
Chinese-English code-mixing among China's netizens

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Chinese-English mixed-code communication is gaining popularity on the Internet

Introduction

One of the most fascinating aspects of Chinese English in the contemporary age is the growing practice of code-mixing on China's Internet. This study uses participant observation to explore the 'mixing' practices of Chinese netizens in online social networking communities, by focusing on code-mixing in domains of government administration, pop culture and social interaction. The results of the study suggest that a mixed-code variety of Chinese English is gaining popularity in China's homegrown social networks. For the young generation in mainland China, 'mixing' has become part of their everyday communication practices as they build multicultural identities, transform the traditional social relationships and practice their social responsibilities, using new communication technologies as well as their linguistic and cultural repertoires.

On December 20, 2010, the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China announced that 'no random mixing of words or acronyms from English or other foreign languages is allowed in Chinese publications in mainland China'. GAPP then went on to explain that the increased 'abusive use' of language, such as random English mixing, direct use of English words or acronyms, and coined expressions mixed with English or other foreign languages in print and digital publications, have 'seriously damaged' the purity of Chinese and 'destroyed the harmonious and healthy linguistic and cultural environment' (GAPP, December 20, 2010).

While authorities and linguistic purists find 'mixing' threatening, the 513 million Chinese netizens, among whom 90% have received vocational or higher education (CNNIC, 2012), are enjoying a national carnival of English 'mixing'. A telling

episode: 'hold 住',¹ a mixed-code expression originating from a Taiwan TV show, ranks the first in the top ten hot net words of the year 2011 in China (Sina Tech, December 13, 2011). Started from a comic line '就算搞错 party, 整个场面我 hold 住' [Even if I found myself in a wrong party, I am still able to *hold*] by a female college student from Taiwan, the expression quickly spread over the social networks in mainland China.² Mostly adapted as '你 hold 住吗?' [Can you *hold* it?] by mainland netizens, the mixed expression 'hold 住' means the ability to 'sustain pressure' as in '油价再创新高, 你 hold 住吗?' [Oil price has surged to a new high, can you *hold* it?], to 'bear the undesirable' as in '雷人两会提案, 你 hold 住吗?' ['Shocking' NPC and CPPCC proposals, can you *hold* it?] or to 'resist the temptation' as in the innovative notice of the wanted from the police '每人惊爆价: 5000-10000 元. 你还



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hold 住吗? [Surprise price per head (fugitive): 5000–10000 Yuan. Can you hold it?].³ Such mixing is creatively appropriated by netizens from diverse social groups across diverse domains for diverse purposes within the government-approved social networks in mainland China, and the purity issue, either for Chinese or for English, is deconstructed in the national carnival.

The trend of English ‘mixing’ in varying degrees in China’s homegrown social networking spaces has become the most significant intranational use of English in mainland China today.⁴ And yet, our knowledge about English ‘mixing’ in contemporary mainland China is largely confined to the types, functions and motivations of ‘mixing’ based on a classification of isolated utterances/sentences collected from campus (e.g., Jiang Qin & Tian Li, 2011; Xue Xiangmei & Jia Junmin, 2010), print magazines (e.g., Zhang Na, 2006) and advertising texts (e.g., Yang Yonghe, 2008). To provide an enriched account of the current status of Chinese English and to make an impact on relevant language policies, research on ‘mixing’ in mainland China needs to inform scholarship on Chinese English beyond a static taxonomy of ‘mixing’ in restricted domains by situating ‘mixing’ practices in a broader historical, social and technological context. Adopting the approach of digital ethnography, this study uses participant observation to explore the ‘mixing’ practices by mainland Chinese netizens at two core networks in China – *Sina Weibo*⁵ (similar to Twitter) and *Douban* (similar to Facebook), and attempts to present the dynamics of the ‘mixing’ practices of Chinese netizens by focusing on their joint online ‘mixing’ activities in domains of social interaction, government administration and pop culture creativity⁶ against the historical backdrop of Chinese English.

Early ‘mixing’ practices in China

‘Mixing’ is nothing new in China’s linguistic contact with English over a history of four hundred years. The earliest case of ‘mixing’ is evidenced in the origins of Chinese English that dates back to ‘Canton English’, also called ‘broken English’ or ‘Canton jargon’, and was later called Chinese Pidgin English. From around 1750 until 1842, early Chinese English flourished in southern Chinese ports such as Canton (Guangzhou), Hong Kong, Xiamen, and Fuzhou for the purposes of trade with the British (Bolton, 2003: 22–3). The grammar of Chinese Pidgin English derives primarily from Cantonese and the vocabulary is overwhelmingly English-derived. Chinese Pidgin English was

regarded by the western missionaries at the time as a ‘barbarous jargon’ deliberately ‘set up by the Mandarin officials against the evangelization and enlightenment of China’ (Bolton, 2003: 153). In the early twentieth century, as thousands of Chinese people became English-literate through hundreds of mission schools as well as overseas education, Chinese Pidgin English gradually declined. In the late 1920s and 1930s, the practice of ‘mixing’ re-emerged as a popular bilingual intragroup practice among the social elites in Shanghai. Many examples can be found in the literary works authored by Qian Zhongshu, Fu Lei, Lu Xun and Guo Moruo before 1949 (Jiang Jinyun, 2000). In Qian Zhongshu’s *围城* [*Fortress Besieged*], a popular novel that describes the life of Chinese intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s, ‘mixing’ between Baihua,⁷ English and even French codes in the conversations of his characters, from bankers to professors, was considered a badge of modernity and social status. For example, when Fang Hongjian, the hero of the novel, first moved into his father-in-law’s residence in Shanghai, the banker frequently inserted English words and expressions in his little speech about his porcelain collection to impress his returnee son-in-law:

(1.) ‘Sure! 值不少钱呢, Plenty of dough. 并且这东西不比书画。买书画买了假的, 一文不值, 只等于wastepaper. 磁器假的, 至少还可以盛菜盛饭。我有时请外国 friends 吃饭, 就用那个康熙窑‘油底蓝五彩’大盘做salad dish, 他们都觉得古色古香, 菜的味道也有点 old-time.’ (Qian, 2004: 87–8)

(1.) *Sure! Worth quite a lot of money, plenty of dough.* Besides, these things aren’t like calligraphy or paintings. If you buy calligraphy or paintings which turn out to be fakes, they aren’t worth a cent. They just amount to *wastepaper*. If the porcelain is fake, at least it can hold food. Sometimes I invite foreign friends over for dinner and use this big K’ang-hsi ‘underglaze-blue-and-colored ware’ plate for a *salad dish*. They all think the ancient colors and odor make the food taste a little *old-time*.

Since China reopened to the outside world in the 1980s and produced a large English-literate population through mass English education over three decades, ‘mixing’ practices have reemerged in the newspapers, magazines, and television in mainland China (Kang Jianxiu, 1999). With the development of digital communication technologies in recent years, the practice of ‘mixing’ has now spread to a much broader range of domains. In China’s social

networking spaces, ‘mixing’ between Chinese languages and dialects with English, along a hierarchy from the simple insertion of lexical items to the insertion of idioms, collocations and sentences (see Kachru, 1983: 201), has become a common practice among the urbanites such as college students and white-collars and even among some Tibetan monks from remote areas of China. Following a deductive digital ethnographic approach, which has the strength of situating ‘mixing’ practices in a richer social and technological context, I will, in the following sections, describe the ‘mixing’ practices in China’s social networking spaces with a focus on

不夹杂 english 就会 die’ [Speaking without *english* ‘mixing’ will *die*] was set up for, in the group leader’s words, ‘双语小神童’ [‘bilingual whiz kids’] and has attracted 2,337 members in less than two years. The rule of the group interaction is simple: Every sentence should be mixed with English.

In Example (2), ‘I *mix*, therefore I *live* ~’ by Orchid, a self-identified participant from Tianjin (a metropolitan city near Beijing),⁸ her post reflects the status of ‘mixing’ practice in the everyday life of the group members:

(2.)



2008-08-27 11:23:36 Orchid (u can't eat ur cake & hav it~)

我mix, 故我live~

three domains – social interaction, government administration, and pop culture creativity.

Social interaction: ‘I *mix*, therefore I *live*’

Douban, a core social networking site in China that mainly attracts college students, art critics, and general netizens who prefer to identify

(2.) Orchid: I *mix*, therefore I *live* ~

By replacing the verbs from the Chinese translation of René Descartes’s famous quote 我思故我在 [I think, therefore I am], Orchid foregrounded ‘mix’ and ‘live’ in this post. Such ‘*skillful* mixing’ requires creative playing of the two languages and ‘constant *practice*’, as noted by two other participants:

(3.) and (4.)



2009-04-05 22:16:26 [已注销]

其实THIS真正的笑POINT在于:明明NOT INTERSETING的地方你汉化了,BUT许多不合AVERAGE KNOWLEDGE的地方你却用了ENGLISH.....
这个SKILL要运用得VERY熟练IS VERY艰难的.



2009-05-13 10:08:26 长袜子皮皮 (花开以后静静生活)

我totally agree with楼上的point
要把这种skill运用到出god入picture的境界, 我们must多多practice

themselves as 文艺青年 [literary youth], provides an ideal site for observing trendy linguistic practices in the domain of social interaction. On August 27, 2010, a *Douban* group named ‘说话

(3.) Yizhuxiao: Here is the punch *POINT*: Chineselize the part that is *NOT INTERESTING*, *BUT* at places unexpected by *AVERAGE KNOWLEDGE*, use *ENGLISH*. . . . This *SKILL* to

be used *VERY* sophisticated *IS VERY* difficult.

(4.) Longstocking PiPi: I *totally agree with* the upstairs *point*

To use this *skill* to the state of out of *god* and into *picture*, we *must* have more *practice*.

While some participants took a cautious approach in practicing the art of ‘mixing’, others chose a more liberating approach. Yibulaximoweiqi wrote:

Using Chinese as the base language, Yibulaximoweiqi inserted English lexical items such as nouns (e.g. *heart*, *sea back*) and adjectives (e.g. *stiff*, *big*) to highlight his key message: Liberate ourselves from the ‘norm’ of the English learned from classrooms! And he practices what he preaches. The expression ‘*sea back*’, a direct translation of 海归, ‘returnees’ in formal Chinese English for those who obtained their degrees from

(5.)



2010-12-26 17:24:11 一不拉稀莫魏奇 (正在输入中.....)

我think吧，咱们说english不能太stiff了，应该随heart所欲，胆子要big，像那些sea back一样从容，这样才有效果，恩！

(5.) Yibulaximoweiqi: I think ba, we speak *English* should not be too *stiff*, but should follow our *heart*, guts should be *big*, as calm as those *sea back*, then it will be effective, En!

abroad, signals a ‘liberated’ variety of Chinese English only intelligible by bilingual insiders. One email shared by a group member can further illustrate how far this ‘liberated’ variety goes:

(6.)

豆瓣 **douban**

豆瓣猜 发现小站 线上活动

吊丝们，这才是FASHION的Company!



2012-01-05 13:42:09 来自: 二逼青年路路毛(眼看狂奔三了, 可我还二够)

一打开邮箱, 就收到同事用goolemail.com (不是gmail.com额亲) 发来的邮件:

Dear XX,

能不能on MSN 一下? Thanks xx

接着,

老娘就上 MSN了。窗口立马弹出一行字:

“哎, MSN上语音不 convenient, up一下skype, plz?”

然后,

老娘打开了Skype的语言功能,

最后,

隔壁和Skype上同时传出了同事那林志玲的Voice:

XX, 把你的red圆珠pen give me use use!

可怕的是:

她不是在joking。

(6.) Diaosimen,⁹ this is what a *FASION(able) Company* is!
 Opened my email, got a message from my colleague via *goolemail.com* (not *gmail.com* e dear):
 Dear XX,
 Could you get on *MSN*? Thanks xx
 Then,
 Mother I got on *MSN*, a line popped up in the Window:
 Eh, *MSN* voice not *convenient*, up *Skype* once, plz?
 Then,
 Mother I opened *Skype* voice

Chinese clause (e.g. *give me use use*). The seamless mixture of English and Chinese resembles Chinese Pidgin English – the origins of Chinese English, once popular in southern China three hundred years ago.

The group members expressed their love of ‘mixing’ in various posts. For some, ‘mixing’ brings them ‘*excitement*’ as they play with languages; for others, ‘mixing’, as they have observed from friends and colleagues, is the ‘*fashion*’ among professionals and carries a ‘high-end *feel*’ [高端的 *feel*], as in Examples 7 and 8 below:

(7.) and (8.)



2011-01-06 18:00:49 晴天有时下桔 (根正苗红的好太太~!)

我绝对support这个team的, 我朋友的office人人都有个英文名, 说话也like this的, 就是他们中没有谁能完整说一个sentence的。好小资好fashion哦。



2011-01-06 18:14:59 佰

mar克

Finally,
 From the next room and *Skype* came, simultaneously, my colleague’s *voice* similar to Lin Zhiling’s¹⁰
 XX, bring your *red ball pen give me use use!*
 What’s appalling is:
 She is not *joking!*

(7.) Sunny-days-sometimes-rain-oranges: I totally *support* this *team*. At my friend’s *office*, everybody has an English name. They speak just *like this*; none of them speaks a complete *sentence*. So bourgeois and so *fashion*.

(8.) Bai: *marke*]

Text 6 above has incorporated two layers of ‘mixing’: a story narrated in a mixed-code variety by Lu Maomao about her interactions with a colleague at workplace; and the mixed-code interactions, both written and oral, with the colleague. In the story by Lu Maomao, the English lexical insertions, such as ‘*fashion*’, ‘*company*’, foregrounded the context of the story and the verb ‘*joking*’ in the end emphasized the dramatic effect of her story. As for the interaction with her colleague, which involved email and voice messaging, the English ‘mixing’ extends from lexical insertions (e.g. *convenient*, *red*) to the direct English translation of a

In collaborative spirit, Bai (a self-identified participant from Beijing) contributed a hybridized word ‘mar 克’, which can be interpreted either as the verb ‘mark’, marking the above post, or the male name ‘Mark’, preserving its English origin and its Chinese flavor, and vividly captured the multicultural identities the bilingual white-collars identify with. It is worth noting that the participants’ attitudes towards ‘mixing’ are not fixed. In Example 9 below, Linlinsansan admits that she used to regard English ‘mixing’ as a kind of ‘show-off’, but now, the ‘*feel*’ of Chinese does not exist without English insertions:

(9.)



2008-09-27 14:22:04 伶伶散散 (夜曲)

以前特鄙视说话带en的people, 觉得拜托难道就会说en吗, 但是现在觉得中文里不带en就没有feel, 经常学说小s的话: 我根本不care~!

(9.) I used to despise those *people* who speak with *en*, excuse me are you the only person who can speak *en*? But now I think Chinese does not have a *feel* without *en*, often imitate Xiao S' words: I don't *care*!

As the participants practice the art of 'mixing' together through sharing their 'mixed-code' posts, their 'mixing' strategies, and their experiences and opinions about 'mixing' practices, they are slowly evolving into an online community of practice with a common goal of enjoying the 'high-end *feel*' of English 'mixing', a state of living for the bilingual urbanites.

The government Weibo where 'Hundred groups happy-go'

The practice of 'mixing', popular in the online interactions among college students and white-collars, is gradually spreading to the domain of government, as various branches and levels of Chinese governments start to use new social networking technologies to communicate with the general public.¹¹ On December 9, 2011, the Tiannin Branch of Changzhou Police Department started a fugitive hunt campaign with a Taobao¹² style tweet at their official *Sina Weibo* site, which has more than 110,000 followers.

(10.)

#百团乐GO#“天清地宁”为答谢广大网民,现推出抓逃惊爆价! 求秒杀! 求给力! 你还HOLD住吗? 清单如下: 1.吴小杭, 男, 1977年生, 江苏省宿迁市泗洪县人。2. 崔红兵 (小名崔二牛, 又名崔强), 男, 1971年生, 江苏省淮安市青浦区人。3.朱琪, 男, 1977年生, 江苏常州市天宁区人。每人惊爆价: 5000—10000元

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【百团乐GO】“天清地宁”为答谢广大网民, 现推出抓逃惊爆价! 求秒杀! 求给力! 每人惊爆价: 5000—10000元。你还HOLD住吗?

¥ 0 抢购

① 吴小杭 ② 崔红兵 ③ 朱琪

天清地宁 百团乐GO

本单详情:

1. 吴小杭, 男, 1977年生, 江苏省宿迁市泗洪县人。
2. 崔红兵 (小名崔二牛, 又名崔强), 男, 1971年生, 江苏省淮安市青浦区人。
3. 朱琪, 男, 1977年生, 江苏常州市天宁区人。

2011-12-9 16:17 来自 新浪微博

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(10.) Hundred groups happy-go: To thank the general netizens, ‘Clear Heaven and Peaceful Land’ offers surprise fugitive hunting price! SecKill! Geili! Can you *hold* it? List of items: 1. Wu Xiaohang, male, born in 1977, Sihong county, Suqian city, Jiangsu Province. 2. Cui Hongbing (nickname Cui Erniu, Cui Qiang), male, born in 1971, Qingpu District, Huai’an City, Jiangsu Province. 3. Zhu Qi, male, born in 1977, Tiannin District, Changzhou City, Jiangsu Province. Surprise price per head: 5000–10000!

Instead of describing the fugitive hunt campaign as a traditional legal action with the official legal term 通缉令 [‘wanted notice’], the Tiannin Police chose to use a hybridized noun phrase as the rubric 百团乐 go [‘Hundred groups happy-go’]. The English verb ‘go’, which has the same pronunciation of 购 [‘buy’] in Chinese, carrying both the sense of the action in ‘go’ as well as the sense of ‘group buy’ in 购 [‘buy’], creates a bilingual pun. Of course, an online ‘group buy’¹³ event is much more appealing to the netizens than a fugitive hunt. Meanwhile, the replacement of ‘buy’ with *go* distinguishes the wanted notice from a real ‘group buy’ advertisement. Before detailing the cash reward for each fugitive and the

Sophisticated tweeters at *SinaWeibo* often add visuals to enhance the linguistic content of the tweet. The incorporated image of the notice of the wanted people resembles the structure of the webpage for merchandise to be sold at *Taobao*. Below the introduction of the campaign, which repeats the key information in the tweet, are the photos of the three fugitives, displayed as items for sale. The purchase button, which is often located on the right side of a *Taobao* page, has been moved to the left side, foregrounding the new information on the right side: photos of the three fugitives. Mixing and blending the legal genre with the genre of advertising, the Tiannin Police successfully transformed a traditional, straight-faced fugitive hunt campaign into a happy ‘group-hunting’ event.

The innovative wanted notice proved to be quite effective. One day later, Cui Hongbing, one of the three fugitives, turned himself over to the police after reading the tweet. In a follow-up tweet, the Tiannin Police ended the tweet with ‘百团乐go...ing’ [‘Hundred groups happy-go...ing’]. The English morpheme ‘ing’, inserted after the ellipsis dots in English and Chinese style, suggested the continuation of the fugitive hunt campaign and invited the netizens’ continued participation. Five days later, a second fugitive was captured.

(11.)



-天清地宁-V: #百团乐GO##给力秒杀# 12月10日, 在广大网友的支持、关注, 及舆论的压力下, 逃犯崔红兵(男, 1971年生, 江苏省淮安人)终于投案自首。在此, 感谢广大网友对天清地宁的关注与支持。同时也希望吴小杭童鞋和朱琪童鞋能够早日归案。百团乐go...ing。



2011-12-11 21:33

来自 新浪微博

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information about the fugitives, the Tiannin Police appropriate the hot mixed-code expression 你还 *hold* 住吗? [‘Can you resist the temptation?’] to signal a trendy new identity for the police force and their solidarity with the netizens who share similarly trendy practices of interaction.

The four related tweets by the Tiannin Police on the fugitive hunt were then retweeted and commented on over a hundred times by the general public, journalists, as well as other government agencies from various parts of China. In general, netizens reacted positively to this innovative use

of the Internet by the police. Xiamen Anti-theft Online, a branch of the Xiamen police, wrote:

campaign but also established a closer and more equal social relationship.

(12.)



厦门反诈在线 V: 赞! 勇于创新追逐宣传, 值得学习 (2011-12-9 16:54)

回复

(12) [Xiamen Anti-theft Online: Cool! Innovative fugitive hunting. Will learn from you.]

Probably encouraged by the playful spirit of the Tiannin Police, several netizens addressed the police officers in their comments as 阿 Sir [Ah Sir], a friendly mixed-code address term, originating from Hong Kong, but rarely used in offline encounters with policemen in mainland China. Through these joint mixing and blending activities mediated with the new social networking technologies, the netizens and the Tiannin Police have not only transformed the traditional fugitive hunt

Pop culture creativity: 'Welcome to China!'

The national carnival of 'mixing' practices reached a new high point at the appearance of an English-based one-man show in China's social networking spaces. In February 2011, a nearly seven-minute video 'Introducing nine countries in nine Englishes by Northeast English Brother', first uploaded by Nick张旭 (screen name) at YouKu (the Chinese equivalent of YouTube), has been played at YouKu over 3 million times, retweeted over 60,000 times, and commented on over 10,000 times at *Sina Weibo* (Figure 1). Even Yao



Figure 1. Screenshot of the *Weibo*-nested one-man show

Chen, a popular Chinese actress and *Weibo* Queen, praised the creativity of the video. An analysis of the ‘mixing’ practices in and around the show, participated in by Nick张旭, as well as his fans, illustrates the status of English in mainland China and reveals the attitudes of the general public towards a new variety within the variety of Chinese English.

Nick张旭, the producer, screenwriter, and actor of this one-man show, is an employee of an international company located in Dalian, a harbor city in China’s northeast Liaoning Province. Born in 1983, Nick张旭 graduated from the English Department at Dalian University. He passed TEM 8, a higher-level English proficiency test for English majors, and is now working as an auditor of international orders at the company. He said in an interview that he often consulted his colleagues, whose work requires communication with clients all over the world, about the characteristics of the Englishes in different countries (Hu Tingting & Li Yi, February 17, 2012).

In the nearly seven-minute video, which took him three months to shoot, Nick 张旭 introduced Japan, South Korea, Britain, India, France, Italy, the United States, Russia and China, using eight varieties of English with distinctive local features in phonology, lexicon, nonverbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions, and even in background music.¹⁴ In addition to the English audio which is occasionally mixed with the keywords that represent the local culture of each country in its local language, Nick 张旭 also prepared Chinese subtitles throughout. The analysis below will focus on the English ‘mixing’ in his Chinese-based subtitles as well as the Chinese ‘mixing’ in his English-based script in the part on China (Example 13).

about the China of our time, Nick 张旭 creates a humorous effect through ‘mixing’. In the Chinese-based subtitles, the insertion of the English adjective *tough* foregrounds the characteristics of the nation, the English verb *do* highlights the action of ‘killing’ in a Chinese idiomatic threat 做了你 [to kill you], and the acronym TMD as an euphemism for a direct Chinese curse expression. In the English-based script, mixing involves the use of nouns from Chinese in noun phrases such as *Digou* oil [‘hogwash oil’] and ‘thin pig meat *jing*’ [‘lean meat essence’] to highlight food safety problems and the direct use of the Chinese address term *Xiao Zhang* [‘Young Zhang’] and the acronym of the Chinese national curse expression ‘TMD’ to identify the national identity of the performer. Besides mixing at the lexical level, Nick张旭 mixes English and Chinese grammar (together with direct translations) in sentences such as *we have people mountain people sea* and *If you hai [even] look for more, I TMD really do you* [‘I will kill you’], producing sentences that even resemble Chinese pidgin English in its early stage. And yet, unlike the early linguistic middlemen who used Chinese pidgin to negotiate with the British traders, Nick张旭, an advanced bilingual working for an international company today, deliberately chooses to use a code-mixed, pidginized variety of Chinese English to amuse and identify with his fellow netizens ‘without apology’ (see Butler, 1997: 106).

Other than a tool for material prosperity, a passport for social mobility or a ‘weapon’ of patriotism,¹⁵ the primary function of English, for Nick张旭, appears simply to be having a good time together with his fellow Chinese netizens. A pursuit of ‘fun’ also sets the tone of his *Weibo*, primarily in

(13.) ‘Welcome to China!’ Script and Subtitles

English-based Script	Chinese-based Subtitles
<p>Hello, welcome to China. I am your host today. My name is <i>Xiao Zhang</i>. We China have five thousand years history. We have people mountain people sea. We Chinese are the toughest nation in the world. <i>Digou</i> oil, thin pig meat <i>Jing</i>. Those stuff cannot destroy us. Why? Because we have strong mental power, passed down from our pioneers. If you dare to mess up with Chinese, I will complain it first, several times, repeatedly. If you <i>hai</i> look for more, I <i>TMD</i> really <i>do</i> you (wola). Give you some color see see. Do you understand? Finally, welcome to China!</p>	<p>欢迎来到中国,我是主持人小张。我们中国有五千年的文化,我们有人山人海,中华民族是世界上最tough的民族。地沟油、瘦肉精,这些东西在我们眼里都是乌[浮]云,为什么呢?因为我们有坚韧不拔的意志,这个可是从老一辈无产阶级革命家传下来的。如果你想欺负我们?我首先会谴责!!多次谴责!!各种循环谴责中~如果你还要More,我TMD真Do你给你点颜色看看!!当然,还是以和为贵~欢迎您来到中国 Nick in house 出品</p>

By creatively deploying his bilingual and cultural repertoires, in particular, the cultural keywords

Chinese but naturally mixed with English lexical items or idiomatic expressions here and there.

Indeed, he has even tweeted that he started the video with the intention of entertaining everybody:

accurate and gentle jabs at social problems in contemporary China.

(14.)

其实我的想法很简单，能做有意思的视频给大家带来欢乐，这就是非常满足的事。其他衍生的一些事没有多想。也暂时不想去想。呵呵，我是传说中的英语哥儿，能给你带来快乐的英语哥。期待下一部作品，虽然还不知道拍什么。。。。加油。

2月18日22:54 来自新浪微博

转发(92) | 收藏 | 评论(402)

(14.) My idea is simple. It is satisfying to produce interesting videos to bring happiness to everybody. I haven't and will not consider other things it will lead to for the moment. Hehem, I am the legendary English brother, who will bring you happiness. Expecting the next work, not knowing what to shoot yet add oil.

But for Nick, it is more than entertainment. In an interview on the story behind the show, he noted that 有些东西你不能直接说，可能被和谐，但

The reactions of Chinese netizens to this video show an increasingly open attitude, not only towards Chinese English, but also to other varieties of English. Most Chinese netizens are impressed with Zhang Xu's outstanding command of a number of English varieties with local phonological and cultural features. Musuodaren (a self-identified high school student from Hubei Province) and Feifeizuozaocao made their comments at Nick张旭's tweet:

(14)



沐索大人🌟: 我一直都觉得带点儿口音的英语比较好听 (2月21日 10:25)

回复



肥肥做早操: 我对你崇拜的感觉犹如滔滔江水连绵不绝 (2月21日 10:25)

回复

是你可以转着弯儿说一下。可以调侃一下 [‘You cannot make direct comments, which are likely to be “harmonized”’.¹⁶ But you can express it in a roundabout way. You can be ironic’] (Xinqingnian we54, February 18, 2012). Skillfully blending his bilingual repertoire into a fashionable ‘post-pidgin’ variety of Chinese English, Nick takes a few

(14) [Musuodaren: I always think English with some accents sound pleasant.

Feifeizuozaocao: My admiration for you is like the torrent of river, flowing endlessly.]

One netizen even suggested that he should use English varieties based on Chinese dialects in his next show:

(15)



我得换名了🌟: 下部用国内方言讲英语吧! ~大连银加油! ~(2月20日 19:41)

回复

[Use Chinese dialects to speak English in your next show. Dalian guy, add oil!]

The netizens' open attitudes towards 'Englishes' in the plural are also revealed in their response to the norms of English grammar. While Nick张旭 might still be a bit concerned about the normative English grammar when sharing the English-based script with the netizens by adding 别有语法错误啊 ['Hope there are no grammatical mistakes'], his fans are more carefree. Ying Xiaoya (a self-identified woman from Dalian) made a comment, using the trendy 'mixed-code' style thus:

(16)

 股小丫: 不用瞻前顾后, 本来就是大家一起happy, 有点小错误无可厚非啦, 何况你给我们带来这么多欢乐, 油菜花童鞋...  (2月19日 23:35)

(16) No need to look ahead and back, we are here *happy* together. There is nothing wrong with small mistakes. Especially you have brought us so much fun, Mr Talent!

Since Nick张旭's *Weibo* video was first posted, it has been shown on Beijing buses and Shanghai subway for entertainment and also used in college English classrooms for courses such as Oral Interpretation and English Reading by individual

teachers in various parts of China, despite Nick张旭's caution that the video was for 纯娱乐 ['pure entertainment'] rather than for teaching (Figure 2).

A number of his followers, self-identified as college teachers, students and company employees, have also recommended that the National Bureau of Education include this video in English textbooks to help students understand English varieties from different parts of the world in an entertaining way:

(17.–21.)

 哦米卡希: 额...我们上课译课也放了! (3月20日 10:37) 回复

 阿春桃:  (3月20日 10:37) 回复

 C-red小白: 哈, 同意同意, 这样课才有趣,  (3月20日 10:29) 回复

 MS_Chan_n:  (3月20日 10:24) 回复

 -Apu-: 我们也用过哦!@Nick张旭: 强烈要求国家教育局把此视频编入教材~ (3月20日 10:17) 回复



Figure 2. Nick's one-man show on a bus and in the classroom

- (17.) omikaxi: e. .we played the video in our translation class.
- (18.) Jun chunyan: ☺
- (19.) C-red xiaobai: ha, agree, agree, that makes classes more fun
- (20.) MS_Chan: ☺
- (21.) Apus: We also used the video @Nick 张旭: Strongly suggest the national bureau of education collect the video into textbook]

The analysis of the mixing practices in the domain of pop culture creativity reveals that innovations in linguistic practices, as in many other social practices, often do not start in the classroom, but instead come into the classroom from the spaces of popular culture.

Conclusion

Chinese English in the present era features the vitality and diversity of ‘mixing’ practices on the Internet. The analysis of the ‘mixing’ practices in China’s social networking communities reveals that a mixed-code, pidginized variety of Chinese English is gaining popularity in the domain of social interaction, government administration and pop culture creativity. While the mainstream pattern of ‘mixing’ in the three domains is the insertion of English lexical items or morphemes in Chinese-based sentences, advanced bilinguals have started to use English as a base language and insert lexical items and idiomatic expressions from Chinese in the domain of pop culture creativity.

Compared to the linguistic middlemen in southern China three hundred years ago and the pre-1949 English-literate literati in Shanghai, today’s Chinese netizens are ‘mixing’ for a variety of purposes in diverse activities across broader intra-national functional domains with confidence. For the young generation in mainland China, mixing is neither shame nor showing off, it is simply part of their everyday communication practices through which they build their multicultural identities, transform traditional social relationships and practice their social responsibilities (often coated with irony) in an increasingly open China, using new communication technologies as well as their linguistic and cultural repertoires. From a broad perspective, Chinese English has the potential to encompass many varieties of language, and, in this context it may be more useful to refer to ‘Chinese Englishes’ in the plural (Bolton, 2002, 2003).¹⁷ New varieties of Chinese Englishes are bubbling up in China’s social networking spaces, no matter whether authorities or linguistic purists

can ‘hold 住’ or not. To understand how the emerging varieties are appropriated by diverse social groups in their social practices, a digital ethnographic approach that focuses on the participants and their Chinese-English-mediated-activities in multiple spaces and times may continue to yield interesting results, particularly at a time when hundreds of social networks are mushrooming on China’s Internet. ■

Notes

- 1 The Chinese resultative complement 住 means ‘to make sure something stays securely’.
- 2 The original video is available at http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/iZJvuVhO_BI/?fr=rec1&FR=LIAN. ‘Sister Hold’ has more than 323 thousand followers at *Sina Weibo* (<http://weibo.com/u/2326437920>).
- 3 The examples are all retrieved from online forums in mainland China.
- 4 This supports David Graddol’s (1996: 63) prediction about the special position of English ‘in the language mix in every part of the world’.
- 5 *Sina Weibo* is considered by many analysts and users as the most influential microblog site in China. It attracts more than 250 million registered users, 76% of whom are between 19 and 30 years old; 42% of the users hold a Bachelor’s degree and 25% are college students (CIC and Sina, October, 2011).
- 6 Kachru (1992) listed thirteen functional domains of English, which include advertising, government, literary creativity etc. What differentiates an Expanding-circle country and an Inner or Outer circle country is the use of English in domains of government and literary creativity (Kachru, 1992; Kachru, 2008:7). I add the domain of pop culture creativity in this study since English-based video shows, blogs and microfiction are emerging in China’s homegrown networking spaces, although printed English literary works by mainland writers for Chinese readers have not yet appeared in mainland China.
- 7 Baihua, the vernacular language used in literary works during the New Culture movement in the 1920s, serves as the basis of the grammatical forms of Putonghua.
- 8 It is hard to establish any identity of individual members other than their self-identified locations.
- 9 A playful net expression for ‘poor, unattractive, and short young men’ as a reaction to the mainstream type of ‘rich, attractive, and tall men’.
- 10 A Taiwanese model, actress, and TV hostess famous for her baby voice.
- 11 Up to November 5, 2011, more than 10,000 government *Weibo* sites have been set up at *Sina Weibo* (Shanghai Jiaotong University, 2012).
- 12 Taobao, the Chinese equivalent of Ebay, is the largest homegrown online shopping platform in mainland China.
- 13 According to the latest report from Price Waterhouse Coopers, 70% of Chinese netizens will shop at least once online, which is double the frequency of online shopping for British and American consumers

and is four times more than European consumers (People's Net, April 5, 2012).

14 See complete script of the video at http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4a3fc01201011c1t.html

15 See Bolton's (2002) discussion of Li Yang.

16 'Be harmonized' is a popular expression that refers to the government's practice of deleting online messages which are not considered conducive to the construction of a harmonious society.

17 Kachru (1983:224) cautioned thirty years ago that it would be misleading to regard the non-native varieties of English as 'homogeneous'.

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