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‘Think global, act local’: How #MeToo hybridized across borders and platforms for contextual relevance

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ABSTRACT

Beyond a consciousness-raising hashtag, #MeToo has become a transnational movement, crossing the borders of many societies. However, outsized attention has been paid to the manifestations of #MeToo in the US and on Twitter when the reach of this movement was not restricted to a single country, language, or platform. Drawing from the concept of hybridization, we seek to understand how the uses of #MeToo are contextualized across cultures, languages, and social media platforms. By establishing a macroscopic computational approach, we examine the global diffusion of #MeToo as a hybrid communicative process across different language groups (English, Spanish, and Korean) and social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Through time-series analysis and comparative descriptions of language groups and platforms, we demonstrate how discourse flows, language characteristics, and actors differ across cultural and platform contexts and how public discourse of #MeToo was reappropriated and re-signified in different parts of the world to localize connective action.

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In Fall 2017, revelations of gender violence perpetrated by movie mogul Harvey Weinstein prompted widespread hashtag activism around the banner of ‘Me Too,’ with women leveraging their collective power via Twitter hashtags to advance perspectives that challenged the status quo and built coalitions with allied communities of activists. Research on #MeToo in the US revealed that the heightened sense of solidarity, empathy, and resistance built through these networks of ‘Me Too’ recognition and acknowledgment coalesced into connective action (Suk et al., 2021). Nonetheless, outsized attention has been paid to the manifestations of #MeToo in the US and on Twitter, when the reach of this movement was not restricted to a single country, language, or

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platform. Indeed, #MeToo on Twitter alone reached at least 85 countries, with about 30% of tweets being non-English during the first year of its existence (Anderson & Torr, 2018). This hashtag, along with dozens of localized adaptations and variations, quickly circulated worldwide across different social media platforms (Arriaza Ibarra & Berumen, 2019; Hasunuma & Shin, 2019). The evolution of the hashtag into a transnational movement (Ghadery, 2019) demands deeper scholarly inquiry into how #MeToo was contextualized across different uses.

Because social movements can swiftly cross borders in an online networked environment, it is necessary to theorize and empirically analyze how these forms of activism spread globally. Local geographies and language contexts structure how grievances are translated into different forms of political action (Nicholls, 2009). Geographic proximity or linguistic affinity shapes relations among activists, playing a pivotal role in the proliferation of movements (Nicholls, 2009). Additionally, differences across platforms and social media affordances can influence the contextualized development of the global movement, delimiting how activists engage in politics, navigate relevant information, and find communities (Keller, 2019). Social network popularity differs across geographic and linguistic context, and within subcommunities in societies (Poushter, 2017). This study, therefore, takes a comparative approach to examine how #MeToo manifested itself into a transnational movement that fostered global political actions while adapting to specific contexts (Ghadery, 2019). To do so, we rely on the concept of hybridization, where global forces or movements intersect and fuse with local actors and priorities.

Hybridization is a process that recognizes the dynamic nature of cross-national and cross-cultural interactions, where global and local forces are constantly negotiated. In proposing hybridization as a communicative process, we look at communicative contexts that are critical in understanding the global diffusion and hybridization of #MeToo: across social media platforms where activism discourses are constructed and travel, through languages that represent discursive practices reflecting cultural and regional meaning, and with different types of users and actors that participate in and bridge the process. Locating #MeToo and its contextualized manifestations from this vantage point – hashtag activism's intersection with global feminism – reveals how #MeToo was reappropriated and re-signified globally.

There has been a pressing need to explore large-scale multilingual, multinational, and multicultural analyses on digital media data that also cross social media platforms in communication research. Evidence shows that current scholarship on the global #MeToo movement largely centers around Global North, with a particular focus on Twitter (Quan-Haase et al., 2021). The lack of geographic diversity and cross-cultural, cross-platform observation limits a comprehensive understanding of digital activism that spreads globally. Accordingly, we adopt a comparative computational approach to the question of the scope and specificity of the first year of the global #MeToo movement – from October 2017 to September 2018 – by collecting a comprehensive cross-national, multilingual, and cross-platform corpus of public posts containing #MeToo and related hashtags that adapted the phrase and its sentiment in various languages and countries.

We present a macroscopic approach of spread of the global movement using time-series modeling and offer empirical observations of linguistic and actor characteristics from a comparative perspective. We chose three geo-linguistic contexts where #MeToo was popular but exhibited cultural differences and distinct patterns of grassroots feminist activism:

English-language, Spanish-language, and Korean-language public discourses. Considering the relatively scant scholarly attention given to Spanish and Korean language contexts despite #MeToo's significant reach and impact in these geo-linguistic spaces (Edmé, 2020; Hasunuma & Shin, 2019), our study offers an important comparative perspective on the global diffusion and localization of the hashtag in regions outside North America and Europe. Additionally, we consider multiple social media platforms with global popularity in which #MeToo discourses were primarily centered – Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram – responding to calls for comparative social media research (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021).

Hashtag activism and digital feminism

The use of hashtags to create narratives against gendered violence is not new. Long before #MeToo, there were hashtags used to raise awareness about sexual violence and rape culture (Mendes et al., 2019), including #BeenRapedNeverReported, #EverydaySexism, and #RapeCultureIsWhen in the US and #NiUnaMenos in Latin America. As such, digital media technologies have created alternative spaces for traditionally marginalized groups, including sexual violence survivors, to legitimize their experiences (Jackson et al., 2020), connect with each other through affective and latent ties (Papacharissi, 2016), and employ multiple platforms to challenge, critique, and confront existing norms and engage in activism (Mendes et al., 2019). In these spaces, especially social media, hashtags become a strategic way for oppressed groups to collectivize ideas, expand conversations, share identities, and organize actions – i.e., hashtag activism (Jackson et al., 2020) and hashtag feminism (Mendes et al., 2019). Hashtags organize and connect discourses thematically, link and connect ideas and users, and increase visibility by creating a searchable shortcut, becoming tools to advance alternative narratives and build action networks without formal adherence to groups and identities (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In that sense, the tweet by actor/activist Alyssa Milano that catalyzed the global #MeToo movement gives us a glimpse into how collective support can be mobilized to expose the 'magnitude of the problem' that was until then normalized as a part of existing social structures. While Milano's use of the phrase offered a platform for the survivors to use #MeToo to build solidarity, it is telling that Tarana Burke, who coined the term to support survivors of sexual violence, sought to support marginalized communities reeling under multiple oppressions.

#MeToo, while spreading globally due to shared traumas and grievances (Bennett, 2005), also became localized, reflecting regions' unique socio-political background and intersectional challenges, as well as differences among women within each locality (Ghadery, 2019). Questions remain about how meaning is generated, articulated, and understood in intersecting transnational, national, and local contexts beyond the scope of many current studies. While much of the research on digital feminism tends to be grounded either in cultural and media studies and discursive textual analysis of digital content, we take a comparative, macroscopic computational approach to describe how #MeToo manifested and developed across linguistic contexts of networked connectivity.

Hybridization as a communicative process in global and local activism

The increasing economic, political interconnectedness as well as direct and indirect flows of information in digital spaces foster transnational movements. Giugni (2002) asserts

that movements are diffused rapidly because transnational actors, voices, and structures respond to similar threats and get organized to face grievances of global character. At the same time, global information flows open possibilities for local actors and institutions to adopt similar tactics, adapt strategies to the context, or repurpose global forms to local norms. Hence, the collective threat and shared experience of sexual violence denounced by the #MeToo movement had a global character that resonated across many countries. Across these contexts, social media platforms also afforded the possibility for cohesive-ness, resistance, identity sharing, and/or goal setting.

Cultural studies scholars have analyzed how these international communication processes are shaped by tensions and negotiations between asymmetrical communication flows from North to South, West to East, and how they come into tension with local agencies (Kraidy, 2002). As Straubhaar (2007) puts it, when cultural forces ‘move into a new country or cultural space, they hybridize, becoming part of the ongoing history of that country, interacting with previous forces, and becoming localized, enacted, and received by local people with their own identities, histories and agendas’ (p. 3). These processes, theorized as hybridization (García Canclini, 2005) or glocalization (Kraidy, 1999), emphasize the mobilizing flows across borders and the situatedness of particular cultural settings. Therefore, the global force is localized by interacting with cultural norms, needs, and transitions. While the global #MeToo movement has a character of translocality that transcends physical boundaries (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013), it has been adapted to the specific needs of localities by connecting their leaders, hashtags, objectives, issues, cultures, and histories.

Cross-cultural and national contact is a requisite for hybridity (Kraidy, 2002). In the networked communication ecology, ideas and practices easily travel across weakly-connected networks, especially through affordances of digital technologies like hashtags, thereby reconfiguring organizing dynamics beyond physical boundaries (Tufekci, 2017). Therefore, the global reach of hashtag activism may also yield diverse political outcomes, the re-signification of tactics, and online strategies particular to local contexts. Beyond generalizing the experiences of women under the notion of ‘global feminism’ or ‘global sisterhood’ (Morgan, 1984), #MeToo has taken ‘a multinational and multilocal approach to the issue of sexual violence’ (Ghadery, 2019, p. 270). Similarly, focusing on Black Lives Matter (BLM), Shahin et al. (2021) show how its global diffusion resonated in local cultures differently, developing differentiated practices in Brazil, India, and Japan.

Beyond mere blending or summation of distinct elements, hybridization should be understood as a communicative process ‘constitutive of and constituted by sociopolitical and economic arrangements’ (Kraidy, 2002, p. 317), involving multitudes of voices, actors, and strategies. Therefore, hybridization through cross-national and cross-cultural interaction is a dynamic process, where global and local forces constantly interact and negotiate. In particular, we look at three communicative contexts that are critical in understanding the hybridization processes around #MeToo: First, social media platforms provide a space where the nature and flows of activism discourses are constructed by unique affordances and cultural meanings, amplifying the influence and hybridization of the movement. Second, language serves as a discursive practice for the production of meaning in different contexts (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021). Third, different types of users or actors amplify and disseminate messages corresponding to local norms, goals, and purposes, emphasizing the situatedness of localized connective action.

Platforms in a transnational movement

While activism has been mobilized on various social media platforms (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012), current literature primarily examines a single platform, almost always Twitter (Özkula et al., 2022) and its use in a single country context (e.g., US or Germany), while making general arguments about social media use and social movements that remain unexamined outside these contexts.

However, each social media platform has unique affordances (Davis, 2020) and platform vernacular, utilizing a ‘unique combination of styles, grammars, and logics’ (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 257). For example, Facebook is at the ‘intersection between private life and public life’ (Mitchelstein et al., 2021); Twitter is seen as both a self-promotion platform (Davenport et al., 2014) and ‘space for the discussion of public affairs’ (Mitchelstein et al., 2021); Instagram provides a space for visually focused content (Voorveld et al., 2018).

The specificities of each platform and mediated practices among users provide hints for how discourses may flow across social media, though research in this area is still nascent. Research reveals that multiple social media interact in concert with each other, and their interplay takes shape over time. For example, cross-platform studies on Black resilience and resistance spanning Twitter and Vine (Lu & Steele, 2019) and Hong Kong’s Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill movement across mainstream and emerging platforms (Poon & Tse, 2022) both demonstrate how individuals are politically engaged through multiple platforms at the same time. Different platforms play distinct roles in information diffusion (Park et al., 2015), with the clustering of ideas on one platform sparking connective action on another (Pearce et al., 2020). In the context of #MeToo, Twitter discourse focused on empathy and support for sexual violence victims, serving as a disseminator of content on forums like Reddit (Manikonda, 2018), whereas Facebook users mostly reacted to news articles about #MeToo (Rho et al., 2018). On Instagram, #MeToo was employed as a commodifying strategy by businesses and brands (Afnan et al., 2019).

In addition, platform practices may vary across contexts. Countries and language communities have unique cultures, norms, and beliefs which are linked to distinct cultural meanings and motivations for platform use (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021). Studies have identified intercultural and international differences in social media usage and gratifications (e.g., Trepte et al., 2017), self-presentation and imagined audience (e.g., Su et al., 2022), as well as communication styles and strategies (e.g., Cho & Park, 2012). Therefore, online information consumption patterns tend to be geographically and linguistically bound (Taneja & Webster, 2016). In this sense, how users engage with #MeToo and interact with various platforms should be understood within geo-linguistic contexts.

Language in a transnational movement

Language is an arena for the production of conventional meaning and discursive practices (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021). In transnational activism where multiple cultures are involved, language can indicate variation, appropriation, and re-signification of the global agenda in distinct contexts (Smith, 2005). In other words, language can serve as a significant proxy that reflects distinct issues and concerns shared within particular geo-linguistic cultural contexts while communicating with the global agenda.

Examining the multilingual nature of a transnational movement is essential for understanding global hybridization processes. People communicate their concerns in spaces and ways particular to their culture and norms, and therefore, language in a transnational online movement can reflect unique domestic concerns, issues, and social and political environments. This could be related to distinct discursive practices and multilingualism in transnational, digitally mediated contexts among diasporic communities (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009).

Not all ideas and discourses associated with the hashtag are equally resonant with local contexts. Some local discourses may align with the movement's global agenda (i.e., solidarity with sexual violence survivors), while others may emphasize local struggles (Shahin et al., 2021). Hybridized with local concerns, the global hashtags can also lead to the development of new, alternative hashtags to contextualize local voices. For instance, research on #MeToo Twitter discourse reveals localized linguistic differences, with #MeToo English tweets from India more concerned with religion than those from the US and #MeToo French tweets including more narratives and negative emotions about local events (Lopez et al., 2019). Despite some of the above evidence, current scholarship still lacks a fuller understanding of #MeToo from a comparative perspective (Quan-Haase et al., 2021). It is critical to examine beyond the Anglo-phone-centric and US-centric discourses to see how this global issue hybridized with local struggles (Bachmann & Proust, 2020).

Language also reflects platform politics and vernaculars (Gibbs et al., 2015). For example, Keller (2019) shows that people strategically use Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr to engage in feminist politics, suggesting distinct discursive strategies depending on issues like privacy, community, and peer support on each platform. Though not about discursive or linguistic styles, Qiu et al. (2013) also find that users who use both Facebook and Renren (the Chinese Facebook counterpart) flexibly change their behaviors across platforms, suggesting that platforms constrain user behaviors to maintain perceived norms. Often, new words or lexical variations emerge depending on platform cultures and communities. Transcending geographic and platform boundaries, #MeToo transformed into different discourses reflecting unique linguistic and platform-specific politics.

Actors in a transnational movement

In digitally mediated activism, hashtags can establish relationships among various actors. The decentralized nature of organizing forces in digital spaces has allowed different types of actors, including social or political elites and ordinary users, to emerge as prominent players within the movement. On social media, such actors are collectively driven by the crowd through engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. Therefore, the implications of liking, sharing, and commenting extend well beyond personal boundaries, conveying significant communicative and mobilizing power.

Social movements literature reveals the pivotal role of networks and relational dynamics among local actors. Some suggest that territory-based understanding of transnational movements is limited given the growing interconnectedness across societies and centralized efforts in organizing actions. However, geography-based networks and relations among actors can structure the contextualized development of transnational movements (Nicholls, 2009). Some actors may resonate more with global issues and

messages, while others may represent local concerns. Some actors may create bridges across different cultural and geo-linguistic communities by engaging in issues relevant for both communities. Evidence shows that such actors account for a minority of users in social movements but play a pivotal role in facilitating information diffusion (González-Bailón & Wang, 2016). Sociopolitical domestic conditions may configure what kinds of actors emerge as dominant drivers within the global diffusion of #MeToo. For example, a history of grassroots feminist organizations or women's rights awareness can be important for determining local receptiveness to transmitting and adapting global ideas to local contexts.

Platform politics and vernaculars can enable the emergence of different types of actors across social media. Social media platforms show stark age differences (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). In the US, over 70% of 18-20-year-olds say they use Instagram, whereas only 42% use Twitter. In contrast, 50% of 65-years-olds use Facebook, compared to Instagram (13%) and Twitter (7%). This not only suggests distinct user characteristics but is also tied to unique information diffusion dynamics and messaging coordination efforts within a given topic of activism (Poell & Van Dijck, 2015). For example, during the Egyptian uprising of early 2011, Facebook was a primary platform for news, and Twitter was vital in mobilizing and inviting a wider range of actors (Lim, 2012). Actors may also strategically choose certain platforms to share messages with specific audiences (Keller, 2019), yet overlapping networks across spaces may necessitate collectivizing voices to larger audiences (Lim, 2012).

Research questions

We contend that hybridization as a communicative process is integral for understanding cross-cultural interactions in digital activism. We look at three communicative contexts that are critical in the hybridization of digital activism #MeToo: social media platforms that shape unique discourse flows within and across cultural contexts, languages that create localized meanings, and users or actors that amplify local norms and goals. Focusing on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram where #MeToo conversations were mostly concentrated, we attempt to understand how the global activism #MeToo hybridized into localized connective action in distinct geo-linguistic communities. Therefore, we propose following RQs:

RQ1: How are #MeToo discourses diffused between platforms and across geo-linguistic contexts?

RQ2: How do variations of word usage patterns of #MeToo reveal themes and expression strategies unique to platforms and geo-linguistic contexts?

RQ3: What types of prominent actors drive #MeToo discourses across platforms and geo-linguistic contexts?

Methods

Data

We collected global conversations about #MeToo via a social listening platform Synthesio, which collects online discourses across various sources, including public content

from Twitter (using Decahose Stream), Facebook, and Instagram. Focusing on the one-year period when #MeToo conversations were especially heightened (15 October 2017–30 September 2018), we collected publicly available posts that included #MeToo and related hashtags that were used in different languages and countries (Supplemental Material A for a full list). In this analysis, we focused on social media discourses in English ($N = 1,070,576$), Spanish ($N = 81,315$), and Korean ($N = 4,112$).

Geo-linguistic context

We selected these three language contexts considering unique cultural, political, and social backgrounds related to the diffusion of #MeToo: The English context signifies the global reach of #MeToo, and Spanish and Korean contexts provide evidence for local adaptations of the hashtag, but with distinct cultural and historical background in grassroots feminist activism. English posts account for most social media conversations (about 77.9%) in our dataset. [Figure 1](#) reveals the global distribution of the English language to countries other than the US where #MeToo initially began. Besides the US, UK, and Ireland, English content also originated in India, Australia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and South Africa. Despite the initial virality in the US, the spread of English content across borders suggests a cultural connectedness between nations, vestiges of colonialism, and contagion effects of social movements.

This is also true of Spanish content largely coming from countries such as Spain, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and Chile, among many others, again echoing colonial connections. In that sense, the Spanish geo-linguistic context presents a unique case in terms of national diversity yet with shared cultural background and strong grassroots feminist activist connections. Feminist movements in Spain have been essential for policy formation (Caravantes, 2021) as high-profile political figures publicly identify themselves as feminists. In Latin America, feminist movements promote social and cultural changes, focusing on ending femicides and violence against women (Revilla Blanco, 2019). Feminist movements in Spanish-speaking countries simultaneously focus on local and transnational causes. Historically, Spain and Latin American countries have been a benchmark for each other regarding women's rights issues where the shared language has facilitated the creation of interregional relations and united culture within feminist movements (González & Brochner, 2019).

For Korean, most contents were tagged as originating from South Korea. Given South Korea's long-rooted patriarchy, the issue of sexual violence and gender inequality has been central to the feminist movement. Before #MeToo, there were attempts to raise awareness of the prevalent misogyny and gender discrimination, some of which led to protest marches after an anti-woman hate crime in a restroom close to Gangnam Station in 2016. Against this backdrop, #MeToo in Korea coincided with heightened awareness of sexual violence, breaking social taboos on issues that had previously been silenced.

Notably, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are the core platforms that facilitated the hashtag's cross-border reach, each playing an important role across geo-linguistic contexts. Not only do they have global popularity, but they also embrace unique technological affordances and vernaculars. As noted above, Twitter is known as a public venue for political discussion and public campaigning. Facebook is built upon personal networks and interest-based communities, but its public pages are conducive to forming political

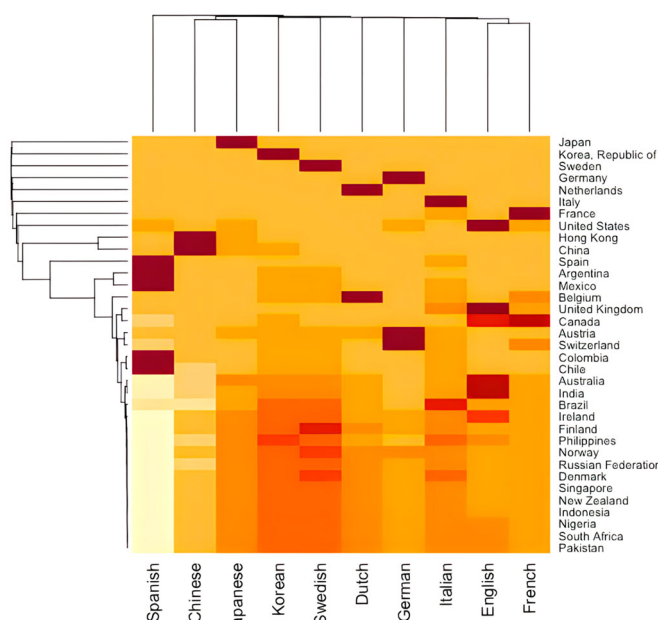


Figure 1. Distribution of languages across nations.

Note. Colors represent top-10 languages proportions in the dataset by top-35 countries in our dataset. Darker colors indicate more concentration of a language in a country compared to other countries.

identities and broader political discussion. Instagram is a visual-focused platform that shares images with optional textual content. Therefore, tracking multilingual #MeToo discourses across these platforms allows an investigation of how #MeToo grew into a global, cross-platform movement.

Analysis strategy

As part of pre-analytic steps, English and Spanish content were pre-processed by tokenizing and lowercasing texts, removing punctuation, special characters, and URLs, removing English and Spanish stop-words, and stemming words. For Korean, which has a unique syntax and grammatical structure relative to Indo-European languages like English and Spanish, an R package *KoNLP* (Jeon, 2016) was used to perform similar pre-processing steps, removing punctuation, special characters, URLs, and stop-words.

For RQ1, we performed time-series modeling to examine discourse flows of #MeToo. Specifically, we used Vector Autoregression (VAR) to model endogenous relationships between the discourses within and across languages and platforms. Augmented Dickey-Fuller unit root tests were applied to test the stationarity of each time-series. For VAR analyses, ones with unit roots were first-differenced to remove the integrated component (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2014). Following the AIC information criteria, VARs with optimal lags were estimated, followed by Granger-causality tests (Supplemental Material B for details). For RQ2, we conducted *keyness* analysis to identify words that uniquely contribute to a specific text compared to a reference corpus, which is closely related to understanding themes and concepts of a given text (Gabrielatos, 2018). For RQ3, we conceptualized prominent actors behind discourses as those whose influence

was driven by engagement, or ‘crowd-enabled elites’ (Shahin et al., 2021), and identified those with the most engagement metrics.¹

Results

We first investigated overtime patterns of the #MeToo public discourse across languages and platforms. Generally, we saw distinct discourse dynamics: consistent fluctuations corresponding to external events in English discourse, responses marked by specific cases and commemorative dates in Spanish discourse, and platform-specific dynamics in Korean discourse. Major peaks in English discourse generally coincided with significant events (Figure 2), including Alyssa Milano’s viral #MeToo tweet (October 2017), the launch of the Time’s Up campaign (January 2018), awards season (January-February 2018), and the Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh’s sexual assault hearings (September 2018). Instagram’s #MeToo posts had the local maximum on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2018.

Spanish discourse dynamics across platforms show two clear peaks: the first breaking event was on March 8, 2018, with the commemoration of International Women’s Day and the development of the International Women’s Strike or ‘Huelga feminista’ (Feminist strike), as it was one of the most massive in the history of Spanish-speaking countries (Campillo, 2018). The second peak (April-May 2018) included two key events, the creation of the hashtag #Cuéntalo (#TellIt) after the gang rape case ‘La Manada’ (The Wolf Pack) in Spain and the beginning of the social movement ‘Mayo Feminista’ (Feminist May) or ‘Tsunami Feminista’ (Feminist Tsunami) in Chile.²

Korean #MeToo discourse shows platform-specific patterns. #MeToo did not receive widespread attention until January 2018, when a female prosecutor, Ji-hyun Suh publicly

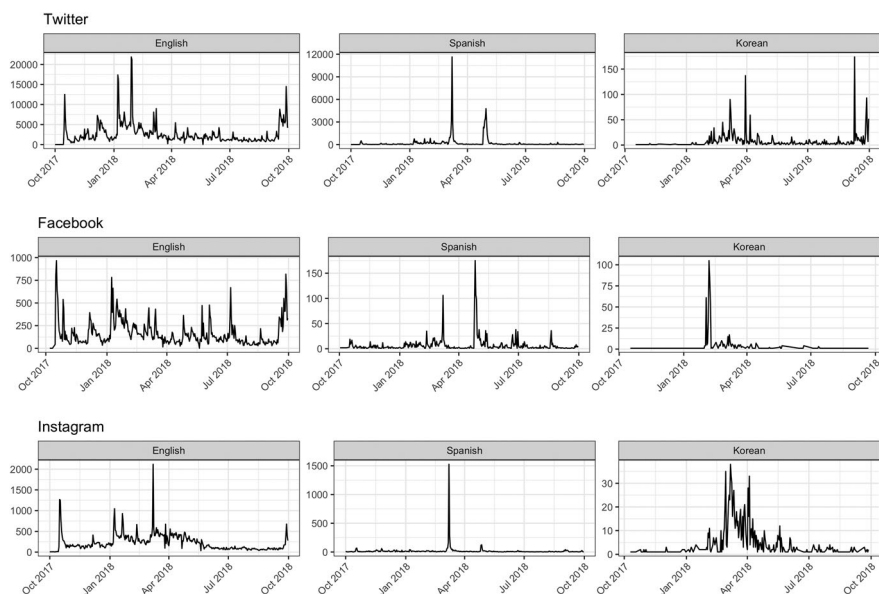


Figure 2. Daily counts of #MeToo discourses across three platforms.

testified that she was sexually harassed by a senior prosecutor eight years ago. Her account was followed by a cascade of allegations, including against powerful authorities in politics, culture, sports, and education, which peaked in early 2018 (Figure 2). Soon, collectivizing voices surrounded the new hashtag #위드유 (#WithYou). An outburst of Twitter posts in October 2018 was marked by an organizing effort among high school students, giving rise to #스쿨미투 (#SchoolMeToo). On the other hand, Facebook shows an ephemeral pattern, with the highest activity concentrated in early 2018. Instagram shared some of these temporal dynamics, though with more sustained intensity.

#MeToo discourse flows across language groups and platforms

For RQ1, we examined discourse flows across languages and platforms: (a) cross-language flows within platform and (b) cross-platform flows within language. Granger-causality tests demonstrate different levels of interconnectedness within platforms across languages (Figure 3). Twitter and Facebook remained relatively disconnected in terms of cross-language discourse flows. Unlike Twitter and Facebook, Instagram discourse was mutually connected across language groups, with English, Spanish, and Korean Instagram discourse Granger-causing each other, indicating Instagram's potential role in facilitating transnational movement discourse across language and cultural boundaries (full table in Supplemental Material B).

Furthermore, English Twitter discourse significantly influenced the volume of English Facebook and Instagram discourse ($F = 12.062$, $p < .001$ for Facebook; $F = 4.322$, $p < .01$ for Instagram), but not vice versa ($F = 1.921$, $p > .05$ for Facebook, $F = .885$, $p > .05$ for Instagram), suggesting a unidirectional flow from Twitter to other platforms in the English context. Spanish discourse shows more bi-directional interactions across the platforms within the language, as indicated by a mutual relationship between Spanish Twitter and Instagram ($F = 13.903$, $p < .001$ for Twitter-Instagram; $F = 34.508$, $p < .001$ for Instagram-Twitter) and also revealed by Facebook Granger-causing Twitter ($F = 5.918$, $p < .001$). Korean #MeToo discourse, likewise, shows an interesting pattern where Twitter and Instagram mutually Granger-caused each other ($F = 2.604$, $p < .05$ for Twitter-Instagram; $F = 4.740$, $p < .001$ for Instagram-Twitter).

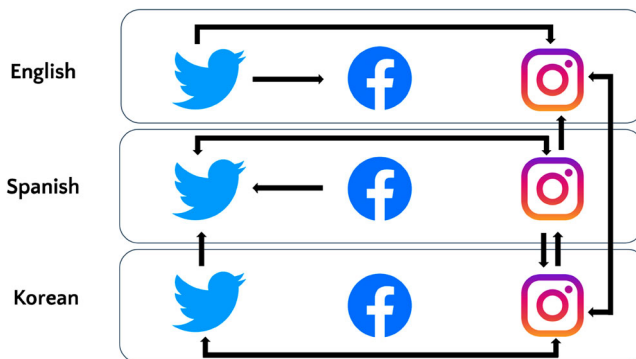


Figure 3. Visualization of Granger-causality Wald tests.

Note. Six sets of Granger-causality tests are shown.

Linguistic characteristics of #MeToo across language groups and platforms

We further examined word usages and expression strategies across contexts (RQ2). Results show localized linguistic differences in global #MeToo discourse, and further, platform-specific norms and communications within each language group (see Table 1 for top 20; full chi-square results in Supplemental Material C). One notable feature of English Twitter discourse is the politicization of #MeToo. Both liberal (e.g., #p2, #theresist) and conservative hashtags (e.g., #tcot, #maga) were relatively popular terms on Twitter compared to other platforms. Relatedly, Kavanaugh's confirmation and Dr. Ford's sexual assault accusation (e.g., 'ford', 'dr', 'blasey', 'christin', '#kavanaugh') intersected with #MeToo English discourse, especially on Twitter. This not only suggests Twitter as a platform for political confrontation and partisan battle, but also signals the unique development of English discourse on gender justice and sexual violence by the end of the first year.

Terms that uniquely contributed to Facebook suggest that Facebook discourse was relatively more concentrated on news reports and their reactions to #MeToo and associated accusations. For Instagram, discourse was dominated by hashtags ranging from feminist activism (e.g., #feminist, #womenempower, #girlpower) to general human rights-related (e.g., #lgbt, #humanright). Many of them were supportive and consciousness-raising, presenting how Instagram has become an affirmative and active platform for online activism.

Spanish discourse further shows how the global hashtag #MeToo and the issue of sexual violence were hybridized, with discourse of local social movements and personal experiences fused with content on feminism, women's rights, and regional events. Twitter was particularly the preferred platform for personal experiences of abuse or gender violence ('#cuentalo/#cuéntalo', 'insulted', 'hit', 'commit suicide') and calls for marches organized by local activists ('#8m', 'strike', 'march').

Like English, Spanish Facebook discourse was largely centered on news reports, focusing on localized hashtag activism surrounding #yositecreo (*#ibelieveyou*), #noesno (*#nomeansno*), #bastadeviolenciayacoso (*#stopviolenceandharassment*), and #bastadema-chismo (*#enoughofmachismo*). Spanish Instagram discourse engaged with feminist activism (e.g., #feminist, #women, #sisterhood). The dominance of English hashtags on Spanish Instagram signifies the global character and interconnectedness of the #MeToo and digital feminism on Instagram, a tendency distinct from Twitter and Facebook.

For Korean discourse, Twitter was most preferred for localized activism, where #스쿨미투 (*#SchoolMeToo*) stood out. Hashtags indicating specific cases of #MeToo, including high schools or middle schools, were among the most popular, especially on Twitter. While tweets surrounding these hashtags featured narratives of gender violence experienced by Korean women, as seen in Spanish discourses, Korean tweets were organized mostly through new hashtags, centering on students' collective efforts to publicize gender violence in schools.

Like English and Spanish, Korean Facebook discourse was predominantly about news reports and local events. Instagram discourse, however, reveals unique commercialization and appeals to consumer activism. Hashtags were often used in commodified posts or selfies, either to advertise products or gain attention. Some supported #MeToo and included language endorsing the movement in their product

Table 1. Differences in English, Spanish, and Korean #MeToo discourse across platforms.

	English			Spanish			Korean		
	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
1	#metoo	movement	#love	#8m	#partieswithrespect	#women	#metoo	priest	#daily
2	Ford	peopl	#femin	#cuentalo	#metoo	#femin	#schoolmetoo	Ye-won	#follow
3	latest	men	#equal	#cuéntalo	movement	#love	#미투 (metoo)	prosecutor Park	product
4	#maga	pound	#feminist	secure	#ibelieveyou	#feminist	#MyungJihighschool_metoo	purity	Apieu
5	dr	happen	#womenempower	year	#stopviolenceandharassment	#girlpow	#MyungJihighschool	recovery center	#f4f
6	Trump	think	#meme	story	#disassemblingthediary	#woman	#KyungHwagirl'smiddleschool_metoo	incident	#daily
7	#timesup	victim	#girlpow	strike	Yorkey	#humanright	#SoSunggirl'smiddleschool_metoo	church	#instagood
8	Kavanaugh	women	#repost	#metoo	#machismomurdererofPablolglesia	#sisterhood	#CheongJoogirl'shishschool_metoo	itself	#diet
9	sexual	accus	#intersectionalfemin	march	case	#feminism	#KyeYangmiddleschoolmetoo	contract	#design
10	Blasey	get	#beauti	sick	#ibelieveyou#	#love	#ChungBukgirl'smiddleschool_we_don't_stop	unfairness	AbleC&C
11	Christine	point	#govegan	house	#nomeansno#	#girl	#Busangirl'smiddleschool_publicize	leak	used car
12	daili	woman	#lgbt	harassed	harassment	#photographi	#SoSunggirl'smiddleschool	Videomug	good
13	#veteran	proven	#girl	put	Weinstein	#instagood	#KyungHwagirls'middleschool	disclose	#selfie
14	#goldenglob	man	link	leave it	girl	#feminist	#KyeYangmiddleschool	trust	#fashion
15	#p2	guilti	#inspir	hit	#enoughofmachismo	#empowerment	#CheongJoogirlshighschool	#Maeilbusinessnews	#travel
16	#tcot	someon	#donttakeourplanetforgr	insulted	they covered	#woman	#SeoulAcademyFoundation_metoo	SBS News	#Innisfree
17	harass	go	#instagood	called	#machismomurderersofPodemos	#genderequ	#InSeonggirl'shishschoolmetoo	victims	#daily
18	#aarp	evid	#humanright	commit suicide	#iwouldbelieveyoutoo	#stop	#ISingirl'shishschool_metoo	#MBN	#travel
19	#theresist	tri	#ilovepari	chased	#iwouldbelieveyou	#equal	#ChoongBukgirl'shishschool_metoo	contract	#golf
20	#Kavanaugh	comment	#ilovenyc	asking me	dictate	#picoftheday	#InSeonggirl'shishschool	wife	#pilates

Note. For Spanish and Korean, words are translated directly into English. The original language words can be found in Supplemental Material C. Full chi-square results are also provided in Supplemental Material C.

advertisements – a form of cause-related marketing –, while others included a string of hashtags simply to increase visibility. Political consumerism is another notable trend unique to Korean Instagram. After sexual harassment accusations in the cosmetics industry (e.g., Apieu, AbleC&C, #Innisfree), consumers gathered on Instagram to raise awareness of the accusations and encourage people to boycott the products, suggesting Instagram as a platform for blending brand messages and personal narratives, particularly suited to advancing consumer activism.

Most #MeToo engaged accounts across language groups and platforms

For RQ3, which asks types of prominent users in #MeToo across contexts, we generated a top-25 list of users with the most engagement metrics on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram by language and coded the accounts into different categories (Figure 4). Consistently across language groups, we find that among top-25 accounts, media and journalist accounts constituted the majority driving #MeToo discourse on Facebook. The dominance of media and journalists reveals Facebook's outsized role in news aggregation and collection, especially regarding localized events and accusations, which is also demonstrated by linguistic characteristics of Facebook public discourse surrounding reports and events.

On Instagram, across languages, most accounts were coming from the entertainment industry (e.g., actresses, singers, influencers). Consistently, Instagram featured voices that raised awareness of sexual violence and expressed solidarity, suggesting this platform served as fertile ground for feminist activism. Unique to Korean Instagram were commercial accounts that joined #MeToo by hijacking it for commercial purposes. The prominence of commodified hashtags on Korean Instagram suggests the unique role of Instagram as a venue for commercialization and commodification of social movements in South Korea.

Twitter shows more distinct patterns across languages; for example, the most prominent English accounts were political activists (liberal or conservative). On the other hand, the prominent users in Spanish Twitter were mostly ordinary citizens. Of the top-25 accounts, 14 were ordinary users, which contrasts with the prevalence of political activists on English Twitter. Conversations from these ordinary users mostly concentrated surrounding #Cuéntalo, suggesting the grassroots nature of the localized movement in Spanish-speaking countries and widespread acknowledgment of sexual violence experiences through networks (Suk et al., 2021).

Among the prominent actors in Korean Twitter were feminist activist accounts, which were specifically motivated to support #MeToo in Korea. Such accounts were created in response to specific incidents of sexual allegations and in support of localized feminist movement, including #SchoolMeToo. Like English and Spanish, Korean Instagram was also marked by a dominance of social media influencers as prominent actors, but beyond raising consciousness of the issue and movement, they further played a significant role of leading and supporting sub-movements of #MeToo in the Korean beauty industry and engaging in consumer activism through boycotts and buycotts. Taken together, results suggest that the most influential accounts within #MeToo during this period varied considerably across language and platforms, except for media actors on Facebook.

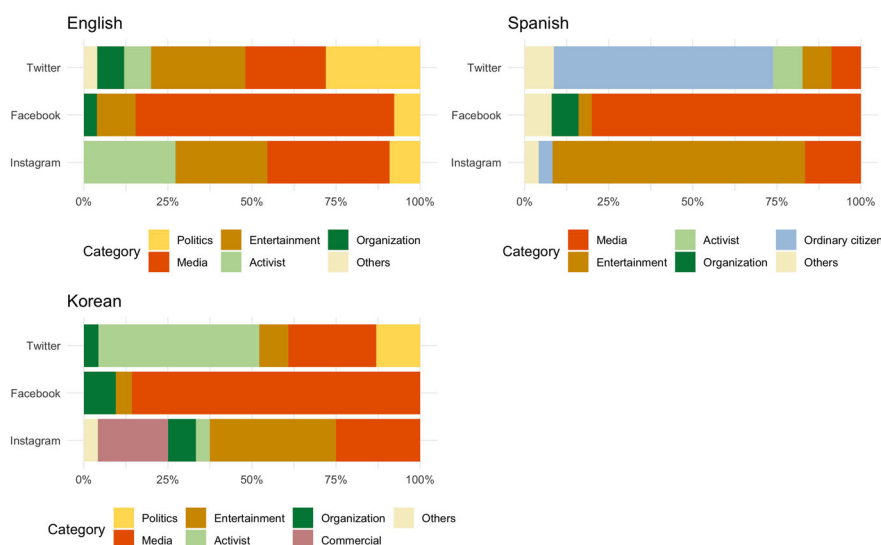


Figure 4. Prominent accounts in English, Spanish, and Korean #MeToo by category.

Note. *Politics*: politicians and political activists; *Entertainment*: celebrities and social media influencers; *Activist*: feminism and human rights activists; *Media*: news media, magazine, broadcast, journalists, and reporters; Deleted or suspended accounts are omitted from calculation.

Furthermore, most of these prominent actors used their own language, though some accounts engaged with issues other than their own geo-linguistic contexts, either through employing international hashtags resonating with multiple communities or delivering news or information about such issues. In English context, 11 accounts from Facebook mentioned issues from non-English speaking countries, followed by Twitter ($N = 6$) and Instagram ($N = 2$), most of which were media and news-related accounts. For Spanish, 16 accounts from Facebook, 4 Instagram accounts, and 1 Twitter account talked about issues about non-Spanish speaking countries, such as #MeToo in the US, Japan, and South Korea, and other international awards. Similarly, for Korean, 11 accounts from Facebook, 7 Instagram accounts, and 6 Twitter accounts mentioned issues about non-Korean contexts, highlighting cases in America and France (see Supplemental Material D for more). Importantly, across platforms, it was mostly media accounts that engaged with issues other than their own geo-linguistic contexts, rather than ordinary users and local influencers, suggesting the role of media accounts in serving as a bridge to connect local and global issues.

Discussion

Understanding hybridization as a communicative process across platforms, languages, and actors, we present how #MeToo transformed into a transnational movement reflecting specific characteristics and backgrounds in different geo-linguistic contexts. Our comparative approach across English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and Korean-speaking #MeToo discourse allows us to show not only the global connectivity of the hashtag but also how it hybridized in different parts of the world, critically dependent on the existing

local contexts, platform power, networked actors, and grassroots efforts. For example, English discourse highlighted the politicized nature of #MeToo, especially in the US during the fight over Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court, where gender violence and social justice conversations became blunt instruments in the political battle between the left and right. This finding aligns with previous evidence on the increasing politicization of the #MeToo discourse in US media coverage (Su et al., 2020). Time-series analysis further demonstrates the role of English Twitter in driving Facebook and Instagram discourse, suggesting Twitter's unidirectional flow to others, uniquely in the English context. As the platform where #MeToo took off, it is likely that Twitter's functionality to effectively organize discourse and create networks through hashtags stimulated the formation of conversations on other platforms, expanding its reach and scope.

Spanish discourse demonstrated that the arrival of #MeToo had a synergetic influence with the region's own hashtags and deep history of grassroots feminist activism. Spanish discourse responded to local events, marches, and protests and involved more ordinary citizens and non-elites as prominent influencers. Compared to the English context, the implications of politicians or well-known figures are less prominent. Given the history of the grassroots feminist movement and everyday struggles of gendered violence in Spain and Latin America (Arriaza Ibarra & Berumen, 2019), #MeToo played an essential role in continuing the collectivization of ordinary citizens' voices online and through marches and protests. Supporting this, interactive flows across platforms within the Spanish context suggest how Spanish #MeToo discourse was able to resonate with local struggles and conflicts while speaking to and connecting with this global solidarity movement. With #MeToo, localized feminist movements gained more notoriety and power, advancing their common agendas together as an interregional force (González & Brochner, 2019).

For the Korean discourse, #MeToo fostered an increasing awareness of the prevalence of sexual violence and gender discrimination, inviting a new form of localized movement inspired by #MeToo spurring new hashtags (#WithYou, #SchoolMeToo). Such development shows how collective voices were used in the Korean context to highlight the prevalence of sexual violence in particular contexts, connecting structural and systematic inequalities to this global movement. Also notable, Korean #MeToo discourse revealed distinct development on each platform, with Korean Twitter content focused on #SchoolMeToo and Korean Instagram content centered on commercialization and consumer activism. In contrast, Korean Facebook existed in relative isolation to other platforms. Its unique development across platforms, even within the same language context, may be related to different platform cultures and communities that lead to platform-specific hybridization in the Korean context.

We further show platform differences in relation to unique developments of #MeToo in geo-linguistic contexts. Compared to other platforms, Instagram showed more significant connections across language groups in terms of discourse flows, themes, and actors. As a visual-based platform, Instagram appeals to younger users (Auxier & Anderson, 2021; Correa & Valenzuela, 2021), and its functionality allows users to highlight visual narratives of social activism and related events that cross language boundaries. Instagram users also curate messages and track attention via hashtags. Visual communications combined with hashtags on Instagram likely facilitated flexibility in discourse flows across

contexts, stoking the glocalization of #MeToo. Notably, consistent themes across languages in Instagram posts were strongly connected to messages of self-affirmation, solidarity, and feminism, identifying Instagram as a relatively safe space for movement mobilization and support. While we relied on texts, we note that incorporating non-text components like visuals will be compelling to find how such consistent themes manifest in photos and videos along with texts.

In stark contrast with Instagram, Twitter displayed the most versatility within #MeToo. English Twitter discourse featured politicization of the movement, especially in the US context, while Spanish Twitter content was dominated by a wider range of supportive ordinary users, and Korean Twitter discourse became an isolated platform for localized hashtag activism, suggesting the contextualized development of activism on Twitter. On the other hand, Facebook capitalized on news reports and related events from media and journalists' accounts. While public discourse of #MeToo on Facebook mainly concentrated on news and events, private groups, pages, and networks likely reveal different patterns. Future studies can further investigate such differences. This may also be a function of data availability for public content, biasing in favor of institutional accounts across all geo-linguistic contexts.

Through a computational communication framework for examining large-scale multilingual and multinational data, our analysis expands the understanding of hybridization as a communicative process that stimulates the development of the global hashtag into a localized connective action, in this case #MeToo. Platforms serve as sites for digital activism and languages as systems that easily cross borders, co-creating meanings for global movements in relation to local cultures and struggles. Actors that amplify localized messages vary by platform and language, and the meaning of a global hashtag like #MeToo is constantly transformed and reinterpreted. Beyond universalizing the experiences of women and sexual violence survivors under 'global sisterhood' (Morgan, 1984), #MeToo has demonstrated how the global hashtag can be contextualized, adapted, and re-signified in different social, cultural, and political environments. Efforts to examine how #MeToo diffused across platforms in other geo-linguistic contexts must follow, given its sustained visibility and resonance in French, German, Chinese, Swedish, and Dutch social media discourse.

We also note that social media activism surrounding hashtags may not represent an entire picture of global feminist activism efforts, especially in areas with limited social media access. Given the geographically skewed nature of social media, structures of inequality may inhibit access by certain social group (Latina & Docherty, 2014) and lead to overexposure of vulnerable victims for the sake of political causes (Cole, 2015) or misrepresentation of lived experiences through westernized perspectives (Berents, 2016). Therefore, understanding the implications of global movements beyond social media spaces may require critical recognition of geopolitics, local complexities, and digital hierarchies. Digital feminist activism is not simply a new strategy for doing feminist politics; rather, it represents a paradigm shift within feminist protest culture that contains both possibilities for inclusion and perils of exclusion (Jouët, 2018). Future studies can involve rich collaborations with scholars of different cultural expertise and employ mixed method approaches with computational and qualitative methods to reveal how the hybridized movement moves beyond social media platforms.

Notes

1. We used the sum of retweets, replies, and favorites for Twitter; for Facebook, likes, shares, and reactions; for Instagram, likes and replies.
2. In April 2018, five men were accused of raping a woman at the Saint Fermín festival in 2016 but were convicted for sexual abuse, not rape ('La Manada'). This led to the creation of #Cuéntalo (#Tellit), #noesno (#nomeansno), and #yositecreo (#ibelieveyou). In Chile, more than 40 college student groups organized 'Mayo Feminista,' consecutive strikes to demand protocols against sexual harassment and to combat sexist educational practices.

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