The Use of TCIS: An Innovative Teaching Method for Cross-Cultural Internet Chinese Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract .his study examines the efficacy of an online, self-paced learning system designed to assist non-native Chinese language learners in improving their proficiency with commonly used Chinese internet vocabulary and deepening their understanding of Chinese culture. The system, accessible through the link https://appspenang.uitm.edu.my/talkmandenglish/, offers a user-friendly interface for language learning and cultural exploration. One hundred and one non-native learners from UiTM Terengganu, Malaysia, engaged with the system for 14 weeks and then completed a comprehensive questionnaire to assess their language skills and learning experiences. The results indicate favorable improvements in language acquisition, the understanding of Chinese culture and learning satisfaction among participants who completed the online innovative learning program. This self-directed learning platform is shown to be beneficial for non-native learners seeking to effectively master Chinese internet vocabulary. To further explore the impact of this learning system, the research methodology has been modified to include qualitative interviews with a sample of 15 students from the study group. These interviews will provide deeper insights into the learners' experiences, perspectives, and the factors contributing to their success or challenges with the online learning platform.

Keywords :alking Chinese-English Internet Vocabulary System for Non-native Learners (TCIS), innovative teaching method, cross cultural teaching, non-native Chinese language learners, Chinese popular vocabulary

1   Introduction

Chinese popular words, also known as buzzwords or colloquial terms, can indeed be overwhelming for non-native learners. These words are constantly evolving, reflecting the latest trends, events, and social phenomena in Chinese society. They often carry nuanced meanings that can be difficult to grasp, as they may incorporate elements of humor, sarcasm, or cultural references that are not immediately apparent. However, mastering these popular words can greatly enhance one's ability to understand and engage with native speakers in a natural and conversational manner. To tackle this

challenge, learners can start by familiarizing themselves with common Chinese internet slang and catchphrases, as well as keeping up-to-date with current events and popular culture in China.[1] Additionally, utilizing online resources such as dictionary apps, language learning platforms, and social media platforms can provide valuable context and examples for understanding the usage and meaning of these words. With consistent practice and exposure, non-native learners can gradually build up their proficiency in using and understanding Chinese popular words, ultimately enhancing their overall language skills and cultural understanding. [2]

The aim of this research is to examine the efficacy of an internet-based, self-study assistance program in enabling non-native speakers of Chinese to boost their language skills and grasp the cultural significance of contemporary Chinese buzzwords. The online platform, Talking Chinese-English Internet Vocabulary System for Non-native Learners (TCIS), which was developed in-house, can be easily accessed through the provided link at https://appspenang.uitm.edu.my/talkmandenglish/, offering a user-friendly space for language improvement and cultural investigation into these Chinese colloquial terms.

2   Literature Review

In the past few years, the swift growth of the internet has given rise to a plethora of online neologisms that have become a significant aspect of everyday life. Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) has begun to place more emphasis on the study and integration of these internet-born terms. Firstly, educators should introduce these new internet expressions to their students promptly, assisting them in grasping and effectively utilizing these words. Secondly, by incorporating internet neologisms into teaching materials and activities, teachers can create an engaging and dynamic learning experience. Moreover, educators should instruct students in critically analyzing the meaning and application of internet neologisms, helping them to discern the difference between formal and informal language use and to employ them properly in various situations. By integrating internet neologisms into TCSL instructional approaches, teachers can assist students in adapting more effectively to the swift evolution of the Chinese language and in improving their digital age communication skills. [3]

Internet neologisms, which are fresh terms or expressions created from online culture, are increasingly popular among modern university students. These new words and phrases often capture the latest trends, memes, and slang from the digital world and act as a form of communication and self-expression for many young individuals. Students often integrate these terms into their daily speech, whether in digital or physical interactions, as a means to connect with their peers and showcase their awareness of current internet trends. Moreover, internet neologisms are utilized to convey creativity, humor, and criticism, enabling students to express intricate thoughts and feelings succinctly and captivatingly. Consequently, the adoption of internet neologisms by college students is not only a reflection of their immersion in digital culture but also a testament to their skill in shaping language to reflect their distinct experiences and viewpoints. [4]

Over the past decade, there has been a notable uptick in the incorporation of modern vocabulary into the curriculum for Chinese as a Foreign Language (CTFL), reflecting the language's ongoing dynamism and swift progression through the digital era. This expansion of the curriculum, commonly known as "new vocabulary," encompasses words and phrases linked to areas such as technology, social media, economics, and culture. Educators have acknowledged the necessity of acquainting students with these modern terms, which are essential for understanding and engaging in conversation within contemporary Chinese contexts. Educational materials have been revised to integrate these words, and they have emerged as a central component of classroom instruction, where their definitions, pronunciations, and applications are taught in conjunction with traditional syntax and vocabulary lessons. The inclusion of new words not only improves learners' linguistic abilities but also offers glimpses into Chinese society and its continuous transformation. [5]

The cultural sector has spawned a plethora of new internet terms, which are indicative of popular culture's profound impact on modern society. Three such terms are "easter eggs," "extras," and "side stories." Easter eggs, once a conventional Christian symbol, have been reimagined within the cultural industry as hidden bonuses or concealed features within movies, video games, or other forms of media. "Extras" pertain to supplementary features or additional content included in movie or game releases, providing viewers or players with a more immersive experience. "Side stories," conversely, are auxiliary narratives or offshoots that branch out from the main story, enabling a deeper exploration of characters or themes. These new internet terms underscore the cultural industry's role in generating enthusiasm, cultivating fan involvement, and perpetually expanding the realm of popular cultural products. These Chinese popular terms are considered challenging for learners of the language who are not native speakers. [1]

Incorporating new vocabulary into the teaching of Chinese as a Second Language is crucial for effective language learning. Educators must choose relevant and practical words that meet the learners' needs. The process of choosing these words should consider their cultural significance and everyday usability. Moreover, teachers should utilize a variety of methods to introduce and solidify the learning of new terms, including the use of visual aids, context-based clues, and memory aids. Additionally, integrating technology and multimedia resources can enrich the learning experience, making it more captivating and effective. Providing opportunities for learners to apply the new words in real-life scenarios is also advantageous, as it promotes a deeper grasp and proficiency in the language. [6]

Recent developments in the study of technological, pedagogical, and learning strategies for Chinese popular vocabulary have substantially revolutionized the field of Chinese language teaching. The adoption of technology, especially online self-study platforms, has proven highly effective in improving the learning experience for non-native Chinese speakers. Pedagogical innovations like blended learning and the flipped classroom model are being more widely used to maximize the benefits of these digital tools. The research underscores the critical role of learner engagement, motivation, and independence within these digital learning spaces. Additionally, the research highlights the value of including popular Chinese words in these technological frameworks,

acknowledging their importance in vocabulary development and cultural insights. These advancements are reshaping how Chinese language education is conducted, fostering more efficient and student-centered learning experiences for non-native learners.[7]

A scientometric review conducted with CiteSpace software has revealed valuable insights into the use of technology to teach Chinese as a second or foreign language, particularly in relation to the study of Chinese popular words. The review shows an increasing trend in research that acknowledges the critical role of technology in facilitating language learning, especially when it comes to acquiring popular Chinese vocabulary. It emphasizes the effectiveness of online self-learning platforms, mobile apps, and multimedia resources in improving vocabulary acquisition and cultural knowledge. The analysis also identifies pedagogical methods that effectively incorporate technology, such as blended learning and the flipped classroom model, as well as the application of big data and artificial intelligence in personalized language education. Additionally, the review highlights the necessity for continued research into the effects of these technologies on learner engagement, motivation, and autonomy. Overall, the scientometric review underscores how technology has the potential to revolutionize the teaching and learning of Chinese popular words, promising more effective and empowering language education for non-native speakers. [8]

Zhao and Lai's (2023) latest study has identified four essential components of language acquisition within an online platform designed for learning popular Chinese words.[9] Firstly, the platform must ensure that word comprehension is prioritized, providing clear explanations and definitions for these terms. Secondly, the inclusion of a comprehensive vocabulary discovery tool that lists popular Chinese words with their meanings and pinyin notation can significantly enhance memory and recall. Thirdly, the system should offer robust pronunciation guidance, including downloadable audio files to assist learners in pronouncing these words correctly. Lastly, the research emphasizes the importance of cultural context, with the platform offering insights into the cultural relevance of popular Chinese words to enrich learners' understanding of the language in its cultural context. This research emphasizes the critical role these four elements play in developing effective online systems for language learning focused on Chinese popular words.

Shadiev and Yang (2020) have highlighted three key elements that contribute to a successful online learning experience for Chinese popular words. Firstly, the integration of interactive learning is vital for capturing student interest and sustaining motivation.[10] An effective platform should encourage active participation, including opportunities for listening practice and reinforcement of word comprehension. Secondly, the provision of personalized learning experiences is crucial to accommodate the diverse learning styles and learning speeds of students. A superior online system should be able to tailor content to each student's needs and interests, allowing them to pursue words that pique their curiosity. Lastly, in our increasingly mobile society, mobile learning is becoming increasingly important, with the online system needing to be optimized for access on various devices, such as smartphones and tablets. This ensures that students can learn Chinese popular words on their own schedule and from any location, fostering a flexible and self-directed approach to learning. This research underscores the

significance of these three components in shaping an engaging and effective online educational experience for Chinese popular words.

In summary, these studies underscore the importance of innovative teaching methods, incorporating cross-cultural perspectives, to facilitate effective Chinese popular words acquisition in the digital age.

3   Research Methodology

A total of 101 non-native learners from UiTM Terengganu participated in a 14-week self-study   initiative,   utilizing   the   online   platform   available   at https://appspenang.uitm.edu.my/talkmandenglish/. This digital learning environment was specifically designed to support independent study, making it an ideal choice for individuals who are not native speakers and seek to efficiently learn Chinese popular words.

Upon inputting the keyword "phoenix" into the online Chinese Internet word system, students are greeted with a variety of resources (refer figure 1). The system provides downloadable MP3 files of the PinYin pronunciation, enabling students to listen and hone their pronunciation skills. Furthermore, the system offers English translations, which help students grasp the meaning and enrich their vocabulary. This holistic approach aids students in acquiring Chinese Internet words with greater efficiency.
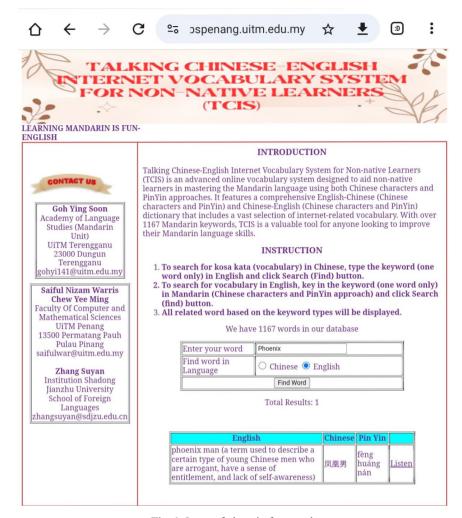
Fig. 1. Input of phoenix for search

Following a 14-week period of autonomous learning via the online platform, 101 non-native learners from UiTM Terengganu engaged in a thorough questionnaire process to gauge their linguistic progress and assess their learning experience. To guarantee the scientific soundness of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted prior with a subset of 30 students. This pilot stage involved having participants fill out the questionnaire to pinpoint any problematic areas, including questions that might be confusing or vague, as well as to evaluate the clarity and design of the questionnaire as a whole. The insights gained from this initial batch of respondents proved crucial in fine-tuning the questionnaire to accurately measure the intended aspects and to yield pertinent data for the research. The researchers utilized the pilot test to refine the questionnaire, thus enhancing its utility and bolstering the reliability of the subsequent results. All

measures of reliability for the questionnaire exceeded the 0.7 benchmark indicating a high level of internal consistency and dependability across all components.

In addition to the comprehensive questionnaire, the study included a qualitative component where 30 students participated in in-depth interviews. These interviews were recorded via video to ensure accurate documentation and later transcribed for thorough analysis. The video and transcription process allowed researchers to capture the nuanced details and rich insights provided by the participants, further enriching the data and providing a deeper understanding of the learners' experiences and perspectives.

4   Findings

In an investigation with 101 non-native Chinese language learners from UiTM Terengganu, participants were administered a detailed questionnaire to evaluate their journey in language acquisition and their overall educational experience. The research centered on four distinct classes (refer to Table 1), with the questionnaire seeking to delve into the learners' levels of involvement, incentives, educational tactics, and perceptions of their personal development. The data gathered from this questionnaire were instrumental in gauging the success of the instructional approaches and in understanding the learners' contentment with their language learning experience. Furthermore, the data assisted in pinpointing potential enhancements to the educational materials and teaching strategies, aiming to optimize support for future non-native Chinese language learners.

Table 1. Demographic background of the samples of this study

Class	Number	Male	Female
1a	25	12	13
1b	23	11	12
1c	24	9	15
1d	29	12	17
	101	44	57

Table 2 presents the mean perceptions and standard deviations of a sample of 101 non-native Chinese language learners from UiTM Terengganu across various aspects of their language learning experience. The mean perception scores indicate the average level of agreement or satisfaction with the given aspects, with higher scores reflecting more positive experiences. The standard deviations provide a measure of the spread or variability of the responses within the group. Notably, the aspect with the highest mean perception score is 'satisfaction of the innovative system used,' suggesting that the learners are particularly content with the system. Following closely is 'cultural learning,' indicating a high level of appreciation for the cultural components integrated into the language education. Additionally, the mean scores for 'word understanding' and 'pronunciation support' are also relatively high, indicating positive feedback in these areas. However, 'vocabulary finder' receives a slightly lower mean score, suggesting that there may be room for improvement in this aspect of the learning experience.

Table 2. Mean perception on five aspects in quantitative questionnaire

Aspect	Mean perception	Std deviation
Word understanding	4.36	0.0897
Vocabulary finder	4.17	0.7097
Pronunciation support	4.34	0.3097
Cultural learning	4.46	0.0586
Satisfaction of innovative system used	4.66	0.1266

Table 3 provides a demographic overview of the participants involved in the qualitative interviews for the study. The table indicates that a total of 30 individuals took part in the interviews, which were conducted in four distinct groups labeled as 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d. Each group consists of a varying number of participants, with 7 in group 1a, 8 in group 1b, 7 in group 1c, and 8 in group 1d. This diverse group of participants contributes to a rich variety of perspectives and insights that can be analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic.

Table 3. Demographic background of participants of interviews

Participants	Number of participants
1a	7
1b	8
1c	7
1d	8
Total	30

Table 4 presents the emerging themes from the interviews conducted with users of the Talking Chinese-English Internet Vocabulary System for Non-native Learners (TCIS). The first theme, Barriers and Challenges, highlights the difficulties learners face in mastering internet vocabulary. Many users find the TCIS to be a valuable tool, comparing it to having a native speaker explain terms online. The audio support is particularly praised for improving pronunciation, although some users express the need for more examples and context to fully grasp the usage of internet slang and jargon. They also suggest that the TCIS could be enhanced with additional interactive features. The second theme, Innovative Strategies, showcases unique approaches learners have adopted to optimize their vocabulary learning experience. Users appreciate the TCIS's role in facilitating quick comprehension of new terms and the ability to personalize their learning journey. The third theme, Cultural Understanding of Internet Words, emphasizes the TCIS's contribution to learners' insights into Chinese culture. The system's explanations and cultural notes help learners connect internet terms with popular culture, slang, and historical references, enriching their learning and fostering a deeper appreciation of Chinese culture.

Table 4. Emerging themes of the interviews

Theme	Key point	Quotations
1	Barriers and Challenges	"I found the TCIS especially helpful when it comes to learning internet vocabulary. It's like having a native speaker by my side, explaining the terms as I encounter them online." "At first, the TCIS felt a bit overwhelming, but once I got the hang of it, it became an indispensable tool for expanding my digital language skills." "The audio support in TCIS is fantastic. It allows me to hear the correct pronunciation, which is something I struggle with. This feature has greatly improved my spoken Chinese." "I wish the TCIS had more examples and context for the internet slang and jargon. Sometimes, the meanings are not clear, and I need more guidance on how to use these words in real-life situations." "The TCIS is a great resource, but I think it could be even more effective if it integrated more interactive elements, like flashcards or quizzes, to help reinforce vocabulary learning." "I appreciate how the TCIS updates its database to include new internet terms. It's important for learners like me who want to stay current with the latest online language usage."
2	Innovative Strategies	"I've been using the TCIS to learn internet vocabulary, and it's been a game-changer. The audio supports have really helped me grasp new terms quickly." "One innovative strategy I've adopted is using the TCIS in conjunction with the needs in understanding Internet words that I have encountered. This way, I can check the meaning if the new vocabulary I found in my daily reading." "The TCIS has allowed me to personalized my learning experience. I can easily search for internet words that are relevant to my interests and field of study, making the process more engaging and effective." "I find the audio feature in TCIS particularly useful. It helps me practice my pronunciation and has significantly improved my spoken Chinese." "The TCIS has introduced a fun and interactive way for me to learn internet vocabulary. The explanation makes it easier to understand the meanings of complex Internet terms." "Another strategy I've implemented is regularly reviewing the vocabulary I've learned using the TCIS. I can reinforce my memory and ensure long-term retention by frequently visit this site."
3	Cultural understanding of internet words	"The TCIS has not only helped me learn internet vocabulary but also gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. I've discovered that some internet terms are closely tied to popular culture, slang, and even historical references." "Through the TCIS, I've learned that internet words in Chinese can vary greatly depending on the region or social group. It's fascinating to explore these differences and understand how language reflects local cultures."

		"The TCIS has been an excellent tool for unlocking the nuances of Chinese internet slang. It's amazing how these phrases can carry specific meanings or connotations that are unique to the online community." "I've found that the TCIS's cultural notes and explanations are incredibly helpful in deciphering the cultural context behind internet words. These insights have enriched my overall learning experience and fostered a greater appreciation for Chinese culture." "The TCIS has provided me with a window into Chinese youth culture. By learning internet vocabulary, I've been able to engage with Chinese millennials and Generation Z on a more meaningful level." "One of the challenges I faced when learning internet words was understanding the cultural references. The TCIS has addressed this by offering explanations that help me navigate Chinese internet culture with greater ease."

5   Discussion and Conclusion

The quantitative findings indicate that the non-native Chinese language learners from UiTM Terengganu have generally positive perceptions of their language learning experience, particularly regarding the innovative system used and cultural learning aspects. The high mean perception scores for these aspects suggest that the learners are satisfied with the system and find the cultural components integrated into the education beneficial. Additionally, the relatively high mean scores for word understanding and pronunciation support indicate that these areas of the learning experience are also well-received by the learners. However, the slightly lower mean score for the vocabulary finder aspect suggests that there may be some room for improvement in this particular area. These findings provide valuable insights into the learners' experiences and can inform future improvements to the language learning system to further enhance their learning experience.

The qualitative findings reveal that while the TCIS Is a highly regarded tool for non-native Chinese learners in mastering internet vocabulary, there are areas for improvement that could enhance its effectiveness. Learners appreciate the interactive elements, such as audio support, which aids in pronunciation and demonstrates the practical application of terms. However, they express a need for more comprehensive examples and context to fully understand internet slang and jargon, suggesting that the TCIS could strengthen its educational content. Additionally, the suggestion for more interactive features, such as flashcards or quizzes, could help to reinforce learning. Despite these recommendations, the TCIS is already contributing significantly to learners' cultural understanding by providing insights into the nuances of Chinese culture, popular culture, and historical references embedded within internet terminology. These findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to language learning that not only addresses the linguistic components but also the cultural context in which the language is used.

The data from the study Indicate that the TCIS is effectively meeting the varied requirements of language learners, offering them a comprehensive suite of resources to deepen their knowledge of Chinese internet vocabulary, broaden their linguistic repertoire, refine their pronunciation skills, and delve into the cultural aspects of the language. Nonetheless, it is notable that the standard deviations accompanying the mean scores reflect a certain degree of variation among participants in their experiences and satisfaction with the system. This suggests that while the system is generally beneficial, individual experiences may differ. Additional research could be beneficial to uncover the reasons behind this heterogeneity in responses and to tailor the system even more effectively to the diverse needs of its users. [11]

The overall results Indicate that the TCIS has effectively established a conducive online learning environment, offering robust support for interactivity, customization, and mobile usage. This is encouraging news, suggesting that the system's features and architecture are in harmony with the requirements and subjective choices of language learners. [12] [2]

The data highlight the significance of a holistic strategy in language learning, where the integration of interactive, personalized, and mobile-friendly elements can significantly bolster comprehension, expand vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and deepen cultural knowledge. [13] The evidence suggests that the TCIS fosters a robust and captivating learning experience, which is likely to positively impact learners' proficiency in Chinese internet vocabulary.

Qualitative research could supply a more nuanced insight into learners' emotional reactions, attitudes, and personal experiences with the online system, thus providing a more complete perspective on its utility and identifying potential areas for enhancement as reflected by the qualitative findings of this study. [14]

In summary, this research project is designed to assess the efficacy of an internet-based, self-paced learning platform intended to empower non-native Chinese speakers in mastering internet vocabulary, an essential component of modern communication. The innovative learning methods employed by the system, which facilitate cross-cultural understanding and acquisition of Chinese vocabulary, are examined for their ability to enhance language proficiency and cultural insights. The study seeks to determine the extent to which the system supports effective learning and to identify any areas where the learning experience could be improved, ensuring that the tool is both user-friendly and educationally sound.

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