Sarah Steinsiek, Michael Beißwenger, and Yinglei Zang

Digital punctuation from a contrastive perspective: Corpus-based investigations of ellipsis points in German and Chinese messaging interactions

Abstract: In this chapter, we examine the usage of ellipsis points (EP) in German and Chinese messaging interactions. After outlining the characteristics of EP usage in written standard German, we first present the results of a study which describes practices of EP usage in German WhatsApp interactions based on a randomized sample from the MoCoDa2 corpus. We present a typology of pragmatic functions of EP in WhatsApp interactions that has been derived from our findings and discuss how the practices of EP usage in these data originate from traditions of writing that can be found in, for instance, literary prose. In a second step, we adopt our functional typology for the investigation of a dataset of WeChat interactions between Chinese students and describe the commonalities and differences of EP usage in German and Chinese. The goal of this second study is to determine to what extent the EP functions established for German messaging interactions can be utilized for the analysis of EP usage in Chinese as a typologically different language which uses punctuation marks that have been adopted from Western languages. The results of this study add to the knowledge base i) on the adaptation of punctuation marks for interaction-oriented writing in different languages and ii) on practices in CMC discourse from a contrastive perspective.

Keywords: CMC, messaging, German, Chinese, WhatsApp, WeChat, pragmatics, practices, punctuation, ellipsis points

1 Introduction

In the past two decades there has been a growing interest of linguistics in the pragmatics of written interactional discourse in computer-mediated communication

Sarah Steinsiek, University of Duisburg-Essen, e-mail: sarah.steinsiek@uni-due.de
Michael Beißwenger, University of Duisburg-Essen, e-mail: michael.beisswenger@uni-due.de
Yinglei Zang, University of Duisburg-Essen, e-mail: yinglei.zang@stud.uni-due.de

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(CMC). This chapter adds to the pragmatic knowledge on how interlocutors adapt to the affordances of written interpersonal communication in the digital sphere by an examination of the usage of ellipsis points (henceforth: *EP*) in messaging interactions. The reported work builds on previous research on EP as elements of (1) the standard writing system and (2) in CMC. We compare randomized samples from corpora of messaging interactions for German (WhatsApp) and Chinese (WeChat).

In a first study, we derive a typology of pragmatic functions of EP from the analysis of a randomized sample (N=108) extracted from the Mobile Communication Database (MoCoDa2) and discuss to what extent the "novel" practices of EP usage found in text messaging interactions originate from traditions of writing. In a second study, we investigate whether the typology from study 1 is also suitable for the analysis of a random sample of Chinese WeChat messages (N=107). The results of both studies illustrate the flexibility of the writing tradition to be adapted to new domains of communication and social interaction for two languages from distinct, non-related language families with different writing systems which both have a defined character and a prescriptive norm for marking ellipses in the written standard text.

Our study is motivated by the observation that there seem to be common practices of EP usage across languages and cultures. The introductory Examples (1)–(4)[1] show that "non-canonical" usage of EP can be found in messaging interactions in different Indo-European languages. The practices underlying the EP occurrences in the examples will be defined in Section 5.

The first example is an extract from a German WhatsApp interaction between Muriel and Julia, who are friends and fellow students. Julia offers to proofread one of Muriel's texts, which is why Muriel asks Julia how much time she has. Because Muriel has been struggling to get in the "flow" (see #294), Julia tries to encourage her (see #300). After correcting a typo in a previous message (see #302), Muriel adds the discourse marker "You know…" (see #304), which – in combination with the message-final EP – serves to indicate that Muriel assumes that she doesn't have to further explain why she texted Julia the single letter "K" (see #303). Instead, Julia is "made responsible" to infer that Muriel did not type the letter "K" by mistake but intentionally in order to correct the typing error in "Thanjs".

1 Examples (2), (3) and (4) were donated by speakers of the represented languages, for which we are very grateful.

(1) German (MoCoDa2, #y91fl)

Muriel:	Bis wann kannste heut abend?	**#297 14:01**
translation	'How much time you got tonight?'	
Julia:	Weiß nicht, die Kinder sind nicht da und ich kann ausschlafen. Ich kann bis 23 Uhr oder so.	**#298 14:14**
translation	'Don't know, the kids aren't home and I can sleep in. Probably until about 11 o'clock.'	
Julia:	😁	**#299 14:14**
Julia:	Du schaffst das!!! 👊	**#300 14:15**
translation	'You got this!!! 👊'	
Muriel:	Cool	**#301 15:28**
Muriel:	Danje!!	**#302 15:28**
translation	'Thanjs!!'	
Muriel:	K	**#303 15:35**
Muriel:	Du weißt schon...	**#304 15:35**
translation	'You know...'	

Example (2) shows four Polish WhatsApp messages written by a mother to ask her German-speaking niece for help with the translation of a text her son Antoś has to write for school. The first message contains a file, Antoś's Polish text that needs to be translated into German. In the following messages, his mother formulates her request and explains the problem (see #2, #3). By using message-final EP in message #3, she imitates a self-selection strategy in that she subsequently adds further details on her son's writing task in message #4. Another possible interpretation is that she is implying that her niece knows why she cannot help her son with the translation (perhaps because of language barriers) and there is no need for further explanation:

(2) Polish

Antoś's mother:	[Antoś's Polish text]	**#1 21:01**

Antoś's mother:	Kochana mam do Ciebie ogromna prośbę – czy mogłabyś mi to przetłumaczyć na niemiecki	**#2 21:02**
translation	'My dear, I have a big favor to ask – could you translate this [= Antoś's text sent in the previous message] into German for me'	
Antoś's mother:	Antoś ma na środę opisać swój dzień, a ja mu raczej nie pomogę....	**#3 21:04**
translation	'Antoś is supposed to describe his day until Wednesday and I probably won't be able to help him....'	
Antoś's mother:	To musi być napisane prostymi słowami, Antoś napisał to po polsku, a jutro będziemy próbowali to przetłumaczyć, ale Twoja pomoc byłaby dla nas ogromnym ułatwieniem. Dziękuje Ci bardzo z gory ❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤	**#4 21:06**
translation	'It's supposed to be written in simple words, Antoś wrote it in Polish, and tomorrow we will try to translate it, but your support would be a great help for us. Thanks in advance' ❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤❤	

In Example (3), two French students discuss the attendance policy of a university class they are both attending. After student A states that she hopes not to get into trouble for being absent (see #1), student B expresses some doubts (see #2). The text-medial EP create the impression that student B pauses and ponders after the utterance "I don't know" – subsequently, she objects that the "mcc" (modalités de contrôle des connaissances = knowledge management modalities) says that a "ue" (unité d'enseignement = teaching unit) is in fact confirmed by attendance:

(3) French

Student A:	Ok merci j'espère que ça va pas nous porter préjudice de pas y être	**#1 17:41**
translation	'Ok thanks I hope it won't be that bad for us that we won't be present'	
Student B:	Je sais pas... du coup j'ai vu dans le mcc que l'ue se validait à la presence	**#2 17:42**

translation	'I don't know... I did read in the mcc that the ue is confirmed by attendance'	
Student B:	Mais jsp ce que ça veut dire	**#3 17:42**
translation	'But I don't know what that means'	
Student B:	Si genre 1 absence ça passe ou pas	**#4 17:43**
translation	'Whether like 1 absence is ok or not'	

In Example (4), a Russian student asks her tutor to postpone a scheduled German lesson (see #1). Message #1 contains two EP usages: The first one serves as a means of segmentation, similar to a comma. However, it also creates the impression that the student hesitates to ask her tutor whether they could move the lesson to a later time. The second EP usage, which follows a direct speech act that can be interpreted as a face threatening act[2] (see Brown and Levinson 2007), establishes conditional relevance in that it elicits a response from the recipient. At the same time, it serves to mitigate the potential face threat in combination with the crying face emoji:

(4) Russian

Student:	Здравствуйте! Мне ужасно не удобно...но меня пригласили на день рождение 👉👈 Сможем ли мы позаниматься после 7??... 😭	**#1 21:51**
translation	'Hello! I'm very sorry to ask...but I was invited to a birthday party 👉👈 Could we move the lesson to a time after 7??... 😭'	
Tutor:	Здравствуй! Не проблема) В пол 8?	**#2 21:52**
translation	'Hello! No worries) Half past 7?'	
Student:	Даа!	**#3 21:52**
translation	'Yess!'	

The examples show that EP are used in similar practices across different Indo-European languages, which is most likely due to the fact that punctuation conventions

2 According to Brown and Levinson (2007), a *face-threatening act* is an act or utterance that can potentially be considered inconvenient or even impolite by an addressee and, thus, threatens their positive self-concept (= *positive face*) or autonomy (= *negative face*).

> were first developed in the early Middle Ages for writing Latin. The Scriptures, the liturgy and the heritage of the past were transmitted to the West in Latin texts; Latin became the language of scholarship and diplomacy, and acquired a privileged role in the recording of information. Because many had to learn Latin as a foreign language, there was a need for conventions which made it easier to read. Over the centuries these conventions of written language were gradually augmented and refined, and, where necessary, modified to meet the needs of different European languages (Parkes 1992: 1).

However, examples of these practices can also be found in languages from other language families, such as Sino-Tibetan. Example (5) shows an extract from a Chinese messaging interaction between two friends who are discussing their afternoon plans. After Mengjia asks Tingting whether they are going to go out together or not (see #1), Tingting answers in the negative. The EP consisting of six dots, which separate her response from the interjection "AH" (see #2), serve to weaken the negative reply and to indicate that she carefully considered her decision:

(5) Chinese (WeChat database)[3]

Mengjia:	我们还出去嘛不出去我就下午再洗澡了 🤧	**#1 09:44**
▫▫▫	We still go out question particle not go out I thus afternoon then shower LE[4]	
~	'Are we going out? If not, I'll wait until this afternoon to take a shower'	
Tingting:	诶……我猜，可能，不出去	**#2 11:32**
▫▫▫	Particle……I guess, maybe, not go out LE	
~	'Ah……I guess, maybe, we won't go out anymore'	

Unlike the examples of Indo-European languages discussed above – German, Polish, French, and Russian, which are synthetic/fusional languages – Chinese is an isolating language with a unique writing system (see Section 3.2). However, since ellipsis points in Chinese were adopted from Western languages (see Guo 2006: 140), the question arises whether there is empirical evidence that the previously described practices are also common in languages from other language families. Thus, we aim to explore how EP are used in Chinese. The research questions and methods will be detailed in Section 4.

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3 Examples from Chinese CMC are presented with a morpheme-by-morpheme translation (▫▫▫) as well as a rough translation (~).

4 LE marks the change of an action or a state.

2 Related work

In the past years there has been increasing research interest in the pragmatics of CMC (see e.g. Herring, Stein and Virtanen 2013; Meier-Vieracker et al. 2023) with a special focus on practices of adapting the resources of the writing system to the requirements of sequential interaction (see e.g. Beißwenger 2016; Beißwenger 2020; Androutsopoulos and Busch 2020). Furthermore, the recently published German handbook on language and digital communication (Androutsopoulos and Vogel 2024) covers a range of articles that summarize the research on the pragmatics of CMC.

In this research context, EP – as an element of the contemporary orthographic standard with a history that traces back to practices of adapting the writing system for the mimetic representation of spoken language – can be considered a resource that is downright predestined for the requirements of written interactional discourse (see Section 3.1).

Androutsopoulos (2020) gives a detailed overview and critical appraisal of the international state of research on the use of EP in CMC. In our own work, we build on the examination of EP presented in Androutsopoulos's paper. The author expands on the functional typology of EP suggested by Meibauer (2007). While Meibauer's typology is neither empirically based nor considers written practices in CMC (but only the use of ellipses in "traditional" text genres), Androutsopoulos analyzes 353 Facebook posts by Greek high schoolers and shows that the function of ellipses to indicate omissions (see Meibauer 2007) is of no significance in this type of CMC at all (see Androutsopoulos 2020: 154). Instead, EP in message-final position are used to convey a certain overtone or for implying (see, for instance, Example 1) and those used within posts are a means of text segmentation (see Androutsopoulos 2020: 150; Meibauer refers to this function as *connection;* Example 4). In this sense, they take on syntactic functions similar to other punctuation marks. However, ellipses are more salient, which is why Androutsopoulos (2020: 155) terms them "eine Art Allzweck-Segmentierer" – an "all-purpose remedy" (or universal tool) for segmentation.

In his study on register variation of German middle and high school students, Busch (2021) analyzes WhatsApp chats and shows that ellipses are also used to mitigate face threats, as a means of cohesion, and as a technique for sequential organization/other-selection, i.e. to directly address and elicit input from other interlocutors (see Busch 2021: 391). Busch points out that EP can take on several functions at once (see Busch 2021: 405).

In summary, both Androutsopoulos (2020) and Busch (2021) show that EP serve many different purposes – except for the one purpose that is codified in the official rules of German orthography (see Section 3.1): to signal the omission of words or

text components. Building on the work of Androutsopoulos and Busch, Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) derived a typology of EP functions from a study on German WhatsApp chats. This study and the resulting typology are addressed in Sections 4 and 5 of this chapter. Furthermore, the cross-linguistic relevance of the EP functions we describe is examined in Section 6, where we analyze a sample from a corpus of Chinese WeChat interactions.

3 Ellipses in written standard language: the case of German and Chinese

Ellipses are a very interesting research topic as they provide insight into how devices of (standard) written language are adapted for the use in written interactional discourse. They are genuinely a feature of written language: there is no equivalent in spoken language and they cannot be verbalized, only paraphrased, for example as “dot, dot, dot”.

3.1 Ellipses in the German writing system

The functions and use of EP in the German writing system are well-researched. The official standard of German orthography[5] provides a codified norm for their use:

> § 99 Mit drei Punkten (Auslassungspunkten) zeigt man an, dass in einem Wort, Satz oder Text Teile ausgelassen worden sind. [Ellipsis points are to be used to indicate that elements of words, sentences or texts have been omitted.] (STANDARD-DE 2018: 100, § 99)

The use of EP according to this rule is common in academic papers to denote omissions within quotations, that is to indicate that e.g. sentences or clauses that are irrelevant to the point being made have been left out.

However, in the official rules of standard German orthography there are also examples such as the following (STANDARD-DE 2018: 101):

(a) Du bist ein E...! Scher dich zum ...! [You’re an a...! Go to ...!]
(b) „... ihm nicht weitersagen“, hörte er ihn gerade noch sagen. [“... don’t tell him”, he just heard him say.]

5 The German orthography is regulated by the Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung (Council for German Orthography, https://www.rechtschreibrat.com/, last accessed 14 February 2025).

From a pragmatic perspective, an analysis of the EP in these two fictional examples as omissions is too simplistic as it neglects the writer's intentions. Even though we are lacking further context, we are able to interpret the writer's intentions based on our world knowledge. In Example (a) the omission most likely serves as a means of politeness since taboo phrasemes are alluded to rather than written out. However, addressees should be able to complete what is missing based on the co-text. At the same time, the addressee is made responsible for the interpretation of the utterance rather than the producer. In Example (b) the EP indicate that something that was said by one fictional character before was inaudible to the other. Unlike Example (a), where the EP signal that single letters or words have been omitted, the omission in Example (b) does not specify how many words, clauses or sentences are missing. Thus, readers cannot complete the utterance represented in direct speech. Instead, the EP either highlight the missing or the represented speech and thereby build suspense.

Therefore, it can be noted that ellipses are also often used rather stylistically in standard written language. Besides indicating omissions, EP also take on pragmatic functions. In direct speech, for instance in literary texts, EP have been used even before the standardization of written language. They can serve as a linguistic device to instruct the reader to imagine the respective written text parts as utterances spoken by a literary figure:

> However, the written medium had become so independent of that of the spoken medium having its own complex conventions, that the expectation that one could represent spoken discourse in a work of fiction was itself an illusion. …[6] The novelist was obliged to impose on readers the responsibility of reconstructing speech, requiring them to contribute their own experience of actual conversation to foster that illusion, and to accept what they found in the text as a record of dialogue. To induce this reaction novelists developed special conventions involving choice of vocabulary and syntactical features, but they also imposed new conventions of layout and punctuation upon the printer to make it as clear to the reader as possible that the representation of spoken language was intended. (Parkes 1992: 93)

The new conventions of punctuation developed by 18th-century English authors that Parkes is referring to are, for instance, dashes and iterated dots. It is important to note that Parkes points to the involvement of the reader – an aspect that Bredel (2011) also highlights. Bredel (2011: 47) considers the involvement of the reader an essential feature of how EP support the cooperation of writers and readers in text communication. She states that EP usages instruct readers to activate their own

6 *Sic!* This ellipsis (used by the authors of this paper) is a prototypical example of a standard-compliant use according to § 99 of the official rules of German orthography.

knowledge (of the co-text and/or context) and fill in missing information on a lexical, syntactic or even pragmatic level (see Bredel 2011: 47).

Both dashes and ellipsis points help readers to scan written texts (see Bredel 2011: 25). As *fillers*, which can stand alone, they take up more space compared to clitics, that are attached to other characters (see Bredel 2011: 20). In standard written language, EP are space-separated and therefore visually salient, which is why Bredel (2011: 25) labels EP as elements of *text cartography*.

The exchange processes between writers and readers are central to Bredel's analysis of the punctuation system. Bredel (2011: 29) describes a relationship of give-and-take, that is writing/encoding and reading/decoding (*actional dimension*). In this relationship the knowledge required for the attainment of meaning and understanding is distributed in a specific manner (*epistemic dimension*). It is assumed by default that the writer has all the knowledge; however, they can also present themselves as the one lacking knowledge and the reader as the one having the knowledge (see Bredel 2011: 29) so that the reader, who needs to activate their knowledge resources, becomes the giver in terms of text comprehension. Thus, the *actional dimension*, that is the understanding of the writer's and reader's role in the interaction with texts,[7] changes. This is especially evident in the case of EP, which can only be interpreted by readers when they activate specific and diverse knowledge resources depending on the context and functions.

In her analysis of EP functions, Bredel does not solely focus on the functions described in the official rules of German orthography, but – in reference to the EP functions described by Meibauer (2007) – also on EP usages in texts that are not subject to the official regulations. Although the examples presented by Meibauer are fictional, they can be backed up with empirical evidence from authentic texts and linguistic corpora. Meibauer distinguishes four function types: *omission*, *continuation*, *connection* and *indication*. Bredel clusters these four function types according to the kind of knowledge resource that has to be activated by the reader in order to reconstruct the intended meaning of an ellipsis within a certain context. She differentiates between the activation of knowledge that is not presented in the text (omission and indication) and the re-activation of knowledge that is presented in the text (continuation and connection) (Bredel 2011: 47).

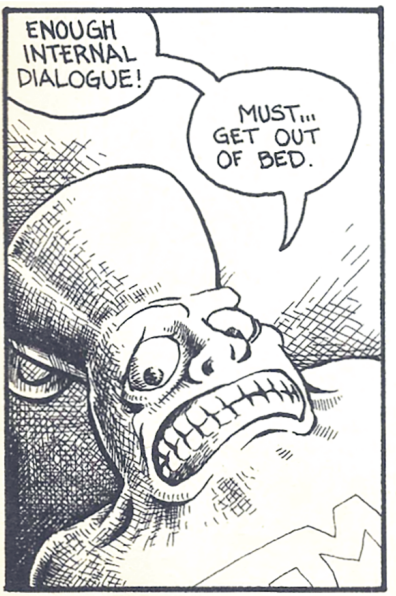
Following Parkes (1992) and Bredel (2011), EP are punctuation devices that originate from practices of the mimetic representation of spoken language in the written medium (see Bredel 2011: 13). Examples (6) and (7) illustrate the use of these practices in contemporary literature. Some of the EP usages found in the CMC

7 Following Ehlich's (1984) text concept, texts are typically designed for communication that is supposed to "travel through time and space".

examples presented in the introduction and below in Sections 5 and 6 resemble the practices that can be observed in standard written literature. It is therefore important to bear in mind these practices when it comes to the analysis of EP in CMC.

In Example (6), the EP usage serves as an imitation of nonverbal signs: It underlines the struggle of Too Much Coffee Man, a cartoon character, to get out of bed in that it creates the impression that it is arduous to do so. In Example (7), which is taken from a novel, the EP serve to establish conditional relevance.

(6) EP in a comic book (*Too Much Coffee Man saves the universe*, 1997, p. 1)



(7) EP in a novel (Stan Jones: *Village of the Ghost Bears*, 2009, p. 38)

> "We've got to get that guy out of One-Way Lake," Active told the pilot. "If you could just…."
>
> "Sorry, man, it'll have to wait till tomorrow," Cowboy said. "He's not going anywhere, right?"
>
> Active frowned. "I still don't like leaving him up there. This time of year, everything's on the move and hungry. Bears, wolves, foxes, ravens. Wolverines too."
>
> Cowboy gave him a what-can-I-do? shrug. "One more day won't hurt."

3.2 Ellipses in the Chinese writing system

In Chinese writing, the use of punctuation marks is codified in the "General rules for punctuation" (STANDARD-CN 2011), regulated by the "National standards of People's Republic of China" (GB/T 15834–2011). According to these rules,

> [e]llipsis points "....." are six small dots close to the bottom of a line. They are mainly used to indicate omissions from listed items or a quoted text or speech. ... If the omitted part is a whole line or a paragraph, the number of dots can be increased to twelve. (Huang and Shi 2016: 587)

The fact that dots are used to indicate ellipses is due to influences from Western languages (see Guo 2006: 140). In Chinese CMC, EP occur in different variants, for example as dots (see Example 5) or small circles[8] (see Example 8, examples of other variants are given in Section 6):

(8) Small-circle EP in WeChat

Tianhao:	应该就是饭卡上的号吧。。	**#2 14:13**
▫▫▫	Maybe thus be canteen card DE number particle。。	
~	'Maybe it's the number on the canteen card。。'	

Huang and Shi (2016: 587) note that "[a]lthough six- or twelve-dot ellipsis points are prescribed, in actual use speakers often use as few as three and sometime even an arbitrary number of dots. It is very rare, however, to see more than thirteen dots." However, there are no examples of EP usages that contain more than six dots in our random sample of WeChat interactions.

4 Research questions, data and method

In Section 5 and 6 we will present results from two studies on ellipses and their functions in German and Chinese text messaging guided by the following research questions:

– To what extent do practices of EP usage found in German text messaging interactions originate from traditions of writing (e. g., mimetic representation of

8 It is important to note that in Chinese standard writing, a period is represented by the symbol "。" (see STANDARD-CN 2011: 2), a small circle placed in the bottom left corner.

spoken language, other-selection, implying as described in Section 3.1)? Can practices of EP usage be described as distinct functional categories?
– Is the typology from study 1 also suitable for the analysis of a random sample of Chinese WeChat messages?

The aim, scope and datasets of the two studies can be described as follows:

Study I: Analysis of ellipses and their functions in German WhatsApp interactions: Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) investigated the usage of ellipses in WhatsApp interactions by analyzing two random samples of WhatsApp messages from the *Mobile Communication Database* (*MoCoDa2*), a crowdsourced corpus of German WhatsApp chats (Beißwenger et al. 2019; König et al. 2023). The corpus, which comprises 1,033 chats with 318,212 tokens in 39,035 text messages (as of March 6, 2025), is freely available online for research and teaching purposes under the following link: https://db.mocoda2.de/. Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) used the regular expression \.{2,} to search for EP instances with two or more dots in the MoCoDa2 corpus.[9] The first sample of 100 WhatsApp messages containing EP tokens was drawn in 2021 and served to develop the first draft of a typology describing the pragmatic functions of ellipses in messaging interactions. In addition to the analysis of examples of interaction-oriented writing (see Storrer 2018), Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) also took different examples and genres of text-oriented writing (see Storrer 2018), such as literary and academic texts, into account. For validation purposes, the typology was subsequently tested on a second sample drawn in 2022. After randomizing the corpus query result (1,196 hits in total) and removing false positives[10] from the sample of 100 WhatsApp messages containing 110 EP tokens, a dataset of 108 EP usages in 98 text messages (Table 1) formed the basis for the quantitative and qualitative analysis in Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023).

9 Uses of the Unicode character U+2026, which occur only scarcely in the database, have not been included into the dataset because their encoding seems to be a result of autocorrection.

10 One false positive is a doublet (an EP token in a text message which is part of a chat interaction that was mistakenly uploaded to MoCoDa2 twice, cf. MoCoDa2 #BU7E6 and #9q7X7). The other is presumably an instance of incorrect anonymization where a street name was not replaced by an alternative street name but an ellipsis: “Um 16:35 an der …Str.” [16:35 at …St.”] (MoCoDa2, #veczv). Although replacing an element by an ellipsis can be considered a source-related omission, in this case the omission was most likely not done by the author of the text message but by the donor of the chat interaction.

Table 1: Random sample of WhatsApp messages (MoCoDa2) containing EP usages (tokens).

Text messages:		**Hits and true positives:**	
Texts containing EP tokens:	100	Hits (EP tokens):	110
Texts containing false positives:	2	False positives:	2
Texts containing true positives:	**98**	**True positives:**	**108**

Study II: Comparative analysis of ellipses and their functions in German WhatsApp and Chinese WeChat interactions: Building on the results of study I, which are summarized in Section 5, we adopt our functional typology derived from the analysis of German messaging interactions to investigate the usage of ellipses in Chinese messaging interactions. The dataset for our study on WeChat is derived from a WeChat database stored at Xi'an International Studies University (XISU), China. This *corpus in a wider sense* (see Beißwenger and Lüngen 2022: 433) was created in a project carried out by the Department of German Studies at the University of Münster, Germany, and the Department of German Studies at XISU in an Institutional Partnership (GIP)[11] funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The goal of the GIP project was to support and promote research and teaching in German studies abroad. The WeChat database contains 413 crowdsourced interactions containing 8,200+ messages from XISU German studies students. The data are solely available as screenshots and transcripts on a hard drive at XISU, which means that they are not publicly accessible and cannot be browsed online, which is why the database was searched manually for instances of ellipsis points. A total of 154 WeChat messages containing ellipses in 79 interactions was then randomized. The random sample of 100 messages containing 107 ellipses (Table 2) forms the basis for analyzing ellipsis points in Chinese messaging interactions in comparison with German messaging interactions.

Table 2: Random sample of WeChat messages (XISU WeChat database) containing EP usages (tokens).

Text messages:		**Hits and true positives:**	
Texts containing EP tokens:	100	Hits (EP tokens):	107
Texts containing false positives:	0	False positives:	0
Texts containing true positives:	**100**	**True positives:**	**107**

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Method:
Both datasets were coded in a hermeneutic procedure. In the first study on ellipses in German WhatsApp interactions, Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023: 295) progressively revised and refined the first draft of their typology by discussing their categorizations in data sessions. In this paper, we utilize this typology for the analysis of EP usages in Chinese WeChat interactions. We discursively coded the Chinese messaging interactions after they were translated literally (morpheme by morpheme) and freely into English by Yinglei Zang (a native speaker of Chinese).

5 Study I: Ellipses and their functions in the German WhatsApp dataset

In an exploratory study on ellipses in WhatsApp interactions, Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) identified four main function types: 1) omission, 2) implying, 3) sequential organization, and 4) segmentation as a basic function that results from the visual quality and salience of ellipsis points. In all of these function types, the EP usage involves a request directed at the reader of a message to activate a certain kind of knowledge in order to be able to interpret the EP usage as intended by the sender. Thus, the following descriptions of the function types as well as paraphrases of the underlying requests directed at the recipient, which are presented in italics, take on the perspective of the producer (for a more detailed description of differences between our function types and Meibauer's (2007) categories see Beißwenger and Steinsiek 2023: 298–299). In Section 6, we provide more detailed qualitative analyses of Chinese WeChat interactions.

TYPE 1: Omission: *Please interpret the ellipsis as a placeholder for missing elements.*
In this function type, the reader has to (or potentially can) fill in parts that have been left out by the author of the text message.
Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) differentiate four subtypes of omissions with different involved requests:

– Source-related: *Activate your knowledge of citation guidelines that determine how to indicate omissions within quotes.*

  This subtype is common in academic texts and is often used to shorten longer quotations by leaving out parts that are irrelevant for the point being made.

(9) EP in academic writing (Parkes 1992: 93)

However, the written medium had become so independent of that of the spoken medium having its own complex conventions, that the expectation that one could represent spoken discourse in a work of fiction was itself an illusion. … The novelist was obliged to impose on readers the responsibility of reconstructing speech, requiring them to contribute their own experience of actual conversation to foster that illusion, and to accept what they found in the text as a record of dialogue. To induce this reaction novelists developed special conventions involving choice of vocabulary and syntactical features, but they also imposed new conventions of layout and punctuation upon the printer to make it as clear to the reader as possible that the representation of spoken language was intended.

– Word-related: *Based on your vocabulary knowledge and from the available context, infer the missing words or word parts.*

Word-related omissions may serve to allude to rather than write out taboo or swear words. Examples: "You're an a…", "Oh, go to …!". The following example of a word-related omission in a WhatsApp interaction is not documented in our random sample but taken from the MoCoDa2 corpus:

(10) Trip to Belgium 2018 (MoCoDa2, #ewD82)

Heike:	SCH.....😊	**#18 10:22**
translation	'SH.....😊'	

– Context-related omission: *Continue the iteration of words based on the context.*

(11) Meibauer (2007: 34)
„Tack, tack, tack, … So ging das die ganze Nacht."
'Tick, tick, tick, … all night long.'

– Frame-related: *From your world knowledge and practical knowledge, infer which elements could be added to an incomplete list.*

In the following example taken from our random sample of WhatsApp interactions, Lea's enumeration of things needed for a sleepover at a friend's house can easily be complemented by other overnight supplies:

(12) A couple planning an upcoming extended weekend (MoCoDa2, #RnbM9)

Lea:	Ich hab die Matratze für uns beide:)	**#25 10:38**
translation	'I have an air mattress for the both of us:)'	
Markus:	Alles klar, muss ich noch was mitbringen?:)	**#26 10:38**
translation	'Okay, should I bring anything else?:)'	
Lea:	Kannst du evt [eventuell] mit deinem großen Rucksack kommen? Ich schlepp den auch, aber dann kann ich da echt alles rein tun:)	**#27 10:38**
translation	'Can you mb [maybe] bring your big backpack? I can carry it, but that one really fits everything we need:)'	
Lea:	Also die Matratze, die Pumpe…	**#28 10:38**
translation	'Like the air mattress, the air pump…'	

TYPE 2: Implying: *Please infer what I am implying based on common knowledge or from assumptions you make about me and my opinions.*
Implying on the other hand is not about leaving something out that is supposed to be filled in, but rather about avoiding concretization. The author chooses not to be too specific, instead, the reader is made "responsible" for inferring what is implied. The main difference between *omission* and *implying* is that omitted parts can actually be realized and reconstructed as concrete linguistic signs. In the following example from our WhatsApp sample, Maja asks her friend Johanna, who is waiting at the train station, if the train has arrived yet. Johanna informs Maja that the train is delayed and quotes a train announcement that is well known to most people who have ever made the experience of "traveling with Deutsche Bahn":

(13) Conversation on the way home (MoCoDa2, #GDIx6)

Maja:	Ist der Zug mittlerweile in Sicht?	**#52 20:16**
translation	'Is the train within sight yet?'	
Johanna:	Nö, hat aber jetzt noch mehr Verspätung 🤦‍♀️😂	**#53 20:17**
translation	'Nope, but it's even more delayed now 🤦‍♀️😂'	

Maja:	Ob shit	**#54 20:17**
Maja:	Oh*	**#55 20:17**
Johanna:	Grund dafür ist eine Verspätung eines voraus-fahrenden Zuges... 😑	**#56 20:18**
translation	'This train is delayed because of train traffic ahead of us... 😑'	
Maja:	Ja na klar wie immer 🙄	**#57 20:18**
translation	'Yeah sure as usual 🙄'	

TYPE 3: Sequential organization: *Activate your knowledge of sequential organization and conditional relevance in spoken conversations and interpret the ellipsis as an imitation of "next speaker selection".*
In this function type, the ellipsis is intended to be interpreted based on common knowledge of sequential organization and conditional relevance in spoken conversations. Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) distinguish between *other-selection* and *self-selection*. Both other- and self-selection help to establish interactional coherence (Herring 1999) under the conditions of CMC.

TYPE 3.1: Other-selection (more or less explicit, depending on the context): The recipient is supposed to take on the role of the author and reply to the current text or infer that the current author has nothing (more) to contribute.

– More explicit: *Please take on the role of the author and reply to my message.*

Example (14) from our MoCoDa2 sample displays more explicit other-selection. After Marius lists all the names of the group members coming along on a day trip (#698) and Markus objects that Bernd is planning to join the group a little later (#699), Marius directly addresses Bernd in message #701 in order to establish conditional relevance and elicit a response from Bernd himself:

(14) Group chat among men planning a day trip together (MoCoDa2, #fhLyA)

Marius:	Marvin kommt auch mit.... Und fährt auch 👍🏻 Also dann: JMGJanusBernd FabiMarvinMarius	**#698 13:10**

translation	'Marvin is coming too.... And he'll drive too 👍🏻 So then it's: JMGJanusBernd FabiMarvinMarius'	
Markus:	Bernd doch erst später oder,	**#699 13:11**
translation	'Isn't Bernd coming along later,'	
Janus:	Whoooop whoooop	**#700 13:11**
Marius:	Das ist jetzt die Frage @bernd	**#701 13:21**
translation	'That's the question now @bernd ....'	

– Less explicit: *Please infer that I have nothing (more) to contribute at this point of the ongoing conversation.*

Text messages that solely contain a (short) response to previous texts on the other hand can be interpreted as less explicit other-selection.

TYPE 3.2: Self-selection (imitation of floor keeping strategies): *Based on previous messages by an author, (1) project that they plan an expansion by using ellipsis points in final position or (2) interpret an ellipsis in initial position as a cohesive device.*

In this function, EP are typically realized in message-final position and are used as a projective strategy, which means that they create the expectation that the author intends to post another message. In initial position, they mark the extension of a text message and hereby serve as a means of cohesion, as the following example of an interaction among friends from our MoCoDa2 sample illustrates:

(15) Friends planning a dinner together (MoCoDa2, #OGoME)

Luisa:	Ach Quatsch stört mich nie :)	**#21 16:31**
translation	'Oh that [if your place is a mess] doesn't bother me at all :)'	
Luisa:	... bei anderen :D in meiner wg treibt mich das zur Weißglut aber das ist ein anderes Thema 😜	**#22 16:31**
translation	'... as long as it's not my place :D the mess in my dorm drives me crazy but that's a different issue 😜'	

TYPE 4: Segmentation: *Construct segment boundaries and utilize them to process what you have read.*
Beißwenger and Steinsiek (2023) differentiate two types of segmentation: *Visual* segmentation and *transmodal* segmentation.

TYPE 4.1: Visual segmentation: *Construct segment boundaries and separately process the segments on the left and on the right side of the boundary.*

Visual segmentation can be considered the basic function of ellipsis points within text messages. The ellipsis serves as a marker of boundaries between sentences, syntactic components or communicative units and supports the reading (scanning) process of the recipient, as the following example from our MoCoDa2 sample demonstrates:

(16) Two fellow students chatting (MoCoDa2, #Aqkwk)

Norbert:	Gruess dich! Jetzt hast du auch meine nummer ... lg, norbert	**#2 18:32**
translation	'Hi there! Now you have my number too ... br, norbert'[12]	

TYPE 4.2: Transmodal segmentation: *Activate your knowledge on the multimodality of spoken language and interpret the EP als an imitation of a meaningful nonverbal signal.*

Transmodal segmentation is a means of "fictional orality": In transmodal segmentation, an ellipsis can be interpreted as a simulation of meaningful nonverbal signs in spoken language, like gaps or changes in the way of speaking, for instance to focus on or stress something (see Androutsopoulos 2020: 135) like a punch line or a negative evaluation ("typographic silence" in Busch 2021: 386–387), as the following (shortened) example from our MoCoDa2 sample shows:

(17) Birthday party invitation (MoCoDa2, #6pvIP)

Viktor:	Bitte jeder einen Schlafsack, Luftmatraze und Handtuch mitbringen. Ich habe leider nicht genug Zeug für 15 Leute da. 😅 Wir werden nicht alle (Luftmatrazen) brauchen, weil ich für 5–7 Schlafplätze habe. Aber besseres sind zuviele davon da als... naja.. Holzboden für jemanden.	**#26 23:45**

12 The German acronym "lg" stands for "Liebe Grüße" [br/best regards].

translation ‘Everyone please bring a sleeping bag, an air mattress and a towel. I don’t have enough stuff for 15 people. 😅 We won’t need all of them (air mattresses) because I have sleeping places for 5–7 people. But too many is better than… well.. the wooden floor for anybody.’

6 Study II: Comparative analysis of ellipses and their functions in the German and Chinese dataset

The application of the typology derived from the analysis of the German WhatsApp dataset to the classification of the EP occurrences found in the Chinese WeChat dataset was rather straightforward. Neither an extension of the typology nor an adaptation of the definitions of the types was necessary in order to be able to create informative descriptions of the Chinese EP instances. As result of the analysis of the Chinese dataset, the distribution and frequency of function types for both languages is as follows (see Table 3):

In both German WhatsApp and Chinese WeChat interactions, ellipses are very seldom used to indicate omissions. It must also be noted that the four source-related omissions in the Chinese data were produced by the same person in a single text message (see Example 21). In both samples, the most commonly used functions are implying, sequential organization, and segmentation. However, implying seems to be the main function in the Chinese data as it constitutes nearly half of the EP usages. Another interesting finding is that visual segmentation is much more frequent in the German than in the Chinese data, which might be linked to the fact that EP often occur after sentence boundaries, for instance between main and subordinate clauses, and “that Chinese *juzi* (sentence) is semantically and textually conceptualized rather than syntactically defined and Chinese readers use discourse information to help identify sentence boundaries and perceive meaning completeness“ (Sun 2021: 234).

Table 3: Distribution and frequency of function types in both samples.

Function type		No. of EP tokens	No. of EP tokens	%	%
		WA	WE	WA	WE
Omission		*1*	*5*	*0,93*	*4,67*
Omission	| source-related	0	4	0	3,7
Omission	| word-related	0	0	0	0
Omission	| context-related	0	0	0	0
Omission	| frame-related	1	1	0,93	0,9
Implying		28	51	25,93	47,7
Sequential organization		*20*	*29*	*18,52*	*27,1*
Sequential organization	| other-selection	13	14	12,04	13,1
Sequential organization	| self-selection	7	15	6,48	14
Segmentation		*57*	*22*	*52,78*	*20,56*
Segmentation	| visual	41	12	37,96	11,2
Segmentation	| transmodal	16	10	14,81	9,3
Ambiguous interpretation[13]		2	0	1,85	0
Total		108	107	100,00	100,00

In the following, we present examples from the WeChat sample that show that the functions EP take on in Chinese messenger interactions are similar to those described for German chats.

In Example (18), two students who like the Harry Potter novels discuss which Hogwarts houses they like best and what kinds of fan merchandise they want to order online together. Ruijie, who is a Gryffindor fan, notes that she dislikes the current Gryffindor attire: “But this time the Gryffindor clothes are……emmmmm”. The EP token comprised of six “regular” dots serves to imply what Ruijie leaves out in her statement: Weilan is supposed to fill in the missing information that Ruijie dislikes the Gryffindor clothes based on her awareness of the latest merchandise collection (see #1). Simultaneously, the EP token serves as a means of transmodal segmentation in that it can be interpreted as an imitation of a gap in spoken language.

13 In order to avoid speculative categorization, we chose not to classify two EP usages in WhatsApp messages that were open to ambiguous interpretation.

(18) Implying

Ruijie:	你喜欢的是四学院那种风格的？	**#1 21:29**
▫▫▫	You like DE[14] be four faculties which style DE?	
~	'Which style of the four houses do you like the most?'[15]	
Weilan:	蛇院！	**#2 21:29**
▫▫▫	Snake faculty!	
~	'Slytherin!'	
Ruijie:	原来！	**#3 21:29**
▫▫▫	Turn out!	
~	'Oh!'	
Ruijie:	如此！	**#4 21:29**
▫▫▫	So!	
~	'I see!'	
Ruijie:	我是狮院粉	**#5 21:30**
▫▫▫	I be lion faculty fan	
~	'I am a Gryffindor fan'	
Weilan:	欸嘿嘿	**#6 21:30**
▫▫▫	Laugh particle laugh particle laugh particle	
~	'Hihihi'	
Weilan:	可以再问问XX [a friend's name]	**#7 21:30**
▫▫▫	Can again ask XX [a friend's name]	
~	'We can ask XX' [a friend's name]	
Ruijie:	但是这次的狮院……emmmmm	**#8 21:30**
▫▫▫	But this time DE lion faculty……emmmmm	
~	'But this time the Gryffindor clothes are…… emmmmm'	

14 DE serves the semantic function of marking a description.

15 Examples from Chinese CMC are presented with a morpheme-by-morpheme translation (▫▫▫) as well as a rough translation (~).

Example 19 displays an example of sequential organization. Keli and Tianhao, who are fellow students, are talking about a teacher at their university who Keli currently assists, what Tianhao formerly did (see #3). After Keli mentions that the teacher probably "doesn't even know he has an employee number" (see #1), Tianhao points out that the employee number might be "the number on the canteen card" (see #2). The EP usage, two small circles, serves as an imitation of floor keeping strategies: In the following text message (see #3), Tianhao "selects himself as the next speaker" and explains why he knows that the employee number is the same as the number on the canteen card.

(19) Sequential organization | self-selection

Keli:	我怕他都不知道自己有工号🤦	**#1 14:13**
▫▫▫	I afraid he even not know self have employee number🤦	
~	'I'm afraid he doesn't even know he has an employee number'🤦	
Tianhao:	应该就是饭卡上的号吧。。	**#2 14:13**
▫▫▫	Maybe thus be canteen card DE number particle。。	
~	'Maybe it's the number on the canteen card。。'	
Tianhao:	我之前给XX [a teacher's name] 老师操作过这个系统	**#3 14:13**
▫▫▫	I previously for XX [a teacher's name] teacher handle GUO[16] this system	
~	'I used to handle this system for XX [a teacher's name]'	
Keli:	嗷嗷	**#4 14:13**
▫▫▫	particle particle	
~	'okay'	
Tianhao:	账号密码都是他工号	**#5 14:13**
▫▫▫	Account password all be his employee number	
~	'Account number and pin are his employee number'	

16 GUO marks the aspect of an action, i.e. that something has been finished.

Example (20) on the other hand shows how an EP token (six dots) is used as a means of other-selection. Chaohui asks Aijia why she needs to download a game called CrossFire if she wants to play the computer game Minecraft (see #1). Aijia responds that Minecraft "is included in cf". However, Chaohui does not understand the abbreviation Aijia used and thus asks "cf is……?". The EP token in combination with the question mark establishes conditional relevance and can be interpreted as a more explicit other-selection: Aijia, who sends a text containing more information on the game CrossFire (see #4), presumably at the same time as Chaohui posts her question, subsequently responds that the abbreviation "cf" stands for CrossFire (see #6).

(20) Sequential organization | other-selection

Chaohui:	不是叫绝地求生吗，为什么又要穿越火线	**#1 21:18**
▫▫▫	Not be call desperate place pursue survival, why again need across fire line	
~	'Isn't the game called Minecraft, why am I supposed to download CrossFire'	
Aijia:	就是cf里面的，	**#2 21:18**
▫▫▫	thus be cf in DE,	
~	The game is included in cf	
Chaohui:	cf是……？	**#3 21:18**
▫▫▫	cf be……?	
~	'cf is……?'	
Aijia:	穿越火线很早的游戏了	**#4 21:18**
▫▫▫	Across fire line very old DE game LE[17]	
~	CrossFire is an old game	
Chaohui:	🥺	**#5 21:18**
Aijia:	cf就是穿越火线	**#6 21:18**
▫▫▫	Cf thus be across fire line	
~	'Cf is CrossFire'	

17 LE marks the change of an action or a state.

Chaohui:	哦哦哦	**#7 21:19**
▫▫▫	particle particle particle	
~	oh oh oh	

In Example (21), Caolin sends her fellow student Mingming feedback on a translation task the two of them are working on together. The two students are supposed to review a translation done by another student, their "academic sister" (a term of address between Chinese students to refer to students in lower or higher grades). The four EP usages (six dots) serve to indicate source-related omissions: In two sentences, Caolin leaves out the direct object in order to emphasize and also visually highlight the wrong translation "to" and the corrected version "with": "I think change ……to……is not translated correctly. So I translated this into change…… with……" (see #1). The missing elements can be reconstructed by Mingming by referring to the source of omission, the translated text that Caolin is commenting on. The fact that Mingming responds that she has "also corrected these two passages" (see #2) demonstrates that she is able to identify which part of the translation Caolin is referring to.

(21) Omission | source-related

Caolin:	Mingming～我看完啦 主要就是学姐翻译的将……替换为……那几句我觉得很别扭 所以我改成了以……替换…… 还有一个就是与名词保持一致 我改成了随名词性数变化 具体的咱俩今晚上或者明天再讨论啊 😳	**#1 13:26**
▫▫▫	Mingming~ I read finish particle mainly thus be academic sister translate DE make ……replace to …… those sentences I find very award so I change to LE with …… replace……still one CL[18] thus be with noun keep consistent I change to LE with noun grammatical gender numerous concrete DE we today evening or tomorrow then discuss ah😳	
~	'Mingming~ I have finished the reading. I only have two comments. In the translation done by our academic sister, I think change ……to……is not translated correctly. So I translated this into change……with……Another one is, I corrected	

18 CL serves the semantic function of marking noun classes.

	the keep identical to noun to gender-numer-ous-correspondence. We can talk about the details today evening or tomorrow🧐’	
Mingming:	我也改的是这些～	**#2 13:39**
▫▫▫	I also correct DE be these~	
~	‘I have also corrected these two passages~’	
	那咱俩晚上讨论～	**#3 13:39**
▫▫▫	Then we evening discuss~	
~	‘Then let’s talk about it tomorrow evening~’	

In Example (22), the omission is not source-related, but frame-related. Kangkang, who is planning a trip to Chengdu, asks her friend Liurui, who has traveled there before, “for some recommendations on food and tourist attractions” (see #1). Liurui shares two screenshots (see #2, #3) of pictures she previously posted on WeChat[19] that show food she strongly recommends (see #4) and adds “Then there is Jinli street, there you can find glutinous rice balls, Kongming pie, one-pot chicken……” (see #5). The EP usage (six dots) serves to indicate that the list goes on: Based on knowledge on Chinese cuisine, Liurui assumes that Kangkang is able to imagine several other dishes to find on Jinli street.

(22) Omission | frame-related

Kangkang:	Liurui！你有时间不，想请教你一下去成都玩有什么一定要吃和玩的嘛，记得你好像去玩过🧐	**#1 10:55**
▫▫▫	Liurui! You have time not, want request you a while go to Chengdu (a city in China) travel have what must eat and play DE question particle, remember you probably go travelling GUO🧐	
~	‘Liurui! Are you available right now? I want to ask you for some recommendations on food and tourist attractions in Chengdu. I remember you’ve been there🧐’	
Liurui:	[screenshot]	**#2 10:59**

19 Similar to a feature on Instagram, WeChat enables users to post pictures and share posts with their contacts.

Liurui:	[screenshot]	**#3 10:59**
Liurui:	这两个全力推荐！	**#4 10:59**
▫▫▫	These two totally recommend!	
~	'I totally recommend these two here!'	
Liurui:	然后就是锦里小吃街，里面的三大炮，军屯锅盔，钵钵鸡……	**#5 11:00**
▫▫▫	Then thus be Jinli snack street, in DE three big cannon, Kongming pie, pot chicken.....	
~	'Then there is Jinli street, there you can find glutinous rice balls, Kongming pie, one-pot chicken……'	

7 Conclusion and outlook

Our analyses show that 1) practices of EP usage in messenger interactions are not completely novel, but originate from traditions of writing. Furthermore, both in German and Chinese CMC, EP are seldom used to indicate omissions – which is their ascribed main function according to official regulations (STANDARD-DE 2018 and STANDARD-CN 2011). Moreover, it has become evident that 2) the EP functions described for German text messaging can also be adopted for the analysis of Chinese WeChat interactions. Ellipses seem to take on similar functions in German and Chinese CMC, which could be linked to the fact that punctuation marks in Chinese were adopted from Western languages. These findings indicate that practices of EP usage that originate from traditions of writing might have also found their way into Chinese CMC. However, we identified differences in the allographic variants. In our German WhatsApp sample, the majority of EP usages contain three (57%) or two (32%) dots. The greater part of ellipses in the Chinese WeChat sample (61%) are the norm-conforming "six small dots" (Huang and Shi 2016: 587), although a considerable number of EP usages contain three (24%) or two (12%) dots or small circles, which are also used for periods in standard Chinese writing (see STANDARD-CN 2011: 2).

Furthermore, we analyzed the frequency of the identified function types in relation to the positions of EP tokens in both samples (see Table 4):

Table 4: Frequency of function types in relation to the positions of EP tokens.

Function type	Single-token message		Message-initial		Message-medial		Message-final	
	WA	WE	WA	WE	WA	WE	WA	WE
Omission | source-related	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Omission | frame-related	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Implying	0	13	1	2	3	2	24	34
Sequential organization | other-selection	0	1	0	0	0	0	13	13
Sequential organization | self-selection	0	1	1	2	0	0	6	12
Segmentation | visual	0	0	0	0	41	12	0	0
Segmentation | transmodal	0	0	0	0	16	10	0	0
Total	0	15	2	4	60	28	44	60

In Chinese text messaging, EP that are used for implying are typically realized in final position or as single-token messages, whereas they are predominantly positioned at the end of German text messages. EP as a means of sequential organization are almost exclusively realized in text-final position in both languages. This seems rather plausible since most instances are examples of other-selection, which serves to elicit responses by the addressee. Both visual and transmodal segmentation only occur in text-medial position in both languages, which can also be explained by the function type itself.

In order to be able to make (statistically) reliable statements, the affinity of function types for EP position should be explored in future research based on larger data sets. Moreover, comparative analyses of other languages with German and Chinese could be very insightful since ellipses – provided that there is a sign for this purpose – are not bound to a single language. Therefore, ellipses are an interesting example of a non-linguistic sign that takes on similar functions in sequential organization, the ensuring of mutual understanding and cooperation in written digital interactions across different languages and cultures.

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