

Native Spanish influencers in China: language learning and public persona building on TikTok (Douyin)

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INTRODUCTION



TikTok (known as 抖音 [Douyin] in China) is an APP on which people view, create and share video clips of 15-60 seconds, with now 500 million of active users worldwide.

- People use TikTok videos for information transmission and learning experience/skills/daily life/explicit knowledge sharing^{[1][2][3]}.
- Many learners of Chinese Mandarin are active *prosumers*^[4] on Chinese social media^{[5][6]}, as language users and intercultural influencers^{[7][8]}.
- This study aims at documenting and analyzing short videos of three male native Spanish influencers in order to answer:

RQ1. What kind of short videos do the three influencers produce for Chinese language learning (format, content)?

RQ2. What kind of the public persona do they construct themselves in the context of Chinese social networking?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Influencers studied

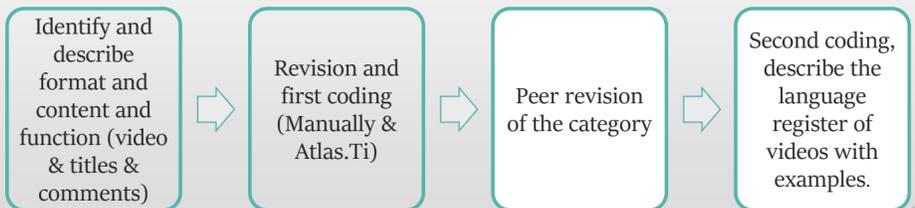
- L1: Spanish, male, aging from 24-29
- TikTok users from late 2017 or 2018

Name	Followers	Videos	Like
@夏波波 Brian	5.78 million	394	74.8 million
@西班牙小哥 德明 (Demian)	4.89 million	186	55.3 million
@Noel 苏诺伊	1.41 million	84	16.4 million

Data collection

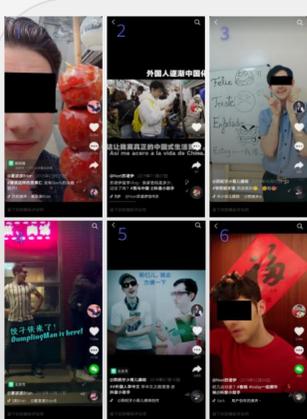
- **6-month online participatory observation** since Julio 2019.
- **Field notes** (30,692 letters)
- **602 short videos** from 10s to 10 minutes of the three influencers, partly transcribed and translated.
- **238 screenshots** of comments

Data analysis



CURRENT RESULTS

Question 1



Video formats (visual) ^{[9][10]}

1. At-street selfie effect video (speaking)
2. Landscape/portrait-mode Vlog with subtitles and annotations
3. Stage-setting tutorial
4. Acting (contextualized, characters, plot, line)
5. Duet display (speaking/singing/dancing)
6. Slideshow of photographs with background music

Question 2

Content	Brian	Demian	Noel
Relevant category	A(51%) C(24%) D(11%)	A(57%) B(20%) D(9%)	C(42%) B(24%) A(18%)
Relevant sub-category of 2018	Foodie, family/friend, life in China	Music, Chinese, Spanish, family	Life in Spain, Chinese, culture
Relevant sub-category of 2019	Foodie, challenge, cultural contrast	Comedy, music, cultural adaption	Life in China, Chinese, family/neighbor

Public persona building is closely tied to the contents and formats. Their self-description showed on main page corresponds to main content and common format. (e.g. “Music lover” Demian not only produces videos of singing or instrument playing, but also uses self-made background music with adapted Chinese lyrics in other kind of videos.)

Contents/formats accommodate the context changing, i.e., influencers adapt their contents and rebuild their public persona as their personal interest or life environment changes.

Brian calls himself a “food and challenge vlogger”, he’s well known as a “dumpling lover”. **Demian** used to “love music and Chinese culture” but now he dedicates to “make the audience laugh”. **Noel** is lover of Chinese language and culture, he “has waited more than 20 years for going study in China” and he’s willing to “show the world how China really is”.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
A. Entertainment	Foodie, comedy sketches, parody of trending series or memes, music, lip-sync, selfie, challenge
B. Learning	Chinese learning, teaching Spanish, tutorial of ukulele/cooking/singing, intercultural adaption in China
C. Life	Family/friends time, daily life activities, pet, traveling, moments (asking questions or sharing state)
D. Sociocultural phenomenon	Festival greetings, culture comparison, Chinese/global sociocultural phenomenon, social issue discussion/street interview
E. Commercial	Product/entity (restaurant, APP, online/offline activities) promotion, reality show/TV series, product review

Content category ^{[11][12][13]}

CONCLUSIONS

RQ1: *Entertainment (A)* is the most common category shared by all three influencers but *Leaning (B)*, *Life (C)*, *Sociocultural phenomenon (D)* are visible in their productions. Six main video formats have been identified and described, some has unique features of TikTok. Besides, differences of contents and formats are clear among influencers, which are related to their distinct public personas.

RQ2: A particular public persona produces an overall benefit on influencer’s professional development. Yet for these Chinese learners, their productions also conform to their hobby, personal interest and life environments. Owing to that they become more adapted in the context of Chinese social media, their contents tend to be more reflexive by concerning more about the sociocultural differences.

EXPECTATION

1. After peer revision and second coding, we expect to carry out a format and content category with more discretions and to illustrate with more details of the language used in the videos and titles.

2. A coming up research will address the interactions between Chinese audience and the three influencers to attest the communicative and affective effects of TikTok on L2 language learning.

3. A cross-platforms comparison aiming at analyzing language styles with different groups of audience will also be conducted.

