. humor)
  - culturally sensitive

- L1 proficiency of the audience
  - Respect for the audience

CONCLUSION

- Post Content and Cultural Considerations (RQ1)
  - **Collectivistic culture**-related contents posted in L1
  - **Sharing cultures** in English
- Division of Imagined Audience (RQ2)
  - **Imagined audience** and friendship distribution determines one's dominant language
  - **Language proficiency** of the poster and the audience

THANK YOU