Exploring The Influence of Cyber Language on Language Education

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Abstract. Previous studies have found that Cyber Language (CL) impacts the Language acquisition of English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. This study, which included 50 Chinese academic undergraduates who lived or studied in an English-speaking environment, examined the sources of CL's influence on EFL students' language acquisition and students' attitudes toward CL as well as approaches to integrating it into pedagogy design. Using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, the researcher discovered that CL is derived from online chat and has a dual effect (positive and negative) on EFL students' language acquisition. Nevertheless, only a small number of studies demonstrated how CL is integrated into pedagogy design. This study examined the sources of CL's influence on EFL students' language acquisition and students' attitudes toward CL. The participants in this study were 50 Chinese academic undergraduates who lived or studied in an English-speaking environment. Through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the researcher found that CL is derived from online chat and has a dual effect (positive and negative) on EFL students' language acquisition. Based on this conclusion, the researcher analyzed past literature and interviews with respondents and concluded that educators could integrate CL into pedagogy designs in the following ways: 1) Systematic and theoretical explanation, 2) Use the informality of CL for vocabulary learning, 3) Constantly update the vocabulary choice of CL in the design. It should be noted that the experimental results need to be further confirmed, considering the small sample size and the potential impact of the questionnaire design order on the respondents, etc.

Keywords: Cyber Language (CL); English as Foreign Language (EFL) students; Language Acquisition; Pedagogy Design.

1. Introduction

With the increasing use of online chat, the influence of CL does not increase arbitrarily, especially on EFL students' language acquisition. According to Selinker's Interlanguage Theory, Shaari and Bataineh found that CL's influence on language learners is similar to L1 [1]. In addition, previous studies have found that CL harms students' formal writing ability [1-3]. However, Arias et al. noted that CL can enhance students' capacity for cross-linguistic learning as well as the development of critical thinking [4]. Interestingly, while earlier research has shown that CL has a dual impact on students' language acquisition, the majority of these studies have not addressed how CL might be included into the design of pedagogy. Therefore, this study investigated 50 Chinese undergraduate students who lived or studied in an English language environment. The researcher further determined the influence of CL on EFL students' language acquisition through a questionnaire and devised specific measures to integrate CL into pedagogy design through a semi-structured interview. The findings can be used as a reference for EFL students and language educators.

2. Literature Review

The following literature review discusses the impact of Cyber Language (CL) on language education. The researcher focused on three aspects: The Characteristics of Cyber Language, The Impact of Cyber Language on Language Learning, and Applications in Language Education and Teaching Strategies.

2.1. The Characteristics of Cyber Language

Cyber Language (CL), as a new product of using the Internet and manifestations of Netspeak, has the characteristics of globalization and high interaction. As the third communication medium's manifestation, CL combines the two characteristics of Speaking and Writing (The first two communication media), improving users' communication convenience [5, 6]. Due to CL's efficiency and the use of its own communication symbols, it can compensate for the synchronization and asynchronism deficiencies of the first two communication media. Hadžiahmetović-Jurida, Begami, and Aulino claim that CL is frequently used to convey certain thoughts through acronyms and unusual fonts, which enhances and facilitates user communication [7, 8]. CL is a third communication channel because, according to the Crystal model, it compensates for its lack of prosody and paralanguage by employing emoji, repeated letters, and other techniques [5]. In addition to the strategy of abbreviating or repeating letters, CL can also change the meaning of existing words to express new meanings. Qodriani and Wijana find that during online teaching, the words used by teachers and students have specific meanings derived from the particular use environment and time [9]. Considering the efficient optimization of user communication procedures and the variety of variations and meanings, CL must be taken seriously.

2.2. The Impact of Cyber Language on Language Learning

With the broader use of the Internet, the development of CL has also been enhanced. Havrylenko discusses three practical areas of CL (user creation, Internet media, and online education) and emphasizes that it will continue to evolve and impact linguistics [10]. There are advantages and disadvantages to CL as a novel communication tool for language acquisition. Selinker's Interlanguage Theory states that when second language learners acquire and use their mother tongue, they encounter interference from it. Since learners are impacted by CL, this phenomenon also happens in online communication [1]. Users of CL exhibit irregular vocabulary choice behavior in academic writing due to the informal linguistic qualities of the language [1, 2, 3]. On the other hand, some academics see CL favorably. Research indicates that English language learners think CL can help them communicate more effectively and become more fluent in the language [11], according to Rim Bourib. Simultaneously, Arias et al. mentioned that using CL helps stimulate enthusiasm for learning, adapting to diversified communication contexts and styles, and cultivating students' critical thinking ability in a diversified language environment to adjust to the rapid development of language [4]. CL has a two-sided influence on language learning, so educators should be critical of its characteristics, strive to integrate it into language teaching, and standardize the use of CL to reduce its negative impact.

2.2.1 The Development of the Internet World

The use of the Internet and the growing audience have forced educators to pay attention to its impact. Contrary to this, Saadé et al. mentioned that the complexity of the Internet continues to increase with the level of use, while educators lack the ability to leverage Internet innovations in learning [12]. It is indisputable that the ongoing development of the network world has led to the further enhancement of CL. The most common context for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) users to utilize CL is social media, which facilitates the learning and practice of new vocabulary [13]. Despite being an informal language for communication, CL conveys information that is frequently comprehensive and complex, making it appropriate for network communicators' emotional expression needs [4]. Meanwhile, Almushwat and Sabkha found through the EFL writing experiment in Libya that social media improved students' vocabulary and positively impacted daily written communication [14]. In this case, CL's positive effect on language learning should also be paid attention to.

2.3. Applications in Language Education and Teaching Strategies

Based on CL's influence on language learning, educators should incorporate CL into their teaching strategies to adapt to the new language environment. EFL students' excessive use of online communication software has affected their English writing. Bouguerra therefore urged teachers to focus more on the drawbacks of CL, correct students' errors, and discourage students from using CL excessively, which can be found in textbooks for systematic study [15]. Furthermore, since CL is derived from online chatting, it is imperative to incorporate online chatting into the Pedagogy design. While Thangaraj and Maniam noted that teachers should use appropriate methods to integrate CL into teaching [15], Almushwat and Sabkha mentioned that EFL students frequently encounter incomprehension of CL, so exposure to online chatting is beneficial to vocabulary acquisition and ultimately enhances language learning [13]. In addition to the standardized use of CL, previous studies also pointed out that standardized writing exercises can be introduced to help students reduce inappropriate word choices in formal writing [1].

3. Research Question

This study aims to explore the influence of Cyber Language (CL) on Language use, especially for English as Foreign Language (EFL) students, and to examine the role of CL in educational design. To sum up, this study will focus on answering the following questions:

1) How does using CL influence language acquisition skills among EFL students?
2) What implications do CL have for pedagogy design in language learning contexts?

4. Research Methods

4.1. Context and Participants

The 50 participants in this questionnaire were chosen at random and are all academic undergraduates (one first-year student, nine sophomores, thirty-eight juniors, and two seniors). They also live in an English-speaking environment or attend a school (joint university with Chinese and foreign partners & living in an English-speaking country) in order to guarantee that participants spoke a second language on a daily basis. In addition, all participants were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview based on their language learning experience. The interviewer can answer in the first language (Chinese), record it in written form, and finally translate it after careful examination. The use of Chinese in interviews can reduce the anxiety of interviewees and improve the accuracy of data.

In order to obtain insight into CL's influence on EFL students' language acquisition and pedagogy design, this research approach utilized a mixed-methods design and descriptive design, combining quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative assessments from in-depth participant feedback analysis. In order to guarantee the integrity and ethical compliance of the research, the participants' informed consent was acquired.

4.2. Measures and Procedure

1) Questionnaire

A 10-item questionnaire, including personal information questions (gender, academic level, and frequency of Internet chatting) and scale questions, was designed by the researcher for this project.

- Five-Point Attitudinal Likert Scale

This research will apply a five-point attitudinal Likert scale to describe respondents' attitudes. It is particularly suitable for measuring and can distinguish between various degrees of respondents' attitudes. The Likert Scale interpretation is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Likert Scale Interpretation

Response Scale	Degree of Intensity	Descriptive Interpretation	Mean Interval
5	Strongly Agree	Participants strongly agree with the statement or question.	4.6-5.0
4	Agree	Participants agree to some extent with the statement or question.	3.6-4.5
3	Neutral	Participants had no significant bias toward the statement or question.	2.6-3.5
2	Disagree	Participants disagree with the statement or question to some extent.	1.6-2.5
1	Strongly Disagree	Participants strongly disagree with statements or questions.	1.0-1.5

Legend: Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.5); Disagree (1.6-2.5); Neutral (2.6-3.5); Agree (3.6-4.5); Strongly agree (4.6-5.0);

2) Interview

A semi-structured interview allowed respondents to answer questions based on experience and expand on some of the questions. By using random sampling, 50 interview subjects in total were chosen. There were two questions in the interview, which was done online and written down. Five to ten minutes were allotted for the interview.

3) Data analysis tool

This study will employ inferential statistics to deliver a detailed and accurate data analysis. In order to address the research objectives, the investigator will employ Microsoft Excel for data processing in order to generate pertinent graphs and charts and evaluate the opinions of the participants by integrating a five-point Likert scale to measure attitudes. The interview results will also be translated into English to verify the accuracy of the translation, and the topic analysis approach will be employed to examine the interviewees' responses.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1. The Impact of Cyber Language on EFL Students' Language Proficiency

5.1.1 The Analysis of Sources of CL

Online chat is becoming increasingly popular as a new kind of communication, particularly during the Internet of Things' explosive growth. Social media, in particular, is frequently used by EFL students as a practical chat platform [13]. The researcher investigated EFL students' use of online chat through a questionnaire:

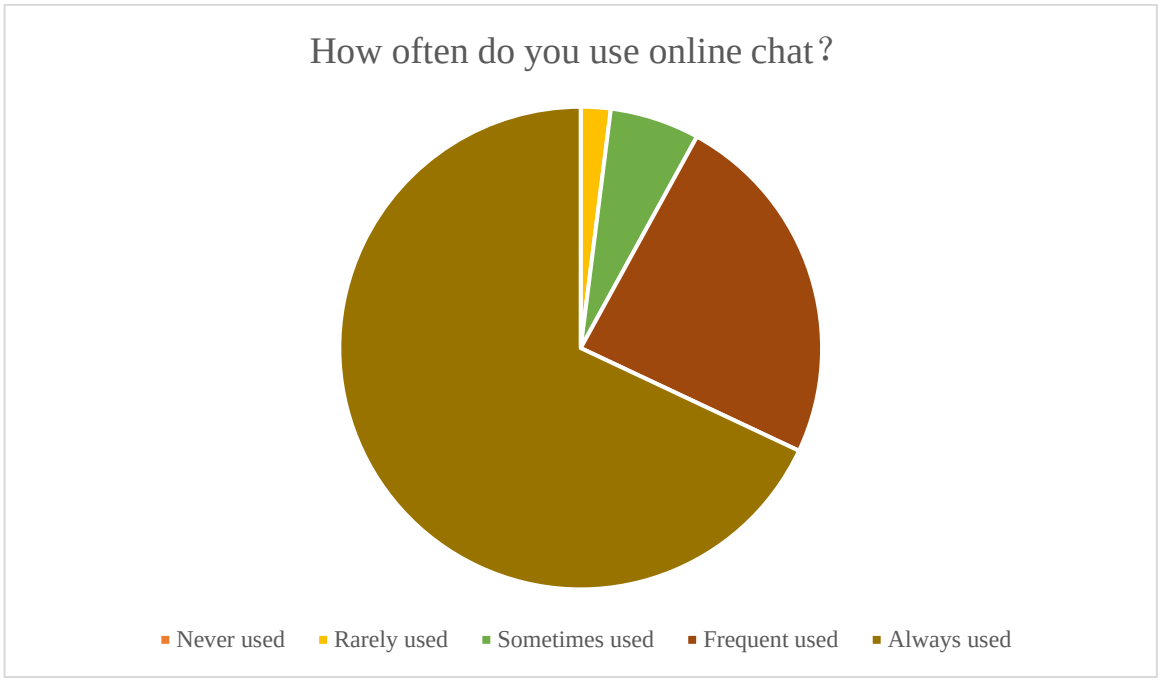

Figure 1- Frequency of Online Chat Use by Respondents

According to the data shown in Figure 1, the majority of people (68%) "always" use online chat, followed by "frequent" users (24%), less frequent (Sometimes) users (6%), and the least frequent (Rarely) users (2%). It can be seen that the vast majority of people frequently or always use online chat in their daily lives.

Based on Almushwat and Sabkha's research, social media provides EFL students with an environment to use CL [13]. However, the researcher was unable to ascertain if EFL students communicated online using CL. In order to guarantee the repeatability and validity of the study findings, the investigator administered a questionnaire to participants regarding the frequency of CL usage. The findings were as follows:

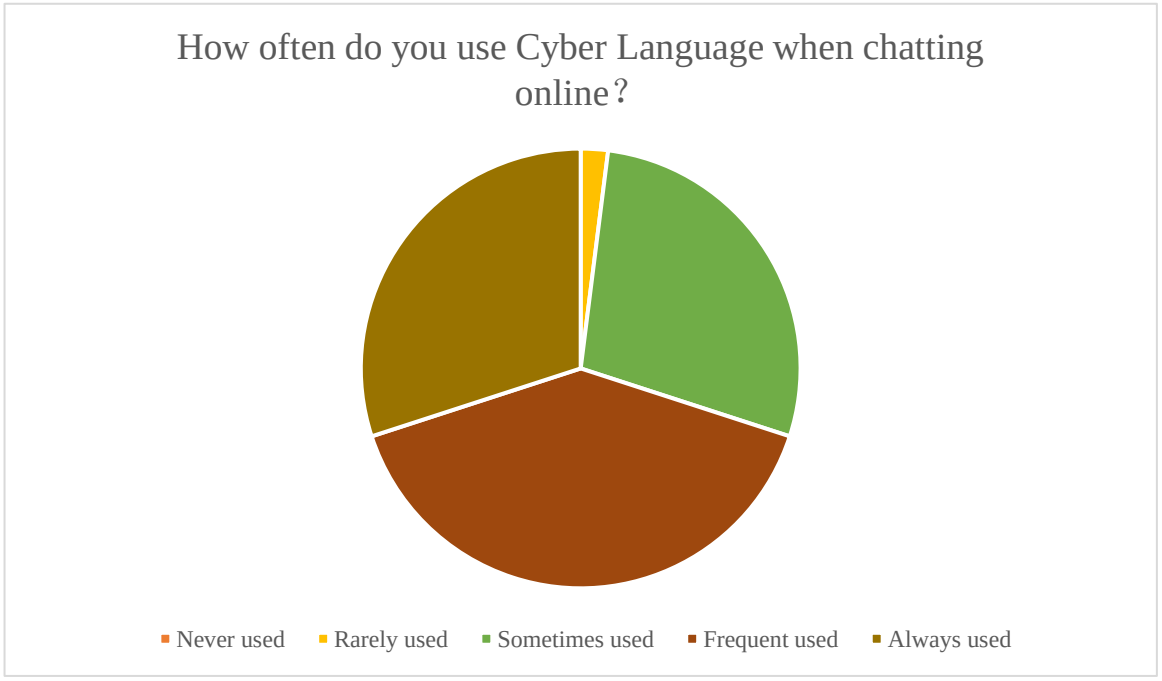

Figure 2- Frequency of CL Use by Respondents

Figure 2's data indicates that approximately 40% of users frequently use network terminology in online discussions. Furthermore, 2 percent seldom use cybertalk, 30% use it constantly, and 28% use

it occasionally. The majority of people utilize cyberspeak in online chats, according to the researcher's findings, which supports Almushwat and Sabkha's assertion.

Overall, the data from the respondents prove that most CL comes from online chat, and EFL students' usage also reflects the widespread use of CL as a new communication medium [5, 6]. Based on the respondents' answers, the researcher further investigated the impact of CL on EFL students' use of online chat.

5.1.2 The Influence of CL on EFL Students' Language Ability

In addition to online chat, online education classrooms provide conditions for CL use, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak, and have a linguistic impact [10]. Because of the informal nature of CL, the researcher expected that CL would hinder EFL students' language development because the classroom should be a more rigorous academic setting for language use [1-3].

Table 2. Use of CL in Language Learning

Item No.	Situation	Mean $\bar{X}$	SD	Scaled Responses	Descriptive Interpretation
5.1.2	"I think I use Cyber Language in my daily language learning."	3.82	0.94	Agree	Participants agree to some extent with the statement or question.

Table 2 shows the use of CL in daily language learning based on respondents' daily situations. The mean (M = 3.86) data showed that most respondents use CL in their daily language learning.

Building on the informal nature of CL mentioned earlier, Shaari and Bataineh added that students are influenced by CL when using L2 just as much as they are influenced by L1 [1]. However, because CL's informality stems from its vocabulary, students' word choice habits will be impacted in the classroom, particularly when writing academically [1, 2, 3]. The researcher created questions to examine the influence of participants on formal writing, taking into account the potential negative consequences of CL. Based on the potential negative implications of CL on formal writing, the researcher collected respondents' opinions through questionnaires and interviews.

Table 3. Use of CL in Language Learning

Item No.	Situation	Mean $\bar{X}$	SD	Scaled Responses	Descriptive Interpretation
5.1.2	"I think Cyber Language will harm students' formal writing ability."	3.34	1.08	Neutral	Participants had no significant bias toward the statement or question.

Table 3 shows respondents' views on whether CL will impact formal writing. The Mean (M = 3.34) data represented respondents generally having a neutral attitude towards the academic impact of CL.

The experimental results diverged from the researcher's conjecture, and the respondents' results showed that CL had a potentially positive effect, resulting in a neutral attitude toward the results. In order to learn more about the particular opinions of the respondents, the researcher performed a semi-structured interview. She discovered that CL had a dual impact on academic writing. Nonetheless, the majority of responders expressed concern about CL's negative effects. The topic analysis method was employed by the researcher to examine the interview data. Here are the contexts of the interviews from two interviewees:

Transcript 1:

Interviewer: *What impact do you think Cyber Language will have on students' formal writing ability?*

Interviewee A: *I think it will have a negative impact. 1. Grammar and spelling errors: Abbreviations and slang in Internet language may lead students to use non-standard grammar and*

spelling in formal writing. 2. Inconsistent style: Online language is often more casual, and students may have difficulty adapting to the rigorous and professional style required for formal writing. 3. Unclear expression: Network language often uses short expressions, which may affect students' ability to express complex ideas in formal writing. 4. Irregular format: Network communication often omits structural elements (such as paragraph separation), which may make students ignore the structural requirements of formal writing. 5. Influence of thinking habits: The fragmented characteristics of network language may cause students to think incoherently and systematically when writing.

Interviewee B: *The positive impact is more remarkable because CL will encourage students to realize the meaning of language. It is a positive influence because they need to decorate their articles using cyber language. At the same time, network language is also a part of the language system. With the advent of the Internet era, using network language is also a necessary skill.*

Interviewees' views on CL were divided into three categories: negative and positive: First, Interviewee A made the argument that CL differs from formal writing in spelling and semantics. She also demonstrated how students' critical thinking skills were enhanced by the use of highly broad vocabulary. Because pupils are accustomed to utilizing extremely broad characters, CL can have an impact on vocabulary choices. On the one hand, it speeds up communication for users by representing complicated and specialized concepts with abbreviations and distinctive forms of characters [1, 2, 3, 7]. "CL has negative effects" can be considered because its use situation and academic environment do not match. Qodriani and Wijana's study showed that CL words in the online environment are based on existing words but with semantic variation [9]. In this case, CL will cause deviation in EFL students' understanding of word meaning, further affecting their formal writing level.

Second, the analysis of Interviewee B based on the amount of language vocabulary showed that CL could enrich students' vocabulary choice and writing ability. Corresponding to this view, previous studies have found that CL improves students' vocabulary accumulation, cultivates students' language useability in diverse situations, and promotes the cultivation of critical thinking [4, 11, 13].

To conclude, respondents have a neutral attitude towards CL (see Table 3), which is due to the dual impact of CL on academic writing. The intricacy of informal language's form and meaning is the source of the detrimental influence. The benefits of CL are thought to have a significant impact on the vocabulary growth and learning motivation of EFL students. The researcher rejected the preceding hypothesis (that CL would hinder EFL students' language acquisition) in light of the aforementioned investigation. Based on the dual influence of CL on EFL students' language learning, educators should integrate CL standardized teaching into the pedagogy design.

5.2. The Impact of Cyber Language on Pedagogical Design

5.2.1 Cyber Language in Class

CL continues to evolve dynamically, and its vocabulary expands with Internet communication. Teachers should be aware of it in relation to the impact of CL on the academic field discussed in the preceding section. They are unable to use the Internet for creative learning, though, which will hinder pupils' ability to learn, particularly in a complicated network setting [12]. The following Figure 3 shows whether the respondents have learned CL knowledge in class:

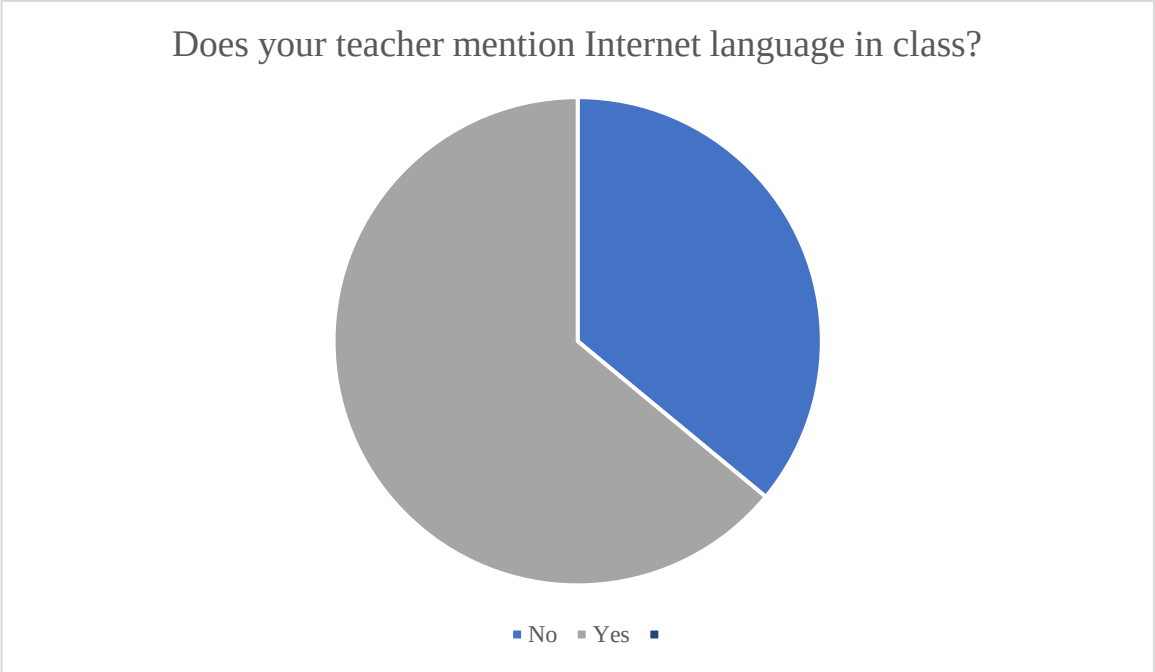

Figure 3- CL Learning in the Classroom

The data in Figure 3 shows that most people (64%) have teachers who have mentioned Internet language in class. Conversely, a sizable percentage of respondents (36%) claimed that their teachers had not brought it up. The data results show how differently educators have prioritized CL. According to previous studies, EFL students frequently misunderstand CL vocabulary. Bouguerra urges educators to take this into account when designing lessons so that students can be taught based on CL in a methodical manner [13, 14]. However, it should be noted that CL is not solely to blame for the drop in students' writing proficiency, and increasing student comprehension of CL can mitigate its negative impacts [15].

Table 4. Attitudes towards Using CL in Class

Item No.	**Situation**	**Mean $\bar{X}$**	**SD**	**Scaled Responses**	**Descriptive Interpretation**
5.2.1	"I think Cyber Language has a positive impact on language education."	3.46	0.97	Neutral	Participants had no significant bias toward the statement or question.
5.2.1	"I think it's important to integrate Cyber Language into language teaching."	3.22	0.95	Neutral	Participants had no significant bias toward the statement or question.

Although the researcher found in the previous section that most respondents were aware of CL's influence on language acquisition (positive and negative), they still held a neutral attitude toward CL's normative learning. According to Table 4, most respondents have a neutral opinion on the integration of CL into language instruction. The findings of the preceding section indicate that a large number of respondents think CL will negatively impact formal writing. The researcher hypothesized that the respondents' complete denial of CL and disregard for its beneficial impacts on pupils' vocabulary development may have been affected by the prior topic [13]. Meanwhile, few respondents considered CL a language used in informal situations and should not be designed in teaching situations.

Overall, respondents' responses revealed their uncertainty about CL. This uncertainty comes from the dual impact of CL on students' learning. Consequently, the researcher came to the conclusion that teachers should incorporate CL into the design of their pedagogies in order to raise students'

awareness of CL and lessen its detrimental effects on programmatic and standardized learning. It should be mentioned that the experiment's inaccuracy was caused by the following circumstances, and more confirmation of the research findings is required:

1) Considering that the questionnaire design order of the researcher has an impact on the subjective influence of the interviewees, they have a preemptive bias towards CL.

2) The respondents' definition of CL needs to be clarified.

3) The experimental sample is small, and the research results are not general.

5.2.2 The Specific Application of CL to Pedagogy

Based on the dual impact of CL on EFL students' language learning, educators should consider how to balance the advantages and disadvantages and introduce CL education in the classroom in a standardized and programmatic way. Regarding implementing CL education, Shaari and Bataineh mentioned that standardized writing exercises can be introduced to help students reduce inappropriate word selection in formal writing [1]. The above experimental conclusions suggest the following problems:

1) A lot of instructional strategies still emphasize the negative consequences of CL (word choice) rather than objectively examining its advantages.

2) Teachers employ alternative strategies to lower pupils' writing faults rather than beginning with CL.

To further explore the practical application of CL in language education design, here are the contexts of the interviews with three interviewees:

Transcript 2:

Interviewer: *Do you think Cyber Language can be included in the design of language learning? If so, what should be done? Please explain in detail.*

Interviewee A: *Agreed. First, we need to understand what CL is; second, we need to understand the development of CL and use it more in language learning; and finally, we need to balance the use of formal and informal language.*

Interviewee B: *Agreed. In my opinion, in language learning, some obscure language can be explained by network language to reduce the difficulty of our learning.*

Interviewee C: *In my opinion, CL reflects the dynamic change of language, and relevant courses can be added to sum up the laws of linguistics by studying the generation and change of CL*.

According to interviewee A, educators need to focus on the interpretation of CL, giving students a perspective that affirms its status as a language. Considering that students will have the idea of "I don't think CL is a language," educators should explain to students that CL is a third communication medium, combining the dual characteristics of Speaking and Writing and that CL comes from the characteristics of deformation or extended meaning of existing words [5, 6]. Teachers can include CL into everyday language learning activities after pupils have a firm grasp of it. Previous studies have shown that CL increases students' vocabulary, enhances their capacity to communicate on a daily basis, and helps them adjust to a variety of communication scenarios. To improve their students' language skills, teachers can provide more standardized CL activities to their pupils [1, 4]. Finally, educators can correct students' mistakes in exercises (e.g., vocabulary choice) in time to distinguish the use of CL and avoid excessive use in academic writing [1, 14].

According to interviewee B, educators can use CL's high generality and informality to help students understand complex words. Because of the high generality of CL, the researcher previously described how students abusing the tool might result in a drop in vocabulary building in academic writing. Nonetheless, teachers could enhance students' comprehension by using CL in language instruction to clarify difficult academic terminology. It should be highlighted that users' perception of CL may diverge due to the fact that part of CL originates from a particular background or language environment and can be utilized to express complicated emotions [4, 9]. Therefore, further research is needed to determine whether CL can be used for word interpretation and translation.

According to interviewee C, educators should be aware of the dynamic development of CL, so the study of CL should also keep pace with The Times. There is a specific regulation in the changing of

CL because the forms of CL are mostly made up of repeated characters, abbreviations, word deformation, and polysemy of a word [7, 8]. To ensure timeliness, educators can add fresh CL learning content and update the syllabus on a regular basis.

In general, educators first need to make a systematic and standardized explanation of CL in actual teaching to avoid students' understanding deviation. Secondly, create an environment for students to practice CL and correct students' mistakes in time. Furthermore, students' vocabulary understanding skills can be enhanced by using CL's high generality and informality to explain complicated vocabulary (further testing is required to confirm viability). Educators must acknowledge the rapid and ever-changing nature of CL, which calls for regular updates to the teaching design to guarantee that the curriculum is tailored to the needs of the pupils.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the study found that CL, as a third communication medium, originates from online chat. At the same time, CL has a dual impact on EFL students' language acquisition ability. These effects all come from the users' daily use.

By analyzing the respondents' responses by topic generalization, the researcher found that CL's high generality and informality would lead to inaccurate word choice in academic writing. Furthermore, because the application of CL varies depending on the situation, misinterpretations of its meaning may result. But according to a different set of respondents, CL can help people in multilingual environments expand their vocabulary and sharpen their critical thinking skills. Thus, the researcher came to the conclusion that CL has a two-way impact on EFL students' language acquisition and that, in order to lessen its negative effects, educators should restrict the usage of CL.

To further explore the practical application of CL in pedagogy design, the researcher designed semi-structured interviews to survey respondents' attitudes. The research findings furnished language educators with the subsequent recommendations: 1) Include CL in language instruction, establish a CL learning environment, and update the material frequently to reflect current events; 2) Teachers ought to conceptually and methodically explain CL to pupils in order to lessen their misinterpretation; 3) Use CL as a teaching tool and use its informality and great generality in word interpretation to help students grasp the language better.

In addition, due to the small number of experimental samples in this study, the understanding bias of respondents and whether CL can be used as a lexical interpretation tool (students' understanding of CL is subjective) need further research to determine the feasibility.

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