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Language as pride, love, and hate: Archiving emotions through multilingual Instagram hashtags

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines multilingual hashtags as discourse of emotions about social movements, with a focus on the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. With the Chinese search word #雨傘運動 ("Umbrella Movement"), over 9000 hashtags were collected from 700 posts on Instagram. These hashtags were coded by language choice and their broad discourse functions of fact, opinion, and emotion. Our analysis suggests that while stating facts and expressing opinions, a significant proportion of Instagram hashtags about the Umbrella Movement are also *affective* in function (e.g. #ilovehongkong, #hate). These hashtags convey emotions associated mainly with political demands, solidarity, unity, hatred, frustration, and dissatisfaction. We also conducted online interviews with selected Instagram users to understand better their multilingual hashtagging practices and language attitudes. Overall, the present study suggests that affect was expressed and experienced through a common set of linguistic resources - Cantonese, mixed code, and traditional Chinese characters - which then became codes of unity and solidarity in difficult times. Interviewees also produced discourses of pride in Cantonese which further suggest the use of Cantonese in asserting their unique Hongkonger identities. Drawing on Ahmed's (2004) notion of 'affective economies', this article concludes by unravelling the relationship between language, emotion, digital technologies, and politics.

1. Introduction

Digital social media have provided ample opportunities for ordinary people to engage in a wide range of social activities. The affordances of social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter enable users to not only update their everyday lives, but also be actively involved in social events through textually-mediated and multimodal practices (Barton and Lee, 2013). One such practice is *tagging*, which can be broadly defined as the act of creating and adding hyperlinked keywords to annotate uploaded contents. Examples of tagging in social media include using *hashtags* (user-defined keywords prefixed by the # symbol) on Twitter and Instagram, as well as photo tags on Flickr. Social tagging has become such a prevalent practice that it is embedded in users' everyday online lives.

Existing research on tagging has identified some common functions of Twitter hashtags such as community building, news reporting, and self-branding (Page, 2012; Small, 2011). Because these keywords are hyperlinked, they are easily searchable by people sharing similar interests on certain topics, thus giving rise to "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna, 2015, see also Lee, 2018). An increasing number of studies have also found that hashtags play a crucial role in organizing and sharing breaking news about social or political events (e.g. Maireder and Schwarzenegger, 2012; Thorson et al., 2013; Bruns and Burgess, 2015). A growing number of studies also show that political hashtags allow users to articulate and publicly display their emotions about people, object, and activity (Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2012; Zappavigna, 2012, 2015). To date, however, research into social tagging from a language perspective is limited, and much attention has been given to monolingual English hashtags on one site, Twitter. Compared to other social media, Instagram, one of the fastest growing platforms, is clearly an under-researched platform. To contribute to this limited but growing body of literature, this article aims to examine the relationship between expressions of emotion and language choice in hashtags on Instagram revolving around the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. It also offers a discussion of how affective multilingual hashtags help perform users' identities online.

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1.1. Instagram hashtags

Launched in 2010, and acquired by Facebook in 2012, Instagram is an image-/video-sharing mobile application where users snap, post, and share images online instantly. As of June 2016, the app has reached over 500 million users (Instagram Blog, 2016). Posts on Instagram may also be shared to other social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr, potentially reaching larger audiences. Unlike Flickr which started as a website, Instagram is primarily an application that allows users to post directly from their mobile phones and devices. Instagram also encourages active sharing and social networking. While posting to Instagram, users may at the same time choose to share an image to other social network sites, including Flickr. In addition to posting images and videos, users may optionally add captions and up to 30 hashtags for each post. A hashtag, a keyword prefixed by the hash (#) symbol, may consist of just one word (#hope) or a string of words written without spaces (#fightfortherighttobefree). According to Instagram Blog (2012), adding tags "is a great way to find new followers and share your photos with more people." In practice, however, connectivity is by no means the only function of hashtags. Scholarly research on social tagging has already identified a much wider range of functions of tags. In this regard, this article will provide a useful extension of existing research, overviewing the range of possible functions of hashtags that were collected from one particular social event – the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong.

1.2. The 2014 Hong Kong #umbrellamovement

The 2014 Umbrella Movement, also known as Umbrella Revolution, was one of the largest scale political movements in Hong Kong history. It was driven by a series of pro-democracy campaigns and protests as a result of increasing conflicts between supporters of the Movement, activists, the Hong Kong SAR government, the central Beijing government, the police, as well as non-supporters of the Movement. Inspired by the occupy movements around the world, the Umbrella Movement is sometimes referred to as the 'Occupy Central' movement. Between September 28 and December 15, streets of three major locations in Hong Kong were occupied by protesters who demanded genuine universal suffrage in Hong Kong, among other political demands. The name, Umbrella Movement, derives from the fact that umbrellas were used by protesters to protect themselves against tear gas and pepper spray from the police on September 28, 2014, a major trigger of the Movement.

Similar to many social movements across the globe, the Movement had a strong digital and social media presence (Lee and Chan, 2016; Tsui, 2015). Images, videos, and breaking news about the Movement were uploaded and shared almost instantly on Facebook and Twitter. Numerous 'Events' pages on Facebook were set up to organize Movement-related activities. For example, the 'Wear Yellow for HK' page urged people to dress in yellow in support of the Movement. As the majority of news sources about the Movement were first reported locally in Chinese, breaking news was translated into English and posted to live feeds on Twitter and reddit. On Instagram, people have posted images of the protest sites, key proponents of the Occupy campaign, artworks, as well as slogans of the campaign. With few exceptions, most of the posts and hashtags are supportive of the Movement.

2. Social tagging and political events

Social media have played an increasingly indispensable role in organizing, planning, sharing, and reporting political events. For example, in October 2009, Twitter and Facebook were used extensively by student protesters during the 'unibrennt' movement in Vienna (Maireder and Schwarzenegger, 2012). 'Unibrennt', which literally means 'the university is burning', was a protest movement in which students occupied the largest lecture hall in Vienna to express their dissatisfaction towards education policy in Austria. The success of the protest, according to Maireder and Schwarzenegger, is largely attributed to social media where participants voluntarily organized themselves into a community of "connected individuals". As with the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, communication about the 'unibrennt' protests was largely facilitated by social media especially Facebook. Another major socio-political campaign that relies heavily on social media is the Occupy movement around the world. Thorson et al. (2013) observed that YouTube is used as a major platform for publicizing, circulating, and archiving moments or feelings related to the Occupy protests around the world. Those videos that went viral on Twitter and other platforms have then become "a stock of resources available to publics associated with the Occupy movement" (Thorson et al., 2013, p. 440).

For both the 'unibrennt' or Occupy movements, *hashtags* were an important means to curate contents and connect those who were directly or indirectly involved in the events. The hashtag #unibrentt on Twitter made it easy for people to follow relevant conversations and posts generated by people outside their immediate social networks. Thorson et al. (2013) found that Occupy videos were more likely to receive more views if they were retweeted with common hashtags on Twitter. They describe these hashtags as "connective goods" that unite supporters of the events, in the sense that like-minded people were connected for similar reasons. Occupy-related hashtags also make discussions on Twitter accessible and ongoing. On the contrary, Small (2011) notes that for posts related to Canadian politics, political hashtags such as #cdnpoli serve the primary function of informing rather than political discussion and reporting. What seems clear from these previous studies is that hashtags for socio-political movements tend to serve multiple functions.

2.1. Emotion online

Regardless of the primary function of hashtags, user-generated contents in social media are rich in stance, opinions, and evaluation (Barton and Lee, 2013; Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013). Before the age of social media, numerous studies already showed that in computer-mediated communication, writers' emotions can be indicated by emoticons (Dresner and Herring, 2010; Harris and Paradice, 2007). There is also a possible correlation between emotive language and online behavior. Huffaker (2010), for instance, noted that in discussion forums, messages charged with emotions tended to receive more feedback. The newer affordances of social media pave the way for users to express their feelings by means other than emoticons. For example, marking emotions with the 'Like' button has become a norm on most social network sites. Recently, Facebook has even introduced the additional buttons of 'love', 'angry', 'sad', 'wow', and 'haha' to elicit users' more specific reactions to a post. The 'sharing' or 'retweeting' function on Facebook, Twitter, and other social network sites enables users to share their feelings not only with their immediate networks, but also with an unknown public around the globe.

Emotions can be explicitly marked through language. Discourses of emotions have been researched extensively in various branches of linguistics. In pragmatics, emotions are performed through 'expressive' speech acts, i.e. performative utterances that articulate feelings and emotions (Searle, 1976). From a discourse semantics perspective, Martin and White (2005) study emotions as part of a system of meanings called *affect,* which belongs to the broader system of *attitude*. This perspective has lately been

adopted to study hashtags, an emerging unit of discourse in social media which is often indicative of users' evaluative and affective stance (see Giaxoglou, 2018). Following Martin and White's typology of affect, Zappavigna (2015) observes that Twitter hashtags perform various evaluative meanings, in that users add hashtags to realize affect (expressions of emotion) in their posts. For example, the hashtag #sad in "...And school is right around the corner. **#sad**" serves clearly to express the affect of unhappiness (Zappavigna, 2015, p. 12). Similarly, on the photo-sharing site Flickr, users may express their affective stance towards the content of their photos by way of tagging, as in "ILoveIt" and "mixed emotions" (Barton, 2015).

Socio-political campaigns represented in social media are found to be charged with intense emotions. The "controversial and polarizing" nature of politics is likely to trigger sentiments and thus draw public attention (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013, p. 218). Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) argue that networked activities in social media create what they call "emotional noise" for online campaigns which easily spreads "horizontally (across e-mail, blogs, social networks and online video sites) and vertically (through journalism, television programmes, print media, and radio)" (p. 1). In fact, emotionally charged posts on Twitter are more likely to be retweeted (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013). In their study of affective stance markers of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign on Twitter and Facebook, Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) have identified extensive use of emotional language representing negative moods and feelings towards "persons, groups, and governments". Papacharissi (2015, see also Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2012) concludes that information related to #egypt politics on Twitter presented "affective news", in that facts and opinions are blended with emotions and sentiments. In a similar way, we believe that Instagram hashtags related to the Umbrella Movement are likely to trigger emotions while disseminating facts and opinions.

Defining emotion is no easy task and there is to date no consensus as to what 'emotion' means or encompasses. For the purpose of this article, we adopt the broad definition of emotion as "something that people express about the feelings they have, whether the feelings refer to a state of being or to a physical condition" (Garde-Hansen and Gorton, 2013, p. 30). Of particular relevance and significance to the context of social media is that emotions can be exchanged and circulated widely among networked individuals (Wellman, 2002). Our understanding of emotion also aligns with Ahmed's (2004) theorization that emotion and affect do not simply belong to the individuals and are not just a private matter; rather, emotions are collective and socially constructed. A related term in the literature of emotion is *affect*. In this article, *affect* is used as merely a unit of analysis in discourse semantics referring to discourse markers or linguistic expressions that realize emotions (Martin and White, 2005; Zappavigna, 2015).

2.2. Language choice and identities online

Language-based research on hashtags has emerged only recently. Among these studies are Page (2012) on hashtags as currency in the linguistic marketplace of Twitter, Zappavigna (2012, 2015) on the discourse functions of Twitter hashtags, Barton (2015) on Flickr tagging as a vernacular literacy practice, Scott (2015) on the pragmatics of hashtags, as well as Zhu (2016) on hashtags as searchable talk. With few exceptions, studies have focused on data from Twitter. In terms of language choice, hashtags other than English have been under-explored (but see Jurgens et al., 2014 and Hopke, 2015 for discussions of multilingual tweeting). To extend this body of research, one of the aims of this paper is to explore the interplay between multilingual hashtags and expressions of affect.

As a former British colony, now a Special Administrative Region of China, Hong Kong has a unique linguistic environment where its citizens regularly encounter and use multiple languages in their everyday communication. In addition to Cantonese, their main spoken language, the majority of Hongkongers also possess varying levels of proficiency in spoken and written English and Putonghua, which is the official language of mainland China. Cantonese-English code-switching is a common linguistic phenomenon in this special region of China. During the Umbrella Movement, multilingual public texts created rich linguistic landscapes both online and offline (Gorter, 2006). On the protest sites, a considerable number of slogans, signs, and artworks were written bilingually in Chinese and English. Cantonese, which is essentially a spoken variety with no standardized writing system, was found to be prevalent on the protest sites and on the internet (Guilford, 2014). Cantonese pop songs were written about the Movement, and were spread and mobilized across online linguistic landscapes. The increased use of (stylized) Cantonese and code-mixing during the Movement can be seen partially as a result of Hongkongers' resistance to the Chinese central government, where Putonghua is the official language. In so doing, they simultaneously asserted their unique Hongkonger identity (Bhatia, 2015).

In computer-mediated discourse, various forms of identities are constructed, performed, and reappropriated through language choice and multilingual practices. Before the age of social media, script-switching, alternation between writing systems, was noted among Greek web users who employed "Greeklish", or Romanized Greek, in discussion lists and SMS (e.g. Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou, 2003) to assert their local linguistic identities in the increasingly globalized web. The co-deployment of English and local languages in order to project a cosmopolitan identity is also evident on Fanfiction.net and Flickr. In the case of fan fiction, Asian languages in English-based fan fiction are used to project the users' multicultural and cosmopolitan identities (Black, 2009). This is similar to the practice of having Chinese-English bilingual screennames on Flickr, where the presence of different scripts in the screen name symbolized cosmopolitanism (Barton and Lee, 2013). During the Umbrella Movement, discourses of Hongkongers' identity construction and their sentiment for Cantonese were frequently articulated both online and offline (Bhatia, 2015; Mair, 2011; Liu, 2015). Our aim in this study is not only to understand hashtags as linguistic markers of emotions about the Umbrella Movement, but also to discern the extent to which emotions are projected through people's language choice for their hashtags in relation to their self-perceived national identity.

3. Data and methods

The study reported in this article took an *event-based* approach to online data collection. That is, instead of randomly collecting hashtags irrespective of content, our study focuses on Instagram posts that are immediately relevant to the Umbrella Movement and its associated events. We expect that when online activities are mediated by a social event, participants would discover new affordances of their resources, including hashtags, languages, and media functions, and participate in ways that are different from their ordinary online activities. As with other studies of political events in social media (e.g. Small, 2011; Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2012), our data are centred around a keyword search. We chose to collect Instagram posts with the Chinese hashtag #雨傘運動 ("Umbrella Movement") for two reasons: first, the name was widely accepted in both online and offline media to refer to the Movement; second, from our initial observations of posts related to the Umbrella Movement, the Chinese hashtag was frequently used alongside English ones. This suggests that bilingual

or multilingual hashtags were more likely to be retrieved for the purpose of our study.

A total of 700 publicly available Instagram posts uploaded between September and December 2014, the key period of the Umbrella Movement, were retrieved. Among the 700 posts, 100 were collected for an initial analysis, and an additional 200 posts were collected from each of the following three active periods of the Movement with major incidents:

- October 6–9, 2014: A teenager was arrested for using the internet to incite others to occupy Mong Kok;
- October 15–17, 2014: A protester was filmed being assaulted by a group of policemen;
- November 19–25, 2014: Protesters were arrested for breaking into the Legislative Council.

The images in these 700 posts capture moments of the protest sites, news excerpts, slogans, protesters, policemen, artworks and objects related to the Movement such as the yellow ribbon. A total of 9049 hashtags and 1289 distinct hashtags were collected from the 700 posts. This means that an average of 12.9 hashtags were added to each post. We excluded posts that were not directly relevant to the Movement. For example, an online shop posted photos of their products (mainly sports shoes) with the hashtag #我要真普選("I want real universal suffrage") alongside hashtags about the products (#airjordan). Although these posts may as well reflect the seller's stance towards the Movement, they are considered promotional in nature and not directly relevant to our study.

We adopted a mixed methods approach through three stages of data analysis. Understanding hashtags as linguistic acts of evaluation and self-presentation, we first coded the hashtags by their discourse functions, adopting Papacharissi's (2015) broad categories of *fact*, *opinion*, and *emotion*. Those explicitly performing emotions (e.g. #ilovehk, #hate) were further analyzed into different *affect* types based on Martin and White's (2005) and Zappavigna's (2012) classification: 'dis/inclination' (e.g. fear, desire), 'un/happiness' (e.g. sadness, hate, happiness, love), 'in/security' (e.g. disquiet, surprise, confidence, togetherness), and 'dis/satisfaction' (e.g. ennui, displeasure, curiosity, respect). It is worth noting that it is not our intention to come up with a definitive and exhaustive list of emotions expressed in the hashtags. Our primary aim is to document and provide an overview of some commonly accepted emotions which were experienced and spread by Instagram users during the Umbrella Movement. We also understand emotion as an "interpretive experience" (Terada, 2001, p. 4), both from the researchers' and the participants' points of view. Coding 'emotion' is never a straight-forward task. Given that hashtags are conventionally short or even fragmented and a complete propositional structure is not common, some hashtags are unavoidably ambiguous. Further compounding the complexity of coding is that some hashtags are deliberately cryptic and figurative for the sake of creativity and playfulness. To enhance the reliability of our analysis, the data were read, coded, and reviewed by three members of the research team. For any hashtag that is seemingly ambiguous (e.g. #future), we interpreted its affect in light of the context of the uploaded image as well as its surrounding hashtags.

All of the hashtags collected were also coded by language choice (e.g. Cantonese, standard Chinese, English, mixed code) and we further analyzed the subset of affective hashtags by language. Our analysis and interpretation of the hashtags were complemented by interview data. We conducted online interviews via Facebook's private messaging with seven Hong Kong Instagram users who posted on Instagram during the Umbrella Movement. In the interviews, the Instagram users discussed language choice of hashtags as well as their feelings about the hashtags they have added and come across during the Movement. All of the interviews were conducted in English. Pseudonyms are given to those participants whose words are cited in this article.

4. Affective hashtags about the Umbrella Movement

Of the 1289 distinct hashtags, 779 (60.4%) primarily point to *facts*, such as events, places, and people (e.g. #police, #occupyhk), which also describe what is shown in the photos. 111 (8.6%) state the posters' *opinions* about various aspects of the protests (e.g. #violent, #peaceful), and 88 hashtags (6.8%) clearly perform *emotions* (e.g. #welovehongkong, #hate). For the rest of the hashtags, 282 (21.9%) express emotions alongside other functions. Some offer the poster's opinions while sharing feelings (e.g. #fightfordemocracy, #noviolence), while others concurrently express facts and affect (e.g. #myhome, #together). For example, the hashtag #fightfordemocracy can be interpreted as the poster's emotional longing for democracy while at the same time asserting one's political stance. There are also a handful of hashtags that do not fall neatly into this classification system. For example, #followme, #20likes, and #instalike are hashtags added alongside these posts about the Movement to enhance the popularity of the posts and, by extension, the Instagram accounts. Although a large proportion of the hashtags in our database are hashtags of 'facts', affective hashtags do play a fairly significant role when conveying information and opinions. The rest of the analysis in this section will focus mainly on *affective* hashtags, that is, those that carry emotions and feelings.

A significant number of hashtags ($N = 370$) carry either positive or negative feelings, or *affect*. These emotive hashtags are represented by a wide range of contents, such as intertextual references to song lyrics, slogans from the campaign, quotes from key players of the protests, and texts seen on the protest sites. Not all hashtags are supportive of the Movement, although most of them show solidarity with the protests. The affects expressed by these hashtags were coded according to Martin and White's (2005) broad categories of affect: 'dis/inclination', 'un/happiness', 'in/security', and 'dis/satisfaction'. We are well aware that there may be overlaps between these categories and that a hashtag may belong to more than one affect type. Table 1 gives examples of affective hashtags about the Umbrella Movement on Instagram.

Among the more frequently occurring affect types are dis/inclination (positive), dis/satisfaction (negative), in/security (positive), and un/happiness (positive):

- **Dis/inclination (positive)** affect is triggered by one's desire for future happenings. In our data, 'inclination' hashtags are characterized by the posters' emotional anticipation, as well as their political wants and stance. For example, #iwantuniversalsuffrage and #愛與和平 ("love and peace") both reveal what the posters long for as a result of the Movement.
- **Dis/satisfaction (negative)** affect deals with "frustration in relation to the activities in which we are engaged" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 50). The majority of hashtags in this category show displeasure and anger over a certain government (#癈政府 "crap government"), person (#梁振英下台 "step down, CY Leung"), and group (#左膠可恥 "shame on the leftards").
- **In/security (positive)** affect covers the feelings of peace, trust, and confidence in relation to one's surroundings. These include expressions of encouragement (#學生加油 "students, hang in there"), togetherness (#together, #共同努力 "let's work hard together"), declaring Hong Kong one's home (#香港是我家 "Hong Kong is my home"), positioning oneself as a Hongkonger (#我係香港人 "I am a Hongkonger").

Table 1
Types of affective hashtags about the Umbrella Movement (adapted from Martin and White, 2005, p. 51; Zappavigna, 2012).

Affect type	Positive	N (%)	Negative	N (%)
Dis/inclination	#iwantuniversalsuffrage #fightfordemocracy #爭取自由 ("fight for freedom")	151 (40.8%)	#whatishappeninginhk #dark #hell	13 (3.5%)
Un/happiness	#happyhongkongwin #ilovehongkong #愛hk ("love Hong Kong")	37 (10.0%)	#brokenheart #hurt #upset	16 (4.3%)
In/security	#addoil #一起舉傘 ("uphold the umbrella together") #同一天空下 ("under the same sky")	57 (15.4%)	#wtf #傻的嗎 ("are you mad?") #放過我啦 ("leave me alone")	13 (3.5%)
Dis/satisfaction	#proudofyou #brave #wonderful	25 (6.8%)	#shameless #警家可恥 ("shame on the police") #垃圾政府 ("rubbish government")	98 (26.5%)

– **Un/happiness (positive)** affect is not only about feeling 'happy', but also about being in favor of an emotion trigger. The hashtags in this category mainly express the posters' love for Hong Kong and its people (#lovehk, #香港人是可愛的 "Hongkongers are adorable").

It can be concluded that these affective hashtags enabled Hong Kong Instagrammers to not only release their anger and frustration, but also express their anticipation for true democracy alongside other political demands. In times of difficulties, these hashtags also create solidarity through expressions of togetherness and unity as well as discourses of love for one's hometown and its people. This is in line with Papacharissi's (2015) findings about political tweets and hashtags about #egypt and #occupy movements, in that affective news online reinforces a sense of unity and solidarity. Feelings of connectedness were also mentioned repeatedly by one of our interviewees, Hector:

> Hector: *I think I **feel more connected to people** when I use hashtags…knowing that some other people used the SAME hashtags can be quite **comforting**, you know…*[it is] ***emotional connection**…*(authors' emphasis)

In some cases, emotions are indirectly and implicitly marked. This is true for hashtags quoting excerpts of song lyrics. An example in point is #我地大家 ("Together we…"), which is an easily identifiable phrase from the Cantopop 獅子山下(Under the Lion Rock) composed in the 1970s. Since then, the song, which is highly recognized by the government, media, and locals, has remained a classic, reminiscent of the Hong Kong spirit, also known as the 'Lion Rock spirit'. Popular songs and well-known lyrics such as the aforementioned example effectively create a form of affective harmony which enables "publics and crowds to feel, with greater intensity, the meaning of the movement for themselves" (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 93). Another interviewee, Joanna, explained:

> Joanna: *The lyrics best represent **the mood of Hongkongers**… fit in nicely with how Hongkongers felt as they stayed in the sites, slept in the street and protested.* (authors' emphasis)

To a large extent, these affective, hyperlinked, and searchable hashtags serve as a kind of "therapeutic discourse" (Rosas, 2015) through which people feel more united and comfortable in times of social instability. Sara Ahmed (2004) highlights in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* the "emotionality of texts", that is, the potential of texts to perform emotions. Instagram and other digital media afford ordinary feelings and emotions to be circulated widely and publicly within and outside the online world through textually-mediated practices such as emotionally charged hashtags. Ahmed also puts forward the notion of "affective economy" in that the power and market values of emotions increase as the sharing and circulation of texts intensify. This is especially true for texts expressing hatred and disgust, as in those hashtags categorized as 'dis/satisfaction – negative' in Table 1. It is also found that strong emotions of dissatisfaction and hate are more likely to be repeated through retweeting or what Papacharissi (2015) calls 'refrains' in social media. It is such forms of repetition, interconnection, circulation, movement of texts that generate affect and a "digital archive of feelings" (Kuntsman, 2012, p. 6). Digital archives of feelings are "repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 7). Searchable hashtags, alongside images, about the Umbrella Movement are part and parcel of such affective archives which record and create sustainable and collective memories.

5. Towards a common language of affect: Cantonese, mixed code, and identities

The digital archive of feelings about the Umbrella Movement is also characterized *linguistically* on Instagram. As described before, Hongkongers, especially educated ones, regularly employ multiple linguistic resources in their everyday communication. These resources include spoken Cantonese, written Cantonese, standard written Chinese (in traditional characters), English, and a mixture of the above. With the majority of protesters being university students, we expect that digital texts about the Movement are also multilingual in nature. The following set of hashtags exemplifies the hashtags for a typical Instagram post about the Umbrella Movement.

#罷課不罷學 #罷課 #689 #佔中 #全城撐學生 #路姆西 #真普選# 佔領中環 #金鐘 #中環 #銅鑼灣 #旺角 #和平佔中 #雨傘運動 #加油 香港人 #自己地方自己救 #自己香港自己救 #和平抗爭 #人在中環 # 我係香港人 #scholarism #HongKongers #umbrellarevolution

(Translation: #boycottclassnoteducation #689 #oc #thewholecitysupportsstudents #lufsig #realuniversalsuffrage #occupycentral #admiralty #central #causewaybay #mongkok #ocwithpeace #umbrellamovement #hongkongershanginthere #saveourownplacebyourselves #saveourownhongkongbyourselves #peacefulprotest #manincentral #iamahongkonger #scholarism #HongKongers #umbrellarevolution)

This set of 23 hashtags belongs to an uploaded photo that portrays a crowd in action at the protest site in Central, Hong Kong. Of the 23 hashtags, only three are in English. The rest are either in Cantonese (e.g. #全城撐學生 "the whole city supports the students") or standard Chinese (e.g. #人在中環 "man in Central").

The language distribution of all distinct hashtags in our database is summarized in Table 2.

While English is still a common language of Movement-related hashtags in our database (49.4%), the significant proportion of Chinese, including standard written Chinese and Cantonese, is not to be ignored. In particular, there are as many as 100 distinct hashtags in Cantonese, a spoken variety not commonly 'written' in Hong Kong. Many of these express insider knowledge which may be unfamiliar to speakers of other Chinese languages or people from outside Hong Kong. For example, #乜乜乜 ('etc. etc. etc.') is a Cantonese expression that mocks anti-Movement protesters; the expression is an intertextual reference to a vague comment made by an opponent of the Movement in a TV interview. A number of Cantonese hashtags in the database contain the verb 撐, meaning 'to support', as in #撐學生 ("support students"), #撐民主 ("support democracy"), and #撐香港 ("support Hong Kong"). The verb 撐 is also symbolic of the Movement, in that 撐 also means 'to uphold' as in upholding an umbrella. The prevalence of Cantonese hashtags contrasts with earlier findings about user-generated tags on Flickr on which English was the most-preferred language among Chinese users (Barton, 2015; Lee and Barton, 2011). In Lee and Barton's (2011) research, although Chinese tags were used alongside English ones on Flickr, Cantonese tags were almost absent. Many Chinese Flickr users in their study considered English to be the lingua franca of Flickr. However, for supporters of the Umbrella Movement, using Cantonese hashtags partly grew out of their emotional attachment to this language that is representative of Hong Kong, as Hector suggested in the interview:

> Hector: *you know, people always told me how Cantonese is important, how beautiful this language is…DURING the movement… …people never said that before the Movement …people sang those [Cantonese] songs during the sit-in …and then the lyrics were up on FB etc…… I understood that using these hashtags gave them* ***comfort****…it's like…some* ***power*** *from which they derive* […] (authors' emphasis)

Hector's comment, on the one hand, suggests that Cantonese hashtags were only used to create an *ad hoc public* during the Movement (Bruns and Burgess, 2015). That is, Instagrammers were in favor of Cantonese only when it was needed. On the other hand, Cantonese, the major spoken language in Hong Kong, was the language of 'comfort' and 'power' in difficult times. The affective function of Cantonese is also confirmed by our analysis of language choice by affect type. Table 3 shows that Cantonese and standard Chinese (written in traditional characters) are the preferred codes for dis/inclination (positive), dis/satisfaction (negative), and in/security (positive) affects. In other words, Chinese is used mostly for expressing emotional anticipation and marking political pursuits, as well as anger, hatred, and frustration.

According to Table 3, Cantonese, although relatively small in proportion, is the language for asserting political wants (e.g. #自己政府自己揀 "choose our own government by ourselves") and annoyance (e.g. #亂咁黎 "what a mess"). Other Chinese hashtags derive from slogans of the campaign, thus stating political demands such as #我要真普選 ("I want real universal suffrage"), #自己香港自己救 ("save our own Hong Kong by ourselves"), which are also seen on banners and cardboard on the protest sites. Chinese-English code-mixed hashtags are also evident as in #alexter萬歲 ("long live Alexter", Alexter referring to the student leaders Alex and Lester), #守MK ("defend MK", MK being the abbreviation for Mong Kok, one of the protest sites), and #fuck 藍絲帶 ("fuck blue-ribboners", opponents of the Movement). Some code-mixed hashtags make cultural references to Hong Kong such as colloquial expressions, slang, lyrics of Cantopops that are only known to Hongkongers. For example, #四點鐘許 sir ("Four o'clock with Hui Sir") refers to a public Facebook page devoted to a Hong Kong police superintendent who gave a televised press conference at 4 pm daily during the Movement. These instances of 'intra-tag' code-switching (Lee, 2017) enable the posters to vividly display their affiliation to Hong Kong's bilingual culture, thus expressing their affection and support for their home city. They also function as discourses of resistance to the political hegemony of mainland China, where Chinese-only discourses prevail. In a way, for supporters of the Movement, Cantonese is not only a language of day-to-day communication, but also a political statement. Emotions about the Umbrella Movement were expressed and experienced through a common set of linguistic resources – Cantonese, mixed code, and traditional Chinese characters – which then became symbols of unity and solidarity.

People's emotional attachment to their national or local languages is also closely related to issues of identities (Pavlenko, 2007). As shown above, Cantonese and mixed codes play a significant role in the data. This is likely to be a result of the increasing tension between the mainland Chinese government and "years of identity struggle on the part of Hongkongers" (Bhatia, 2015, p. 413). The following interview excerpts illustrate this political conflict of languages:

> Vincent: *Chinese hashtags represent the hong kong spirit and* ***enhance the identity recognition of hk ppl*** […] *you know* ***we use traditional chinese not simplified language*** *in China. Traditional chinese is* ***the language of all hk ppl****.* […] *in hong kong, we can still use Cantonese. This language* ***represent hk ppl and hk culture****.* (authors' emphasis)

> Yee: *These Cantonese hashtags apparently emphasize our identity.* ***We are different from mainland Chinese*** *because we are Hongkongers.* ***We use Cantonese; They use Putonghua****. They* (Cantonese hashtags) *are used to* ***depict Hong Kong people and Hong Kong happenings****.* (authors' emphasis)

Both Vincent and Yee drew a clear-cut boundary between Chinese language in Hong Kong (i.e. Cantonese/Chinese in traditional characters) and that in mainland China (i.e. Putonghua/Chinese in simplified characters); both of them said 'we' repeatedly to accentuate what belongs to Hong Kong so as to distance themselves from mainland Chinese ('they'). Their comments are classic examples of Gumperz's (1982) ideas of 'we code' and 'they code' in

Table 2
Language distribution of all distinct hashtags.

Language	Number (%)	Examples
English	637 (49.4%)	#democracynow #hope
'Standard' written Chinese (in traditional characters)	480 (37.2%)	#佔領中環 ("occupy Central") #學生運動 ("student movement")
Cantonese	100 (7.8%)	#左膠可恥 ("shame on the leftards") #有得揀 ("have a choice")
Mixed codes	56 (4.3%)	#愛 hk ("love Hong Kong")
Numbers	10 (0.8%)	#928 (start date of the Movement) #689 (nickname for Hong Kong's chief executive CY Leung, who was elected with 689 votes)
Others	6 (0.5%)	#우산혁명 (Umbrella Revolution)

Table 3
Language distribution of affective hashtags.[a]

Affect type	Positive (+)/Negative(−)	Cantonese	Standard written Chinese (in traditional characters)	English	Mixed Chinese/English
Dis/inclination	+	32	67	50	0
	−	1	2	10	0
Un/happiness	+	2	12	19	3
	−	1	4	11	0
In/security	+	5	39	12	1
	−	2	1	10	0
Dis/satisfaction	+	1	15	7	2
	−	14	62	17	1

[a] The numbers in this table are actual numbers of hashtags. Hashtags categorized as 'Others' in Table 2 are not included here. Only major languages in Hong Kong are analyzed in terms of affect types.

that 'we code' is reserved for asserting in-group identities. The Cantonese or mixed-code hashtags may be incomprehensible to non-Cantonese speakers, as Cantonese is deliberately taken up as a 'we-code' to express insider knowledge by the Cantonese-speaking Instagrammers. For supporters of the Movement, Cantonese is also a language of pride and national identity (Bruls, 2015). Pride is a central element in creating "homogeneity and unity as well as (re)producing power struggles" (Del Percio and Duchêne, 2012, p. 67; see also Heller and Duchêne, 2012). What is perhaps more striking is that during the Movement, Cantonese seemed to have higher communicative value than English, a second language that has long been highly regarded in Hong Kong. This is possibly due to the fact that after Hong Kong's return of sovereignty to China, "English is no longer Hong Kong's special weapon" (Ying, 2014). This is due to the rise of other international hubs in China such as Shanghai where an increasing number of people use English as a lingua franca. For Vincent, Yee, and presumably many other supporters of the Movement, it is the symbolic power of Cantonese that marked their group membership and the national identity that they intended to project to the world.

Discourses of conflict between languages in Hong Kong and mainland China are not new and arose from outside the internet. The de facto status of Cantonese and the traditional character writing system in Hong Kong have been upheld since the colonial era. During the Umbrella Movement, the strong presence of Cantonese writing on the protest sites was largely attributed to Hong Kong people's desire to defend their identity as 'Hongkongers', as opposed to mainland Chinese (Bruls, 2015; Guilford, 2014). With reference to our data, the special status of Cantonese is also evident in the use of the Cantonese hashtag #遮打運動 ("Umbrella Movement"), another name for the Movement, among Instagrammers. The Movement is typically referred to in standard Chinese as 雨傘 ("umbrella") 運動 ("movement")' in online and offline media, for Hongkongers grew up learning standard Chinese in school and using standard Chinese may be more appropriate for the purpose of an official name. What merits more attention here is the invention and use of the Cantonese version 遮打運動 as a local reference to the Movement. In our data, it is not uncommon to find instances of #遮打運動 or #遮打革命 ("Umbrella Revolution"). To non-Hong Kong Chinese, 遮打 would only mean Chater Road in Central, which is geographically close to one of the protest sites. To Hong Kong Cantonese speakers, however, 遮 and 打 have an additional layer of symbolic and evocative meaning. 遮 not only is a Cantonese word for 'umbrella' equivalent to 雨傘 in standard Chinese, but also means more significantly 'to block', which is equally relevant to the Movement. 打 means 'to attack' or 'to hit'. Taken together, these two characters vividly portray the scene of protesters using umbrellas to protect themselves against batons and other kinds of weapons such as pepper spray and tear gas.

In sum, using multilingual hashtags serves as a crucial linguistic practice for *authentication* (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Varis et al., 2011) of Hongkonger identities. Here, authentication is conceptualized as a process of people claiming authenticity, or 'realness', which can be marked discursively through semiotic resources including language and images (Karrebæk et al., 2015). Since the Umbrella Movement, the adjective 'real' or 真 has become a productive pre-modifier in various pro-democracy slogans in Hong Kong, as in "I want **real** universal suffrage" and "真香港人" (real Hongkonger). The use of multilingual hashtags on Instagram can be understood as Instagrammers strategically making visible what Hongkongers speak, read and write, and eventually, what makes a 'real' Hongkonger. More broadly, the significant number of hashtags in Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters can be interpreted as a result of the complex interplay between *englobalization* and *deglobalization* of internet resources. *Englobalization*, according to Blommaert (2011), refers to global circulation of resources, while deglobalization occurs when globally circulated resources are deployed and reappropriated locally and given new local meanings and uses. Instagram, as a globalized social network, was taken up by supporters (and non-supporters) of the Umbrella Movement as a site for mobilizing locally produced resources. These include images capturing moments of social events, which are annotated by hashtags written in local linguistic resources.

6. Conclusions

"We only need to see each other *online* to feel" (Garde-Hansen and Gorton, 2013, p. 2). This is true for the digital mediation of the Umbrella Movement and in fact all emotionally framed socio-political events. Although we do not personally know most of the Instagrammers in our study, we, as human beings with feelings, are inevitably directed by the emotional hashtags; we are able to experience the users' feelings, whether or not we are activists. In this article, we have demonstrated that political hashtags on Instagram, as with affective news on Twitter, perform multiple discourse functions of stating facts and opinions while conveying a plethora of emotions. It was not easy to draw clear-cut boundaries between these functions and different affect types, and there are overlaps between these categories (Papacharissi, 2015). What we have presented in this paper is an overview of possible hashtag uses about the Umbrella Movement on Instagram. We have also shown that affect can be performed through deliberate language choice. Preferences for Cantonese, traditional Chinese characters, and mixed code reveal Hongkongers' discourses of pride in Cantonese, enabling them to demarcate themselves from other Chinese communities.

The present study rethinks the complex relationships between language and emotion, between language and social actions, and more importantly, between the online and the offline. The spread of political hashtags is certainly not just about mobilizing affect online. What is also of interest to us is how hashtags are shaped by and reshape offline practices. Affective statements online are

indeed political statements (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 62). The Umbrella Movement is not merely slacktivism or hashtag activism. Participants' online participation often shapes their offline engagement in a series of Movement-related events (Lee and Chan, 2016). It is thus of vital importance to consider digital technologies, feelings, and politics at the same time. Kuntsman (2012) describes this intertwining relationship as the "affective fabrics of digital cultures", which refers to the ways through which affective politics can "reverberate in and out of cyberspace" (Kuntsman, 2012, p. 1). In affective economies, emotions are valued cultural capitals and digital media like Instagram become agents of emotions (Ahmed, 2004). Also central to affective economies is the role of language and texts. For the Umbrella Movement, multilingual hashtags were an important currency in the linguistic marketplace of Instagram and other social media for transmitting emotions (Bourdieu, 1977; Page, 2012). In particular, Cantonese hashtags became a valuable commodity to construct Hongkongers' distinct national identity.

This article has offered a case analysis of affective hashtags on Instagram. It is however important to note that emotions are performed not only through the hashtags per se and within Instagram, but also through intertextual and multimodal ties between the images, the hashtags, as well as texts from outside Instagram. A considerable proportion of the Instagram posts in this study are images of offline public texts such as protest signs and slogans. Future research should provide a finer-grained multimodal analysis of the discourse functions of hashtags in light of the images posted online as well as related offline practices (see Matley, 2018). The present study has conducted a horizontal analysis of the data to look for trends and common themes in the hashtags across users (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). It is also worth analyzing individual sets of hashtags as narratives or 'small stories' about political movements (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Page, 2013). A large collection of small stories creates collective memories and sets the scene for related socio-political initiatives in the future. At the time of writing, over two years after the Movement, both the Chinese and English hashtags #雨傘運動 and #umbrellamovement are still frequently attached to pro-democracy posts about Hong Kong on Instagram and Twitter. Longitudinal studies of the trajectories of political hashtags would yield interesting findings about the changing practices of hashtag politics.

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