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| Title: | Hong Kong protesters' discourse on Twitter: their linguistic behaviors and construction of identity and affiliation |
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Abstract

The role of social media in protests has been becoming more prominent in recent years and it has become a topic frequently explored in academia around the world. However, such a topic is under-researched in Hong Kong, with a focus on linguistics especially. Moreover, given that the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement has revolutionized the patterns and practices of protests in Hong Kong—particularly digitally, a holistic study researching the practice of the linguistic behaviors of Hong Kong protesters on social media is in dire need. This study adopts a mix of corpus analysis and discourse-centered online ethnography which center on a corpus containing a thousand tweets created by Hong Kong protesters on Twitter, a rising social media platform in Hong Kong due to the protest, to investigate 1) the linguistic features of the language that Hong Kong protesters used on Twitter, 2) how these linguistic practices contribute to the construction of identity online, and 3) whether Hong Kong protesters on Twitter form a community with affiliation through their linguistic practices. Results reveal that Hong Kong protesters on Twitter have made use of linguistic patterning that signifies shared emotions and dialogic tweets, the affiliative use of hashtags, and hybrid discourse—a less formal discourse with “Hong Kong English” and a more formal discourse with “standard English”—to construct their dual identities of a Hongkonger connecting with fellow Hongkongers and an eloquent Hongkonger asking for international support and to form a community with affiliation online. This study dispels what has often assumed by the public—that Hong Kong protesters only treat Twitter as a promotional platform—it is actually a dynamic community with affiliation which is constructed with the aid of various creative linguistic practices.

Reflection

When I shared my research topic with my friends in the beginning of the semester, they all expressed that it is not a wise choice for a school project because it is such a demanding topic entailing a lot of work and intense research. It is true that this topic did come out being so complicated and sometimes even frustrating with many perplexing concepts and data that had to be analyzed and collected. However, I am so glad that I followed what I wanted for my capstone project, an important project that marked the end of my undergraduate journey. Throughout the research process, not only have I advanced my research skills, but I have also learnt more about the community that I live in. Most importantly, I am so delighted that I could put what I have learnt into practice and used

them to make sense of what is happening around our society. At last, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Rowan Mackay, for her unfailing support and generous guidance, and to every professor from the department that have enlightened me with their wisdom during these four years.