

The Use of China-based Social Media to Enhance English Speaking Skills in Chinese Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

As English speaking skills become increasingly vital in academic and professional spheres, educators are exploring innovative approaches to language learning and experimenting with integrating social media into speaking learning in higher education. Of course, this shift also presents challenges for both educators and learners. With China's unique technological landscape and a burgeoning population of English learners, understanding the dynamics of utilizing China-based social media for enhancing speaking skills is crucial. However, notable research gap is identified concerning the use of China-based social media for the enhancement of English speaking skills among Chinese university students. Therefore, this review offering a comprehensive exploration of the utilization of China-based social media for the development of English speaking skills within the context of Chinese higher education. The review adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines to ensure a rigorous and methodical analysis. By extracting and analyzing 22 relevant articles from 2017 to 2023 through the Web of Science (WOS) and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), this review extensively examines the influencing factors of social media acceptance, the improvement of speaking skills, and the effectiveness of social media use. Based on the findings, the study concludes with implications for educators and recommendations for further research on the use of social media to improve speaking skills.

Keywords: China-based Social Media, English Speaking Skills, Acceptance, Effectiveness, Chinese Higher Education

Introduction

In the context of globalization, English plays an important role in international communication and learning (Haidar & Fang, 2019). Speaking skills are tools for social cohesion, social hierarchy, career advancement, and business development. The importance of communication in job search also makes oral skills one of the most important skills (Ramamurthy et al., 2021; John & Yunus, 2021). Therefore, it is very important for learners to be able to communicate well in English (Jao, 2022; Fan, 2023). However, speaking skills have always been regarded as the most difficult skill out of the four skills that learners should master in language learning (Kehing & Yunus, 2021; Devi & Rao, 2018).

The objectives of English teaching in Chinese universities clearly emphasize the importance of speaking, the current situation of speaking learning among contemporary college students is not optimistic, and the phenomenon of "deaf-mute English" is still very common after more than ten years of English learning. The difficulty for Chinese learners in enhancing English speaking skills is a multifaceted issue, influenced by various factors such as the education system, cultural differences, and individual learning styles. The challenges include limited exposure to authentic English contexts, insufficient speaking practice, fear of making mistakes, and a focus on written exams rather than communicative competence (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). On the one hand, the lack of English speaking learning environment means that, as the second language (L2), English has fewer chances to be used in daily life, which is not enough to meet the demand for practice (Ma and OuYang, 2021) and most college students have a poor learning autonomy (Sun et al., 2017). Nowadays, social media have become the world's most popular tools for contacting and communicating with other people. Social media is also seen as a powerful driver of change for language teaching and learning. The integration of social media into language learning has gained momentum globally, and China is no exception. Many studies have shown that the use of social media in language activities can provide learners with interactive environments that relieve anxiety enhance intrinsic motivation and help learners improve their speaking skills. (Devi and Rao, 2018; Cong-Lem, 2018; Azlan et al., 2019; Akkara, Anumula & Mallampali, 2020)). Although there have been many studies on the use of social media to improve oral proficiency, attempts to conduct a systematic review of these studies are still limited. Consequently, this review extensively examines the factors influencing the acceptance of social media, the improvement of speaking skills, and the effectiveness of social media use.

Toward a framework for a systematic review of the use of social media to Enhance English-speaking skills in China higher education

Systematic review is a type of literature review that answers research questions in a structured methodology through collecting and critically analyzing multiple research studies (Snyder, 2019). With systematic review, authors can justify the claim of doing rigorous research, which allows for gaps identifications and directions for future research.

The importance of speaking skills in English classrooms has been emphasized in the literature (Rao, 2019). Strategies for developing speaking skills include creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, incorporating real-world contexts, and promoting learner autonomy (Kehing & Yunus, 2021; Devi & Rao, 2018). The intersection of social media and speaking learning aligns with the constructivist learning theory, emphasizing active engagement, collaboration, and meaningful interaction in the learning process (Trinder, 2017). Constructivist approaches encourage learners to construct knowledge through social interactions and hands-on experiences, aligning with the potential interactive nature of social media (Gee & Hayes, 2011).

In China, Li, Liang and Dai's (2022) Report on the Analysis of Youth Media Use Questionnaire found that the use of social media has become a way of life for today's college students. Therefore, many institutions and teachers are conducting research on the incorporation of social media into spoken language classes (Sun et al., 2017).

Several studies have specifically explored the role of various social media platforms in English speaking learning. Synchronized communication software such as WeChat and QQ, online learning platforms such as Rain Classroom, mobile video platforms such as Bilibili (Fan, 2023), and mobile English learning apps such as Liulishuo and Fun Dubbing have been integrated into classroom teaching to be used to learn English speaking skills. For example, Zeng, Wang and Tan (2020) argued that social software based on mobile communication devices (e.g., WeChat, QQ, etc.) can be used as an extension and supplement to traditional classroom feedback. Yu et al (2022); Yu and Yi (2020); Quadir et al (2022) suggested that the most commonly used mobile learning technology, Rain Classroom, has been widely adopted in Language Education (Yu & Yi, 2020). Furthermore, social media's general built-in features and mobile applications could be used as possible tools to help learners enhance their speaking skills outside the classroom, in terms of oral fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Zeng, Wang and Tan (2020) investigated the effects of two peer feedback modes on spoken English output in WeChat-based language learning environment, shedding light on the potential benefits of collaborative learning environments. Lv (2017) confirmed through an empirical study that the mobile learning resources and real-time voice scoring technology of the Liulishuo can better enhance learners' phonological aspects and fluency of speaking expression, and that its mobility and entertainment can well stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning. Numerous benefits of utilizing video dubbing for improving learners' English-speaking performances have also been reported, such as enhancing vocabulary knowledge, phonology, and phoneme perception (Martinsen et al., 2017). The study by Luo (2020) focused on the application of oral training apps in extracurricular English learning, broadening the understanding of technology-assisted language learning beyond the formal classroom setting.

Although numerous studies have proved that social media platforms can be effective for English speaking learning, the efficacy and implementation of social media in college settings remain subjects of ongoing scholarly debate. Certain learners find it challenging to get the most out of them, and some are even reticent to use them (Lim & Newby, 2020). To use technology fully and effectively in speaking learning, it is important to understand the factors that influence learners' acceptance of social media, the improvement of speaking skills by social media, and how to effectively use social media to improve speaking skills. Without learner acceptance, the potential of these technologies cannot be realized. However, there is a limited systematic review of China-based research on social media for enhancing speaking skill learning. This paper attempts to fill this gap by identifying and describing the use of China-based social media in terms of the factors influencing learners' acceptance of social media, the improvement of speaking skills by using social media, and the impact of using social media in Chinese higher education.

Research Questions

This study attempts to analyze the existing literature on the use of China-based social media in learning speaking skills. Three research questions were constructed

Q1. What are the factors that influence Chinese college students' acceptance of using China-based social media to enhance their speaking skills?

Q2. To what extent does the use of China-based social media enhance the speaking skills of Chinese college students?

Q3. What is the effectiveness of using China-based social media in enhancing the speaking skills of Chinese college students?

Methodology

In this section the method used to retrieve articles related to using China-based social media to enhance university EFL learners' speaking skills is discussed. The researchers used the method called PRISMA, which includes resources used to run the systematic review, eligibility and exclusion criteria, steps of the review process (identification, screening, eligibility) and data abstraction and analysis.

PRISMA

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) provides an updated checklist of 27 items to guide a systematic review. This checklist was originally created to cater for studies related to health but has expanded to include social and educational studies (Page et al., 2021). Using the checklist was useful in planning and conducting this systematic review, where it guided the researchers in collecting data, organizing, and analyzing the articles reviewed.

PRISMA is a diagram that illustrates the results of the analysis of the included empirical studies in this systematic review. The flow diagram represents the flow of information through the different steps of a systematic review process. It maps out the number of articles identified, included and excluded publications based on specific criteria, and the reasons for exclusions (Moher et al., 2009). This way of organizing the data collection for conducting a systematic review makes the process more effective and functions to present accurate results.

Resources

Two databases were chosen for this study which comprised of Web of Science (WOS) and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). Web of Science (WOS) is a credible database which has coverage of the subject and provides citation indexing, thus allowing the possibility of making some measurement of impact in a subject (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007). The search engine covers major high-quality journals in the field of social media and English language learning with high impact factors and core citations. Furthermore, results in this database are reproducible and thereby the research could be easily replicated to understand the future development in this field. Since this study needs to explore the use of China-based social media to enhance Chinese college students' English speaking skills, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) is selected as one of the databases for this study. CNKI is a website that provides a platform for knowledge and information resources, knowledge dissemination, and digital learning, and to realize the efficient sharing of knowledge resources across the whole society. This review focuses on highly cited empirical studies of educational technology in major journals retrieved by CNKI to reveal the uniqueness and trends of research on language learning using China-based social media in the Chinese context. Therefore, it is a valid and reliable source of literature.

Eligibility and Exclusion Criterion

To ensure that the selection of the articles followed a framework for the review, a parameter for selection was decided with the eligibility and exclusion criteria. The articles selected had

to be within the boundaries of the eligibility and exclusion criteria to be considered for the final review. The articles must focus on the use of Chinese indigenous social media for English speaking skills learning in a higher education and must be recent, between the year of 2017 to 2023. Furthermore, the articles must be peer-reviewed, and the full-text articles are available. Next, the research design used could be either quantitative, qualitative, or a mixed method design. The exclusion criteria included books, book chapters or series, articles from conference proceedings, thesis, and literature review articles. Besides that, articles which were published before 2017 were rejected for review and articles which looked at social media in general were also not included. Since the review process only focused on the impacts of social media on students' speaking skills performance, this study only selected articles indexed in social science-based indexes. The summary of the eligibility and exclusion criteria is given in Table 1.

Table 1

The eligibility and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Literature Type	Journal (Research articles)	Book, book chapters, book series, journals (Systematic reviews), conference proceedings
Open Access	All open access	Others
Language	English, Chinese	Non-English, Non-Chinese
Timeline	Between 2017-2023	Before 2017
Indexes	Science Citation Indexed	Science Citation Indexed Expanded

Systematic Review Process

The review process was conducted in September 2023. The first stage of a systematic review process is the identification process, which involves identifying keywords to be used in the search process. Keywords that are related to English speaking and social media were used. Researchers also rely on previous studies and thesauruses to identify suitable keywords (refer to Table 2).

Table 2

The Search String Used for the Systematic Review Process

Date bases	Key words
WOS	TS=((“speaking skill*”OR “oral communication” OR “English oral presentation*”OR “English speaking”) AND (“Social media*” “Social networking service*” OR “Social network*” OR “Mobile application”OR “Douyin,” OR “Bilibili*” OR “WeChat*” OR “QQ*” OR “Rain classroom*”OR“Liulishuo*”) AND (“undergraduate*” OR “first year”OR “second year”OR “third year”OR “fourth year” OR “higher education”))OR “tertiary education”)) AND (“China*” OR “Chinese”
CNKI	#FT=‘社交媒体’OR FT=‘移动学习平台’OR FT=‘微信’OR FT=‘哔哩哔哩’OR FT= ‘B 站’OR FT=‘小红书’OR FT=‘抖音’OR FT=‘流利说’AND FT=‘口语’OR FT=‘口语学习’OR FT=‘口语能力’OR FT=‘口语教学’OR FT=‘交际能力’OR FT=‘口语教程’AND FT=‘大学’OR FT=‘高校’OR FT=‘高等教育’

The second stage is screening. Out of 59 articles that are eligible to be reviewed, 29 were eliminated. The third stage is eligibility. This is the stage where the full articles are being accessed. 7 articles were excluded after a thorough examination. Some of the articles did not have the study context of Chinese higher education. The final stage of review yielded a total of 22 articles used for qualitative analysis. (Refer Figure 1).

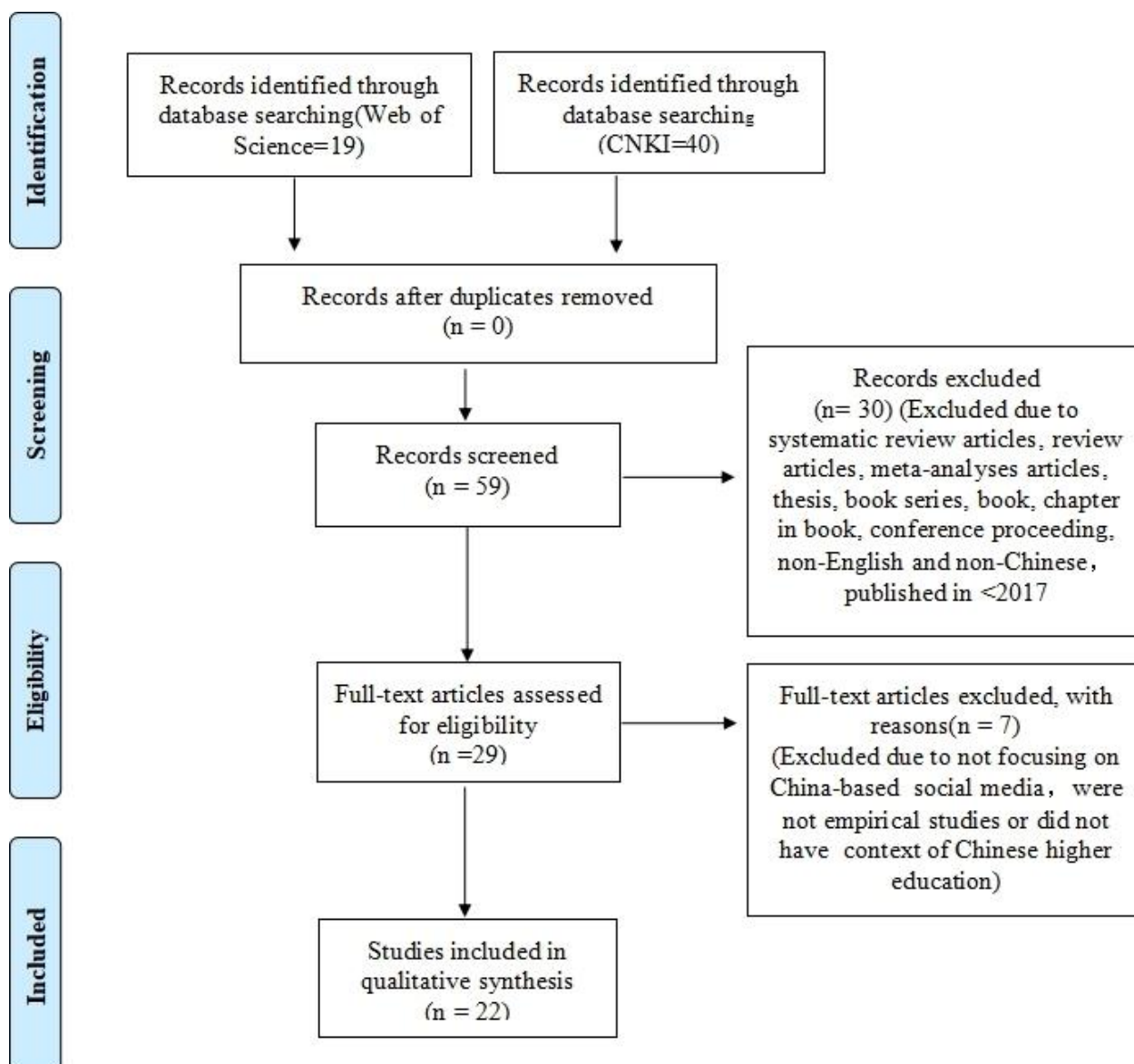


Figure 1. The Flow Diagram of Study (Adapted from Moher et al., 2009)

Data Abstraction and Analysis

All 22 articles were assessed and analyzed. Efforts were concentrated on specific studies that responded to the formulated questions. Data on the various uses of China-based social media in the learning of speaking skills in Chinese higher education. The study was presented in Table 4 according to influencing factors, improvements, and effectiveness. A narrative summary was performed. In systematic review, narrative summaries are often used together with systematic searching and appraisal techniques. It will incorporate quantitative and qualitative data using narrative juxtaposition to offer clearer, more comprehensive, and summarized evidence (Watson et al., 2008; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2020). The synthesis of the results is summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Summary of Reviewed Studies

	Influencing Factors of Acceptance										Improvement					Effectiveness			
	PE	EE	FC	SI	AT	PEU	PEOU	IM	BI	Accuracy	Fluency	Communication Skill	Emotional Aspect	Language Use	ME	RAS	EFO	AL	CG
Yu & Yi (2020)	/	/	/	/	/													/	/
Fan (2023)						/	/	/	/										
Zeng,Wan g&Tan (2020)									/	/				/		/			
Ma & Ouyang (2021)									/										
Lv(2017)									/	/				/		/			
Zhu(2019)									/										
Yeh et al.(2021)									/										
Jao et al.(2022)									/	/									
Fu, Yang & Yeh(2022)										/			/			/			
Yin(2020)											/							/	
Zhu(2019)										/				/		/	/	/	/
Yeh ,Cang &Heng (2021)										/					/	/			
Yuan(2019)											/				/				
Xu(2020)											/		/	/	/	/	/		
Zhou(2023)											/								
Chen & Chew(2021)											/	/							
Shi(2018)											/								
Liu(2018)												/							
Xue & Churchill (2022)														/	/	/	/	/	
Luo(2020)														/					
Zhou(2023)											/	/							
Yu et al.(2020)												/					/		

PE=Performance Expectancy; EE=Effort Expectancy; FC=Facilitating Conditions; SI=Social Influence; AT=Attitude; PU=Perceived Usefulness; PEOU=Perceived Ease of Use; IM=Intrinsic Motivation; BI=Behavioral Intention; ME=Motivating Environment; RAS=Resources Accessing and Sharing; EFO=Evaluation and Feedback Offering; AL=Administration for Learning; CG=Content Generation

Results

Study Characteristics

All the chosen articles were reviewed, the 22 articles have been categorized into three research methods, including quantitative studies (n=7), qualitative studies (n=1), and mixed methods studies (n=14). The geographical scope of the research primarily covered mainland China (n=20) and Taiwan (n=2). The majority of researchers (19 studies) focused on the use of a specific social media application, while a minority of researchers employed a combination of social media networks or applications in their studies (3 studies), and the top three most popular social media tools in the selected research literature are WeChat (N = 7), Liulishuo (N = 3), and the mobile learning technology Rain Classroom (N = 3), which is now widely used in language education (Yu & Yi, 2020; Yu et al., 2022).

This section will delve into the detailed discussion of the results from the past selected studies. Despite potential variations in research methods, all chosen studies utilized China-based social media in the context of spoken skills learning in Chinese higher education. The results of the review were organized into three major themes: factors influencing acceptance, improvement of speaking skills, and the effectiveness of social media to enhance speaking skills.

Factors Influencing the Chinese College Students' Acceptance of Using China-based Social Media to Enhance their Speaking Skills

In the selected literature, 12 studies (learners (n = 11), teachers (n = 1)) explicitly mentioned the acceptance of social media in speaking learning. Except for one study (Yeh et al., 2021), the remaining 11 studies had positive attitudes towards the use of social media to improve speaking skills. The factors influencing learners' acceptance of the Rain classroom to improve speaking skills include performance expectation (PE), effort expectation (EE), social influence (SI), facilitating condition (FC), and attitude (AT). On the other hand, the factors affecting learners' acceptance on the use of WeChat and Bilibili in the improvement of speaking skills are perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), Intrinsic motivation (IM), and behavioral intention (BI).

Yu and Yi (2020), through a mixed-methods approach using an itemized questionnaire adapted from the TAM, semi-structured interviews, and a pro- and post-test of linguistic knowledge, found that Rain Classroom demonstrated significantly higher acceptance than traditional multimedia systems, as indicated by factors such as PE, EE, SI, FC, and AT. Their findings confirmed that PE have a positive and significant effect on acceptance, which is consistent with the UTAUT2 model (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh et al., 2012). The study also confirmed a positive correlation between acceptance and effectiveness in the Rain classroom. Higher acceptance contributes to more efficient and effective learning, as students are more willing to learn about linguistics and actively participate in the classroom.

Fan (2023) examined the acceptance of Chinese college students to learn English using the social media WeChat and Bilibili in a voluntary and self-motivated learning environment. The researcher concluded that learning motivation, especially intrinsic motivation (IM), can greatly help learners maintain their enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, this study takes IM in English learning as a parallel factor influencing Chinese college students' acceptance to use such platforms.

Improvement of Speaking Skills

Different social media, by virtue of their functional features, improved learners' oral performance. The aspects of improvement could be divided into five aspects: accuracy Zeng et al (2020); Ma & Ouyang (2021); Lv (2017); Zhu (2019); Yeh et al (2021); Jao et al (2022) fluency Zeng et al (2020); Fu et al (2022); Lv (2017); Zhu (2019); Yeh et al (2021); Jao et al (2022), communication skill (Yuan,2019;Xu,2020;Yin,2020;Zhou,2023;Chen & Chew's, 2021;Shi, 2018),emotional aspect Liu (2018); Chen & Chew (2021) language use (Fu et al., 2022; Xu, 2020) .

Safdari and Fathi's (2020) view that fluency and accuracy are indicators of EFL students' overall speaking performance. Fu et al (2022); Jao et al (2022) also argue that speaking proficiency includes fluency, accuracy in addition to language use. In Yeh, Chang, and Heng's (2021) study, podcasts increased students' learning autonomy and encouraged them to find solutions (e.g., online resources) to overcome difficulties (e.g., pronunciation accuracy). Besides that, Yuan 's (2019) study concluded that the increase of interaction can strengthen students' attention to explicit language forms, thus improving the accuracy of word use. Ma OuYang (2021) confirmed that WeChat voice chat promotes the development of vocabulary accuracy in speaking English. The results of previous studies have shown that using WeChat to complete English-speaking tasks after class through self-directed learning enhances English-speaking skills in the areas of retelling, impromptu speaking, and conversation (Shi, 2018). Furthermore, Luo's (2020) study found that Liulishuo improved learners' English performance in the five proficiency training categories of pronunciation accuracy, reading fluency, vocabulary and grammar, discourse length and coherence, and communicative flexibility and appropriateness.

Moreover, Amoah and Yeboah's (2021) study revealed that Chinese EFL learners have speaking problems that relate more to psychological factors like anxiety, fear of mistakes, unwillingness, and fear of negative evaluation than linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, insufficient knowledge of grammar rules, reading, and oral presentation. Therefore, social media that allows learners to interact by speaking in real time is more suitable for Chinese students. The results of Zhou's (2023) study suggest that online language communication has a positive impact on EFL learners' speaking skills and communicative willingness, which was also confirmed in (Chen & Chew, 2021; Zhou, 2023) that electronic classrooms have a beneficial effect on students' speaking skills and communicative willingness and that increased interaction also enhances students' attention to explicit linguistic forms, which improves the accuracy of word usage (Yuan, 2019).

Liu (2018) believes that WeChat can play a role in college students' speaking English learning mainly because WeChat, a modern communication platform and software, has an emotional impact on students, i.e., it eliminates or reduces students' shyness, loneliness, anxiety, etc., and establishes a positive relationship between teachers and students, thus improving students' initiative in learning.

In addition, Quadir et al (2022); Yu and Yi (2020) showed that the Rain Classroom learning system had a significant effect on improving the overall language learning performance when compared to the traditional learning system. However, no significant difference was found between the experimental group and the control group in terms of speaking performance,

which may be due to the lack of a voice chat function in Rain Classroom, which prevents learners and teachers from communicating between classes. Therefore, Rain Classroom is always used in combination with WeChat to enhance speaking skills.

Effectiveness of China-based Social Media

Five educational effectiveness of social media emerged from the results, including a motivation environment (Xue & Churchill's,2022;Zeng, Wang and Tan,2020; Luo,2020; Lv,2017; Zhu,2019; Xu,2020), resources accessing and sharing Xue & Churchill (2022); Yuan (2019); Xu(2020); Yeh et al (2021), evaluation and feedback offering Xue & Churchill (2022): Zeng et al (2020); Lv (2017); Xu (2020): Zhu (2019); Yeh et al (2021); Fu et al (2022), administration for learning Yin (2020); Xue & Churchill (2022); Zhu (2019); Yu & Yi (2020) and content generation(Yu & Yi, 2020; Xue & Churchill, 2022: Zhu, 2019).

Liu (2018) established a second classroom with WeChat in college English teaching, where listening, speaking, reading, and translating tasks were assigned and checked through WeChat groups. Similarly, Yuan (2019) also expanded the classroom through a connected learning model combining the classroom and WeChat. The ubiquitous learning context based on WeChat not only has some of the characteristics of the traditional speaking classroom but also has the obvious characteristics of ubiquity, intelligence, individuality, interactivity, and openness. Shi (2018) also explored the impact of WeChat-based profile types on college students' English-speaking learning after class (in informal learning environments), arguing that ubiquitous learning breaks the boundaries of time and space, effectively changes the current way of education, optimizes students' learning experience, and makes learning everywhere and all the time a reality.

Mobile devices are essential tools to obtain learning resources from the internet (Chung et al., 2019). Influencing number of people who use mobile applications is large enough to make WeChat a well-served mobile internet access port. It is worthwhile to explore student engagement and learning outcomes via the WeChat platform (Liu, 2018; Yu et al., 2022). For example, the portability of mobile terminals such as the "Chaoxing" learning platform makes learning more flexible and freer, which not only provides learning opportunities at anytime and anywhere but also allows students to easily access a huge amount of learning resources and, at the same time, allows students to use a variety of learning methods to complete their learning, which meets the personalized learning needs of the students (Yin, 2020).

WeChat-based feedback provides convenience for the teacher to grasp the learning situation of the students in a timely manner, which is conducive to providing more personalized guidance for the students (Zeng et al., 2020). Therefore, it provides an effective interpersonal communication platform for students. Learners create real communicative situations and evaluate and give feedback to each other by "like and commenting" on their peers' speaking performances, which not only enhances the learners' interest in language expression but also strengthens their confidence in communicating in English and effectively promotes the enhancement of their speaking ability.

In Zhu's (2019) social media-based informative speaking teaching model, the platform's quick statistical function shows students' learning status in real time, which is convenient for teachers to track students' learning progress and improve the timeliness and effectiveness of

teacher-student and student-student interactions. The learning management function provides a way for effective learning. Zhong et al.'s (2019) research team also used a combination of hardware and software, including a smartphone, a WeChat public number, and a WeChat group, to carry out the innovative practice of the course. The research team registered the WeChat public number and set up a WeChat group, which regularly pushes the classroom tasks and learning contents every week, including cultural and linguistic background knowledge related to the unit topics, chapter audio and video, supplementary reading materials, and group cooperative learning tasks. Social media-based mobile learning provides learners with many opportunities and possibilities to interact with teachers, peers, and materials and builds a more ideal classroom context, thus strengthening and improving learners' oral expression skills in a shorter period.

Regarding content generation, Zhu (2019) argues that using various APPs and voice-over exercises, multimedia classrooms can first record and upload course materials to the platform in real time. Teachers and students work together to summarize the course content, and students upload their learning feedback on the platform according to the evaluation principles to evaluate the teacher and the course. Matching foreign experts to comment on the courseware and save the evaluation results to the learning platform. Students use Aboboo voice software to dub the materials pushed by the platform. The software's powerful speech recognition technology automatically detects and grades the materials. Students learn about their own and their peers' pronunciation deficiencies through the grading and waveform diagrams and practice repeatedly.

Besides that, students use the mobile WeChat platform to create oral e-learning files for information acquisition, independent learning, evaluation feedback, and active reflection, and upload their oral assignments to the mobile WeChat platform for teacher evaluation and peer evaluation. Compared with paper files, the use of mobile WeChat to create e-learning files after class is effective in improving the students' speaking ability (Shi, 2018).

Teachers can use WeChat as a platform for cultivating emotions, and while accomplishing knowledge transfer, they can use WeChat to establish a miniature "community" with good student interaction and harmonious teacher-student relationships. On the one hand, WeChat can be used as an extension of the classroom, urging students to complete their classroom tasks on time, checking the completion of homework, answering questions, and solving puzzles; on the other hand, the formation of competition and mutual assistance between students in a healthy learning relationship allows students in WeChat to gain self-confidence and overcome shyness and psychological barriers (Liu, 2018).

Discussion

Results regarding the first research question found that using social media to enhance speaking skills, learners' attitudes and perceptions are crucial (Yu & Yi, 2020). Previous researchers have argued that the acceptance of any technology by the end-user is considered an important step before the implementation of that technology (Al-Emran, Mezhyuev & Kamaludin, 2018). Similarly, acceptance of social media is a prerequisite for engaging in language learning. Tan's (2013) investigation of English e-learning websites and Zeng's (2019) survey of m-learning acceptance used a UTAUT perspective. This study of speaking language learning acceptance on social media such as Rain class and WeChat emphasizes the UTAUT

theory. Fan's (2023) study found that English learning motivation had an impact on students' behavioral intention to use WeChat and Bilibili for English learning. However, there is a paucity of research on the use of China-based social media to improve the speaking skills of Chinese university students.

Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes two main forms of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Intrinsic motivation is when a person engages in a behavior out of personal interest and pleasure and derives satisfaction and pleasure from it. Research has shown that intrinsic motivation is more likely to result in persistence, performance, and fulfillment for individuals than extrinsic motivation. The results of the review found that the use of China-based social media has the potential to stimulate intrinsic motivation for EFL learners to improve their speaking skills.

The results of the study suggest that people perceive pleasant technology as more useful, emphasizing that intrinsic motivation leads to an increase in extrinsic motivation (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). This echoes Nikou and Economides' (2017) study. However, this finding is contrary to the findings of Sun and Gao (2020), who concluded that intrinsic motivation in English language learning did not have a direct effect on students' behavioral intention in mobile-assisted language learning but had a positive impact through the two intervening variables, PU and FC. It is worth noting that the dynamic nature of technology and user preferences may lead to changing factors affecting acceptance over time (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The results of the second research question confirmed that use of social media to assist the learning environment is not only conducive to stimulating learners' interest in learning but also to creating a relaxed, cordial, authentic, and interactive communicative atmosphere, thus avoiding the negative impact of tension on speaking learning and effectively promoting the enhancement of speaking skills. In the process of improving speaking skills, the anxiety-based emotional state will affect the external language input to a greater extent and is closely related to the learning effect (Wen & Clément, 2003). However, current research on the extent to which social media enhances speaking skills is not abundant. In this study, Chinese-based social media such as WeChat, Liulishuo, and Bilibili improved learners' word accuracy, oral fluency, communicative competence, language use, and affective competence by virtue of their functional features. Out of all the 22 selected papers, only one study confirmed that the use of social media (Rain Classroom) did not improve speaking performance (Yu & Yi, 2020). The results of the study correspond to previous studies (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2020).

The findings from the third research question confirm that social media can be a constructive and valuable tool not only for language teachers but also for students to learn more effectively, i.e., to acquire more solid and practical language skills in a variety of language use contexts. In addition to providing a suitable environment for group learning and various forms of content sharing (pictures, texts, videos, web links, etc.), online social media have the potential to provide conditions for communication and interaction in foreign languages, as they can cross physical boundaries between institutions and bring together large groups of students belonging to different geographies, cultures, religions, customs, and ideas to provide an attractive learning environment (Lv, 2017; Luo, 2020; Xu, 2020). However, there are few

systematic studies on the effectiveness of China-based social media in teaching speaking and self-directed learning to Chinese college students. Technology and curriculum, should promote each other, collaborate, and innovate, and accomplish a seamless, implicit penetration and integration of the process of deep integration (Zhu, 2019). This is consistent with previous findings (Barot, 2022; Reinhardt, 2019).

Conclusion

The rapid popularity of social media among contemporary university students and the integration of language learning have led researchers to bet the spotlight on the important and difficult-to-acquire area of speaking skill learning. This review provides a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of 22 empirical studies on the use of social media to improve speaking skills published in WOS and CNKI from 2017 to 2023. This includes factors influencing the acceptance of social media use, the extent to which social media use improves speaking skills, and the effectiveness of using social media to improve speaking skills.

Chinese-based social media such as WeChat, Liulishuo, Rain Classroom, and Bilibili are highly accepted in Chinese university students' oral language learning. Higher acceptance contributes to more efficient and effective learning, as students are more willing to learn about linguistics and actively participate in the classroom. The positive attitudes and perceptions of learners also mean that the various genres of social media can be a remedy to current difficulties in oral language learning. This is because accuracy, fluency, communicative skills, language use, and affective aspects of speaking have improved through social media. In addition, the development of social media has provided language learners novel approaches to English learning and result in a transformation of the English learning environment.

This study contributes to both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, this study integrates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Use (UTAUT), and the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Understanding these factors is crucial for educators, researchers, and policymakers aiming to promote the effective use of social media platforms to improve English language skills in higher education in China. In practical terms, research on the use of social media in higher education oral language learning can provide language researchers, teachers, and learners with insights for better utilization of the technology. Despite the strengths of this study, there are some limitations. Notably, the limited scope of publication of the research literature may limit the generalizability of the findings and the ability to draw broad conclusions. In addition, the participants in this study were all Chinese university students, which may limit the applicability of the findings to learners from different educational backgrounds.

Future research should delve deeper into the mechanisms linking technology acceptance, intrinsic motivation, and language learning outcomes. Understanding these factors is essential for designing effective language learning interventions and promoting the adoption of technology for educational purposes.

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