



The Relationship Between WeChat and English Language Learning among Chinese University Students

Yang Jiao^{1*}, Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma², Salasiah Che Lah³

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research delves into the correlation between WeChat utilization and English Language Learning (ELL) among Chinese university students. It aims to elucidate the manners in which Chinese university students employ WeChat in their day-to-day engagements and interactions, assess their perspectives regarding WeChat as a digital platform conducive to English language acquisition, and scrutinize the factors influencing WeChat usage for ELL purposes. **Method:** This research adopts a quantitative approach, employing questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. A sample comprising 539 Chinese university students participated in the survey.

Findings: The findings reveal that among Chinese university students: 1) WeChat emerges as the favoured Mobile Social Networking Site (MSNS), predominantly employed for information interaction, especially through messaging, stickers, Moments posts, and viewing official accounts, driven primarily by social needs. 2) WeChat is perceived as a potentially effective online learning space for ELL, enhancing language proficiency, particularly vocabulary acquisition, motivation, self-confidence, writing skills, and fostering positive attitudes toward ELL. 3) Motivation significantly influences WeChat usage for ELL, particularly driven by recognition needs, whereas entertainment needs do not demonstrate significant impact. **Implications for Research and Practice:** The findings of this study provide valuable insights for English language educators, suggesting avenues to promote the integration of WeChat into ELL initiatives. Educators are encouraged to actively cultivate collaborative learning environments on the platform, thereby enhancing the overall ELL experience.

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¹ PhD Candidate, School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Minden, Penang, Malaysia.

ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3065-3227>, Corresponding author Email: jiaosunny@student.usm.my

² School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Minden, Penang, Malaysia.

ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0220-1098>, Email: shaidatul@usm.my

³ Professor Dr., School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Minden, Penang, Malaysia.

ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6814-6346>, Email: salasiah@usm.my

* Correspondence: shaidatul@usm.my

Introduction

In the contemporary post-industrial landscape characterized by heightened connectivity, Internet-driven information access, diminished trade barriers, intensified global communication, and the rapid pace of the international economy, individuals and entities capable of contributing to the global supply chain and engaging in international cooperation gain a distinct competitive edge. Consequently, it is imperative for students to graduate equipped with the skills to effectively communicate and collaborate in an intricately interconnected and interdependent global environment. English, recognized as a universal communication medium, is highly valued worldwide. Attaining a proficient command of English facilitates effective communication, unlocks diverse global opportunities, enhances competitiveness in the international job market, and fosters intercultural interactions.

The pervasive integration of information technology in education has become an irreversible trend, particularly with the widespread adoption of Mobile Social Networking sites (MSNSs). Tencent's WeChat, serving as a widely utilized instant messaging app, boasts 1.336 billion active monthly users as of January 2024, reflecting the significant impact of information technology on education in universities. Notably, China recorded over 1 billion mobile internet service subscribers in 2023, while the collective enrolment in higher education reached 46.55 million in 2022. As College English is compulsory until the second year of university, with English being a requirement for university entrance exams, these statistics underscore the substantial user base of WeChat, the sizable population of Chinese university students, and the prevalent access to mobile internet in China. Consequently, it is proposed that WeChat has the potential to support EFL learners, provided its features and functions are judiciously leveraged.

Despite recent studies on WeChat, there is a limited body of research on its correlation with Chinese university students' learning, particularly in the context of ELL (Hou et al., 2020). The majority of studies investigating the benefits of WeChat for ELL have focused on its usage within China, given its origin and the restrictions on other popular MSNSs like Facebook and WhatsApp. WeChat has been employed to enhance EFL learners' proficiency in idiomatic expressions, develop pragmatic skills, improve business English writing performance, foster writing performance and learner autonomy, enhance speaking skills, facilitate pronunciation feedback, and promote collaborative learning in an informal and supportive environment for ELL. These contributions ultimately lead to increased learner persistence (Busteed, 2022; Dai et al., 2022; Fester et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2023; Wang & Jiang, 2021; Yanqiu et al., 2021; Zhang, 2022). Nevertheless, concerns have been articulated regarding the application of WeChat in ELL, including issues such as the creation of distracting learning environments (Li, 2023) and inadequacies in readiness for engaging in English-medium conversations within a WeChat-based English telecollaborative project (Wu et al., 2022). Existing research has primarily concentrated on empirical investigations examining the utilization of WeChat in relation to singular or dual facets of ELL.

This study aims to shift attention towards the perspectives of Chinese university students concerning the impact of WeChat on ELL and the factors influencing its utilization for ELL. The significance and novelty of this research lie in its pioneering exploration of the association between WeChat usage and ELL as perceived by Chinese university students within the broader framework of English language acquisition, as opposed to concentrating on specific

facets of language acquisition. The primary focus of this study is to investigate the patterns of WeChat usage in the daily activities and interactions of Chinese university students, scrutinize their perceptions of WeChat's role in ELL, and examine the determinants influencing WeChat utilization for ELL. In the existing literature, motivation theory has been extensively employed to elucidate individuals' behaviours in adopting information technology (Klobas et al., 2018). Simultaneously, motivation plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' learning approaches, motivations, and subsequent performance (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Therefore, it is essential to include the motivational factor in the examination of determinants influencing WeChat usage for ELL. This study is anticipated to contribute valuable insights for future research on the application of WeChat in ELL among Chinese university students. The research employed a survey methodology through a questionnaire. In its pursuit of understanding the correlation between WeChat usage and ELL among Chinese university students, this study aims to address the following three research questions:

1. In what manner do Chinese university students integrate WeChat into their day-to-day activities and interpersonal engagements?
2. How do Chinese university students conceptualize the use of WeChat as a virtual space for engaging in ELL?
3. What factors influence the utilization of WeChat for ELL among Chinese university students?

Method

Research Design

This research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing an online survey questionnaire as the primary instrument to attain the objectives outlined in this study.

Research Sample

A random sample of 800 students from China Three Gorges University (CTGU) was obtained from the CTGU registrar's office. The questionnaire link was disseminated to students through various WeChat groups by five student cadres at CTGU, accompanied by an invitation form providing a concise overview of the study's purpose, confidentiality assurances, and the questionnaire link. All 800 students received the invitation, with two subsequent reminder messages sent to non-respondents. The survey, conducted in September 2023, was administered on the Wenjuanxing platform (<https://www.wjx.cn/>), an online survey hosting service. The sampling frame exclusively comprised CTGU undergraduates, with 539 undergraduates participating in the survey, yielding a response rate of 67.4%. Among the respondents, 224 (41.6%) were male, and 315 (58.4%) were female. The distribution of students included 36.7% first-year, 26.7% sophomore, 19.3% junior, 13.9% senior, and 18% fifth-year students. The majority of participants, 67%, fell within the age range of 21 to 23 years. Regarding academic disciplines, the proportions of students from arts, engineering, science, social science, and other fields were 6.7%, 14.3%, 45.8%, 27.6%, and 5.6%, respectively.

Research Instrument and Procedures

The research instrument comprised three comprehensive measures: demographic

information, details on WeChat usage, and WeChat usage for ELL. Participants were instructed to provide demographic information encompassing gender, age, academic year, and discipline of study. The assessment of WeChat usage for ELL involved adapting and refining a scale initially developed by Kabilan et al. (2010), originally designed for assessing ELL on Facebook. This construct, utilizing a 5-level Likert scale, exhibited a notably high Cronbach alpha score of 0.975.

The WeChat usage information section encompasses duration of use, daily time spent on WeChat, frequency of daily logins, usage motivation, and activity frequency. This study employed a modified version of the microblogging usage motivation scale by Chan et al. (2012) to gauge WeChat usage motivation, consisting of four dimensions: recognition needs, information needs, social needs, and entertainment needs. Participants used a five-point Likert scale to indicate their agreement level (ranging from "1 (strongly disagree)" to "5 (strongly agree)"). The scale's reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding values of 0.829 for overall WeChat usage motivation, 0.866 for recognition needs, 0.904 for information needs, 0.906 for social needs, and 0.833 for entertainment needs. The frequency of WeChat activities, measured by 15 items, demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.883. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis identified four main factors for the frequency of 15 distinct WeChat activities, such as messaging, including content update frequency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.945$), information interaction frequency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.773$), real-time communication frequency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.903$), and leisure and entertainment frequency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.894$).

Data Analysis

Demographic data were scrutinized employing frequency and percentages. To encapsulate the daily activities and interactions of Chinese university students on WeChat, the mean score, frequency, percentages, univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), and standard deviation were applied. The portrayal of Chinese university students' perspectives on WeChat as a learning environment for ELL involved the use of percentages and mean scores. The determinants of WeChat usage for ELL among Chinese university students were explored through multiple linear regression analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: *In what manner do Chinese university students integrate WeChat into their everyday activities and interpersonal engagements?*

Out of the 539 surveyed students, all participants reported having a WeChat account. The predominant MSNS utilized was WeChat, constituting 85.9% of respondents, followed by QQ (7.8%) and Weibo (6.3%), with the remaining MSNSs comprising 5%. In terms of the duration of WeChat usage experience, daily time spent, and frequency of daily logins, Table 1 illustrates that a significant proportion (35.6%) of participants have been using WeChat for over five years, the majority (42.1%) allocate two hours per day to WeChat, and 36.9% log in to WeChat between 21 and 30 times daily. This suggests that participants in this study incorporate WeChat

extensively into their daily routines.

Table 1

Summary Statistic Results for WeChat General Usage (N=539)

Items	Percentage (%)
Duration of WeChat use experience:	
Less than a year	10
1-2 years	15.6
3-4 years	27.6
Five years	11.1
More than five years	35.6
Spending time on WeChat per day	
Less than 30min	7.2
30 min-60 min	8.5
2 hours	42.1
3 hours	26.5
4 hours	8.7
More than 4 hours	6.9
The frequency of login WeChat per day	
1-10 times	16.5
11-20 times	8.3
21-30 times	36.9
31-40 times	29.5
Above 40 times	8.7

The frequency of participation in WeChat activities was assessed utilizing a seven-point Likert scale, wherein participants indicated their level of engagement with WeChat activities, ranging from "1 (never)" to "7 (several times a day)." [Table 2](#) delineated the outcomes, revealing that the information interaction frequency attained the highest mean score of 5.63, with a standard deviation of 1.15. Specifically, the predominant manifestation of WeChat usage behaviour is characterized by information interaction, encompassing activities such as viewing official accounts (M=5.10, SD=1.51), engaging with Moments through likes and comments (M=5.24, SD=1.81), messaging (M=6.19, SD=1.21), and using stickers (M=5.99, SD=1.43).

The examination of WeChat usage motivation unveiled that social needs (M=3.40, SD=0.95) emerged as the predominant factor, as delineated in [Table 3](#), surpassing both information needs (M=3.38, SD=0.82) and recognition needs (M=3.28, SD=0.77). Furthermore, entertainment needs (M=2.79, SD=0.91) were comparatively lower in rank. To elaborate, the prevailing motivation behind WeChat usage is characterized by social needs, particularly the inclination to stay connected with known individuals (M=3.84, SD=1.091), seek peer support (M=3.33, SD=1.071), share views and experiences (M=3.22, SD=1.059), and express feelings (M=3.21, SD=1.076). Notably, the paramount emphasis within these social needs is the desire to remain linked with familiar contacts.

Table 2

Frequency Evaluation of WeChat Activities (N=539)

Activity item		Mean/M	Standard deviation/SD
Content upload (M=3.48, SD=1.75)	Share content on Moments	3.79	1.92
	Publish new content on Moments	3.60	1.88
	Upload photos on Moments	3.40	1.88
	Upload video on Moments	3.13	1.89
Leisure and entertainment (M=2.51, SD=1.68)	Play games	2.71	2.02
	shake	2.18	1.85
	shopping	2.70	1.97
	Upload video on personal WeChat Video Channel	2.45	1.89
Information interaction (M=5.63, SD=1.15)	View official account	5.10	1.51
	Like & comments on Moments	5.24	1.81
	Messaging	6.19	1.21
	Stickers	5.99	1.43
Real-time communication (M=4.87, SD=1.40)	Voice call	4.96	1.42
	Video call	4.78	1.51

Table 3

Statistics Results of WeChat Usage Motivation (N=539)

Motivation Item		Mean/M	Standard Deviation/SD
Recognition needs (M=3.28, SD=0.77)	To establish my identity	3.61	0.851
	To gain respect and support	3.28	0.926
	To build up my confidence	3.22	0.926
	To promote or publicise my expertise	2.99	0.959
Information needs (M=3.38, SD=0.82)	To broaden my knowledge base	3.27	0.929
	To find out what is going on in society	3.41	0.921
	To refine my thinking	3.23	0.927
	To get useful information.	3.60	0.947
Social needs (M=3.40, SD=0.95)	To express my feeling	3.21	1.076
	To share my views, thoughts, and experiences	3.22	1.059
	To stay in touch with people I know	3.84	1.091
	To get peer support from others	3.33	1.071
Entertainment needs (M=2.79, SD=0.91)	To pass time	2.95	1.368
	Because I am curious	2.74	1.027
	Because it is entertaining	2.72	1.000
	Because it is funny	2.74	1.011

Research Question 2: *What is the perception of Chinese university students regarding the utilization of WeChat as an online environment for ELL?*

This section undertakes an exhaustive examination of the perspectives held by Chinese

university students regarding the incorporation of WeChat as a tool for ELL. It encompasses four fundamental components: English language proficiency, self-confidence, attitudes, and motivations. Participants in this study were tasked with evaluating their perceptions using a five-point scale ("no, unsure, yes, a little, yes moderately, and yes, a lot"). Despite the mean scores for all items being below 4, the overall percentage of students expressing positive sentiments exceeds 70% for each item. As a result, both mean scores and percentages are presented to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the collected data.

The mean value for WeChat utilization in ELL is computed at 3.52, with a corresponding variance of 0.97, based on the aggregated scores of all 13 items. Additionally, an ANOVA analysis indicates no statistically significant difference between male and female students in their WeChat utilization for ELL ($M_{\text{female}}=3.55 > M_{\text{male}}=3.50$, $p>0.05$). These findings suggest that students generally engage with WeChat for English language learning at an upper-medium level. In essence, Chinese university students commonly perceive WeChat as a viable online platform for enhancing language proficiency, motivation, self-confidence, and attitudes in ELL.

Concerning English language proficiency, Table 4 delineates that a significant majority, comprising 87.6 percent and 87 percent of participants, indicated acquiring new English vocabulary ($M=3.62$) and sentences ($M=3.68$) to some extent, ranging from a little to a lot through their utilization of WeChat for ELL. Approximately 84 percent of students expressed that using WeChat for ELL could contribute to enhancing their overall English proficiency ($M=3.51$). The participants reported advancements in their English language skills, particularly in the acquisition of new vocabulary and sentence structures. Remarkably, only 3.7 percent to 4.1 percent of participants perceived a lack of improvement in their English language proficiency, specifically in acquiring new vocabulary and constructing sentences. Furthermore, the proportion of uncertain responses surpassed that of participants who reported no improvement.

Concerning self-confidence, a significant majority of participants (81.6%) expressed perceived enhancement in their confidence to write in English ($M=3.63$) through their engagement with WeChat for ELL, ranging from a little to a lot of improvements. Similarly, in terms of English reading proficiency, a majority of respondents (83.3%) indicated perceived advancement in their confidence levels ($M=3.53$). Concurrently, in the domain of English-speaking skills, a noteworthy percentage of surveyed students (81.8%) acknowledged a heightened sense of confidence ($M=3.42$). Additionally, 80.5% of participants demonstrated diminished apprehension towards committing errors in English language usage. These findings collectively underscore the significant potential of WeChat in progressively fostering Chinese university students' confidence in ELL.

Concerning attitude, as indicated by a mean score of 3.5, a significant majority, comprising 84.8 percent of the respondents, displayed a notable inclination toward a more favourable attitude regarding the acquisition of English as a second language. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of 83.8 percent of participants perceived English learning to be more manageable on WeChat. In comparison, an even higher percentage of 86.1 percent regarded the learning process on WeChat as more engaging. These statistics collectively imply the potential suitability of WeChat as an integrated online platform for ELL, given its propensity to foster positive attitudes and enhance the overall appeal of learning endeavours.

Encouragingly, a minority of participants, ranging from 4.1 to 12.1 percent, expressed uncertainties or exhibited negative attitudes towards the aforementioned aspects.

Table 4

Students' Perception of Wechat as An Online English Learning Environment (N=539)

Divisions	Items	Response Categories					Mean Scores
		No	Unsure	Yes, a little	Yes, moderately	Yes, a lot	
		(1)%	(2)%	(3)%	(4)%	(5)%	
English language proficiency	My English proficiency has increased.	4.1	11.5	34.3	29.1	21.0	3.51
	I learn new English words.	3.7	8.7	31.2	34.9	21.5	3.62
	I learn new English sentences.	4.1	8.9	22.8	42.9	21.3	3.68
Self-confidence	I am more confident in writing in English.	5.0	13.4	16.9	43.6	21.2	3.63
	I am more confident to speak in English.	5.2	13.0	37.1	23.2	21.5	3.43
	I am more confident in reading English language materials.	4.6	12.1	29.7	32.7	21.0	3.53
Attitude	I am not worried about making mistakes when using English.	6.1	13.4	35.8	21.9	22.8	3.42
	I like learning English as a second language.	4.1	11.1	37.1	26.3	21.3	3.50
	Learning English is easier.	4.1	12.1	36.7	25.8	21.3	3.48
Motivation	Learning English is more interesting.	4.3	9.6	33.6	27.3	25.2	3.60
	I am motivated to communicate in English.	5.2	13.4	27.5	29.9	24.1	3.54
	I am motivated to read English materials.	5.8	11.9	26.0	34.1	22.3	3.55
	I am motivated to write in English	5.0	13.7	17.6	37.7	26.0	3.66

In terms of motivation, a substantial proportion of participants (81.4%) perceived an improvement in their motivation levels to engage in English communication, ranging from a little to a lot of enhancements. Additionally, 81.3% and 82.3% of respondents reported increased motivation towards employing English for writing and reading, respectively. Conversely, the percentage of respondents expressing uncertainty or experiencing non-improvement in their motivation for ELL ranged between 5.0% to 13.7%. These findings indicate that WeChat serves as a motivational factor for ELL among Chinese university students. From Table 4, it is evident that students' motivation in English writing is the highest (M=3.66), followed by reading English materials (M=3.55) and communicating in English (M=3.54).

Research Question 3: *What factors influence the utilization of WeChat for ELL among Chinese university students?*

The multivariate linear regression analysis identified the key determinants influencing WeChat usage for English language learning among Chinese university students. The independent variables included in this analysis were the daily time spent on WeChat, the frequency of login to WeChat per day, and WeChat usage motivation. According to Falk et al. (1992), a coefficient of determination (R²) exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.1 indicates satisfactory predictive capability for the model. In this context, the model's goodness of fit is deemed acceptable, with an R² value of 0.585, as shown in Table 5. Furthermore, a discernible regression relationship between the independent variables and

the dependent variable is evident ($F = 124.9, P < 0.001$). The Tolerance (with a minimum value of 0.550) and the Variance Inflation Factor (with a maximum value of 1.817) suggest the absence of multicollinearity among the variables.

Table 5

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (N=539)

Independent variables	β	T	P	Tolerance	VIF
Usage duration	0.008	0.283	0.777	0.975	1.026
Login times	-0.043	-1.546	0.123	0.989	1.011
Recognition needs	0.447	11.946	0.000	0.558	1.792
Information needs	0.371	9.839	0.000	0.550	1.817
Social needs	0.060	2.054	0.040	0.928	1.077
Entertainment needs	0.013	0.467	0.641	0.992	1.008

$R=0.765, R^2=0.585, \text{Adjusted } R^2=0.580, F=124.871, P = 0.000$

Note: The variable under investigation is the utilization of WeChat for English language learning.

A t-test was employed to assess the significance of determinants impacting WeChat usage for ELL. The duration of WeChat usage showed no discernible impact on its utilization for ELL ($\beta = 0.283, P = 0.777 > 0.05$). Likewise, login time did not exert a statistically significant influence ($\beta = -0.043, P = 0.123 > 0.05$). These outcomes may be attributed to the potential scenario where Chinese university students may not predominantly or explicitly use WeChat for ELL. Therefore, prolonged usage periods and increased login frequency may not necessarily indicate greater utilization of WeChat for learning English. The data in Table 5 distinctly reveals a robust correlation between Chinese university students' motivation to use WeChat and ELL. With the exception of entertainment needs ($\beta = 0.013, P = 0.641 > 0.05$), all other factors exhibit statistically significant positive influences on WeChat usage for ELL. Specifically, recognition needs ($\beta = 0.447, P = 0.000 < 0.05$), information needs ($\beta = 0.371, P = 0.000 < 0.05$), and social needs ($\beta = 0.060, P = 0.040 < 0.05$) demonstrate significant positive effects. Notably, recognition needs manifest the most substantial influence.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion

Concerning Research Question 1, WeChat emerges as the predominant MSNS among Chinese university students, indicative of its widespread adoption within this demographic. This aligns with a recognized trend observed by researchers such as Pang (2020) and Shen et al. (2018), emphasizing the strong affinity of technologically adept younger generations, classified as digital natives, towards MSNSs. These studies underscore the considerable time and effort invested by the younger demographic in embracing emerging platforms like WeChat.

The predominant mode of WeChat usage among Chinese university students is information interaction. Among the four categories of information interaction frequency, messaging exhibits the highest prevalence, followed by stickers, likes and comments on Moments, and viewing official accounts. This finding aligns with the assertions of Chen et al.

(2021), who posit that Chinese university students increasingly opt for WeChat as their preferred social media platform within virtual communities for the exchange of information and sharing comments with peers who share similar objectives, values, or experiences. Additionally, a significant outcome underscores that social needs predominantly motivate the primary usage of WeChat among Chinese university students. These findings resonate with those of Chiu et al. (2006), who assert that social interaction ties serve as channels for information and resource circulation. Examining the social aspects of WeChat from the viewpoint of Chinese university students, Tang et al. (2022) demonstrate that WeChat's encouragement of social expressions, such as greetings and holiday wishes, fosters intimacy among peers, while social sharing, such as learning materials, facilitates connections and collaborations. Consequently, the utilization of a readily accessible instant messaging application on mobile devices enhances the likelihood of students participating in informal interactions and engaging in collaborative and supportive activities.

Concerning Research Question 2, Chinese university students widely agree that WeChat can function as an online learning platform for ELL, contributing to enhancements in language proficiency, motivation, self-confidence, and fostering positive attitudes toward ELL. The favourable perceptions and sentiments towards WeChat as a conducive platform for English language acquisition may stem from the authentic interaction and communication opportunities provided by online platforms like WeChat. These authentic, collaborative mobile learning experiences have the potential to enhance student engagement by promoting personal development and facilitating collaborative learning (Alioon et al., 2019). As highlighted by Wang and Crosthwaite (2021), WeChat offers L2 students opportunities to enhance interaction with peers and teachers through collective scaffolding. Drawing from the perspective of Lave et al. (1991), learning is viewed as a form of social engagement, and individuals acquire knowledge more effectively in social settings characterized by authentic and relevant social interactions. Wenger et al. (2002) argue that social online communities, such as WeChat, align with this concept by creating a networked environment that enables and supports essential interactions to enhance learning. Utilizing the notion of a "community of practice," Wu et al. (2019) demonstrate that WeChat groups with shared interests and enthusiasm for a specific subject routinely engage in various forms of communication, fostering increased enthusiasm and demand for knowledge and skill learning among community members in the online learning environment.

Most students agree that utilizing WeChat for ELL has facilitated their acquisition of new English words. This finding aligns with recent studies (Namaziandost et al., 2021; Pamintuan et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021) suggesting that WeChat, as a MSNS, enhances language learning beyond the confines of the classroom, particularly in instances with limited time for in-class language practice. These results also corroborate findings from Zhai (2021), indicating that mobile technology heightens English vocabulary retention and increases usage frequency, consequently elevating students' enthusiasm for studying the English language. However, contrasting results from Li et al. (2021) suggest that Chinese university students did not experience improvement in lexical proficiency after engaging in a three-week WeChat-based English-language vocabulary learning program. The lack of improvement is attributed to factors such as the appropriateness of the new approach, limited technical skills and knowledge, challenges in focusing on WeChat-based learning activities, difficulties in active participation, and negative emotions experienced by the

students. Therefore, further studies focusing on the impact of WeChat usage on English vocabulary acquisition for L2 learners are recommended.

Concerning self-confidence and motivation, students acknowledge that WeChat serves as an environment to enhance their confidence and motivation in English writing, as opposed to reading and speaking. These affirmative perspectives align with previous studies (Sun et al., 2023; Wang & Jiang, 2021; Yan, 2019), emphasizing WeChat's positive impact on English writing skills among Chinese university students. Regarding attitude, the majority of students agree that utilizing WeChat for ELL cultivates a more positive attitude towards learning English as a second language, rendering it easier and more interesting. This outcome could be attributed to the flexibility offered by WeChat, enabling learners to engage in activities conveniently from any location, transcending the constraints of time and place. This flexibility enhances ELL adaptability, fosters autonomous learning, and establishes a collaborative learning environment (Duan et al., 2022). Additionally, WeChat can serve as a platform for peer assessment, continuous evaluation, and prompt instructor and peer feedback, providing further explanations for the positive attitude (Sun et al., 2023; Xue et al., 2022).

Concerning Research Question 3, the predominant factor influencing the extent of WeChat usage for ELL is the motivation to use WeChat, superseding considerations of duration and frequency of usage. This can be attributed to motivation, characterized as the cognitive and intrinsic inclination that propels individuals toward engaging in learning activities. This discovery aligns with research conducted by Dörnyei (2019), highlighting motivation as the most impactful factor on language acquisition, surpassing all other individual considerations. These findings correspond with those of Fan (2023), who observed a direct influence of ELL motivation on the propensity of learners to use WeChat for ELL. Specifically, recognition needs emerge as the most influential factor in the utilization of WeChat for ELL among Chinese university students. This outcome tentatively suggests that fostering recognition needs is crucial for enhancing students' intention to use WeChat for ELL, as students express concerns for their images and the opinions of others, contributing to the encouragement of ELL activities on WeChat. These findings are consistent with those of Yu (2020), who identified psychological factors, including submissive behaviour and self-esteem, as impacting learners' willingness to use WeChat for English language acquisition.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research delves into the correlation between WeChat utilization and ELL. Through a questionnaire survey, the findings affirm the pervasive integration of WeChat into the daily practices of Chinese university students. Furthermore, these students commonly assert that WeChat can serve as an online learning platform conducive to enhancing English language proficiency, motivation, self-confidence, and attitudes toward ELL. Additionally, the study underscores WeChat's efficacy in cultivating students' confidence and motivation, particularly in English writing, surpassing the levels observed in English reading and speaking. Moreover, propelled by motivational factors linked to WeChat usage, notably recognition needs, Chinese university students exhibit a high degree of engagement with WeChat for ELL, reaching an upper-medium level.

The study suggests English teachers promote WeChat use for ELL, fostering

collaborative learning experiences. Recognizing WeChat as a valuable MSNS, teachers can leverage it for rich exposure to English resources and construct an online environment for interactive learning and social communication. Teachers should also acknowledge the impact of students' motivation on ELL, focusing on enhancing cognitive needs and providing opportunities for positive engagement. Students are encouraged to address recognition needs by actively participating in the WeChat community, contributing posts, offering recommendations, and engaging with instructors and peers.

While the study's findings shed light on the WeChat-ELL relationship, it's crucial to note certain limitations that may restrict generalization. Firstly, the sample is confined to a single university, warranting future research in different cities or regions for broader insights. Secondly, the study doesn't delve into the determinants of WeChat usage for English reading, writing, listening, and speaking separately, indicating a need for more targeted investigations. Lastly, the research lacks analysis of specific WeChat content aiding English language acquisition, prompting further exploration into learners' interaction and engagement in planned language activities with distinct objectives within the WeChat community.

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