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An Analysis of Social Media Use Within and Outside of College English Classes in China

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Abstract

This case study explored how teachers and students use social media for English teaching and learning purposes within and outside of the College English classes in China. The theories of multiliteracies, new media literacies, and connectivism learning theory provided the theoretical underpinnings for this study. Data sources included classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with one teacher participant and 12 student participants in a university in China. Findings show that the teacher and students used various social media tools in multiple ways to facilitate English teaching and learning within and outside of the College English classes. Findings also reveal that although students acted both as new media consumers and new media designers within and outside of the College English classes, their practices of new media designing were more often found in the outside-of-class practices. This study identified the affordances and constraints of using social media in College English teaching and learning. This study contributes insights into EFL curriculum and pedagogy with regard to integrating social media.

Keywords:

Social media; College English classes; EFL, new media literacies

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the problem

In China, College English course is a compulsory course for all non-English major

students. The objective of College English teaching is to cultivate students' English

application abilities, especially speaking and listening, in order to make students

communicate effectively in their future studies, work, and social interactions (College

English Curriculum Teaching Requirements, 2007). However, studies show that

College English teaching outcomes are not significantly positive in a majority of

universities in China (e.g., Wang, 2017). In order to enhance the teaching outcomes of

College English courses, in 2007, The Ministry of Education in China issued the

College English Curriculum Teaching Requirements ("大学英语课程教学要求").

The document points out that "the extensive use of advanced information technology

should be encouraged; computer and web-based courses should be developed; and

students should be provided with favorable environment and facilities for language

learning" (p. 3) (应大量使用先进的信息技术，开发和建设各种基于计算机和网路的课程，为学生提供良好的语言学习环境与条件) in course design. It further proposes that:

> a new teaching model should be built on modern information technology, particularly Internet technology, so that English language teaching and learning will be, to a certain extent, free from the temporal and geographical constraints and geared towards students' individualized and autonomous learning. (p. 3) ("新的教学模式应以现代信息技术，特别是网络技术为支撑，使英语的教与学可以在一定程度上不受时间和地点的限制，朝着个性化和自主学习的方向发展")

With the development of Web 2.0 technology and social media, teaching and learning in various contexts have been changed significantly. Web 2.0 emphasizes the user-focused, collaborative aspects of technologies in order to promote interactions among users (Ward, Moule, & Lockyer, 2009). Social media emphasizes the social aspects of the Web for users to create and exchange information and can be replaceable with the term Web 2.0 (Dabbagh & Reo, 2011). The use of social media

for teaching and learning purpose has aroused great attention as more and more

research has indicated that social media could influence how teachers and students

teach, learn, and interact in and out of class around the globe (Abe & Jordan, 2013;

Tess, 2013). According to Zhang and Xue (2015), social media is widely used for

learning purposes among Chinese university students outside of classes. However,

there are only a few studies that investigated the use of social media in higher

education in China (Chao & Lo, 2011; Singman, 2012; Yang, 2013; Zhang, Li, Liu &

Miao, 2016; Zhang & Xue, 2015). And none of those studies focused on social media

use in a College English Class setting for English teaching and learning purposes. To

address this gap, this study was designed to explore teachers' and students' use of

social media within and outside of the College English classes in China.

1.2 Rationale and research questions

I chose College English classes in China as my specific research context due to my

own learning experience back in China as a university student about ten years ago. At

the time, social media was not as popular as now. Most of my English teachers

extensively used transmission approaches to English teaching which were teacher-

centered and centered around discrete language drills. Students' social interactions on

social media platforms were not a focus in my College English classes. Those

experiences inspired me to look into how College English teachers and students use

social media to facilitate English teaching and learning nowadays. As I reviewed the

literature in this area, I identified that most of the research regarding whether social

media could be effectively applied in educational field was undertaken in countries

such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, and some European countries (e.g., George &

Dellasega, 2011; Junco, Heiberger & Loken, 2011; Tess, 2013). There are only a few

studies that address social media use that serves educational purposes in China (Chao

& Lo, 2011; Lee, n.d.; Singman, 2012; Sun et al., 2017; Yang, 2013; Zhang**,** Li, Liu

& Miao, 2016; Zhang & Xue, 2015). And there is even less literature that documents

social media use for English teaching and learning purposes (Chao & Lo, 2011;

Singman, 2012; Yang, 2013). Existent research has investigated English learners'

attitudes towards the use of social media in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

context, but none of these studies focused on the use of social media within and

outside of the College English classes to serve English teaching and learning

purposes. To address this gap, this study aimed to explore how teachers and students

use social media to facilitate English teaching and learning within and outside of the

College English classes in China and the ensuing influences upon their English

teaching and learning. This study asked the following questions:

1. How do teachers and students use social media for English teaching and learning

   purposes within and outside of the College English classes in China？

2. How do teachers and students think that social media may be influencing their

   English teaching and learning (including affordances and constraints)?

3. What would teachers and students suggest for social media use to facilitate English

   teaching and learning in EFL contexts?

4. What are the implications for pedagogy and curriculum with regard to integrating

   social media in 21st EFL contexts?

1.3 An overview of the thesis

In Chapter 2, I define social media and introduce the most popular social media tools

in China. I introduce my theoretical framework which consists of multiliteracies, new

media literacies, and the connectivism learning theory. I also review the related

literature on social media use in higher education, social media and language teaching

and learning, and affordances and constraints of using social media in language

teaching and learning.

In Chapter 3, I introduce and explain the rationale for the qualitative research

method and case study design for this study. I elaborate on the research design and

data collection methods of class observation and interview. Then I describe my data

analysis processes followed by my ethical considerations and the limitations of this

study.

In Chapter 4, I present major findings with direct quotes from the teacher and

student interviews and vignettes of the class observations.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the major findings to respond to the research questions.

I also propose recommendations for pedagogy and curriculum with regard to

integrating social media in 21st EFL contexts.

Chapter 2

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1 Defining social media

Social media is widely-used for sharing information, opinions, experience, and

knowledge (Heinonen, 2011). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as "a

group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological

foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated

content" (p. 61). Similarly, Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, and Gonzalez Canche

(2012) referred to social media as "web-based and mobile applications that allow

individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user-generated or

existing content, in digital environments through multi-way communication" (p.1).

Both definitions of social media focus on creating and exchanging user-generated

contents. Davis et al. (2012) in particular paid more attention to online engagement

through various ways of communication.

2.2 Social media tools in China

Social media is gaining popularity in China in recent years. There are several popular social media tools in China, such as Sina Weibo (a microblog, the Chinese equivalent to Twitter), RenRen (a social networking site, the Chinese equivalent to Facebook), WeChat and QQ (instant message tools), and Youku & Tudou (online video sites, the Chinese equivalent to YouTube). In particular, WeChat has become the most influential one among all of the social media sites in China.

China has the largest population in the World with an estimated number of 1,300,000,000, including over 900,000,000 WeChat users as of 2017 (Statista, 2017). WeChat is not only a communication tool for people now, but has become a key part of leisure activities for its users. For example, WeChat has a unique function called "Moments", through which users could post their own news, share articles, upload photos and videos, share location, and interact with friends by choosing to 'like' or writing comments for other's "Moments". WeChat supports different types of instant messages, such as text messages, picture messages, voice messages, and video messages. It also allows users to create different chatting groups based on shared interests and various needs.

Sina Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter, was launched in 2009. Its

functions and features are very similar to Twitter. For example, users could create

their own Tweets and share them with their followers. Also, users could follow

anybody based on their interests. Besides, users could talk to anybody through

"@user's name", and they could use hashtags# to highlight the hot topic. According

to a recent statistic, the active users of Sina Weibo has reached over 300,000,000 in

China (Statista, 2017).

QQ, an instant message tool, has over 800,000,000 users by the end of 2016 in

China (Statista, 2017). In addition to sending messages, it also provides other popular

services such as social games, micro-blogging, and music. It is worth mentioning that

the most popular function is called "QQ Zone", where users could share blogs,

photos, and videos, and engage with each other.

RenRen is a widely used social media tool among Chinese university students.

Each university has its own network, so it is convenient to find and add alumni. Also,

people can easily find their old classmates and friends through its search criteria, such

as gender, education background, and hometown. Students from different universities

could build connections with each other through RenRen.

The rapid growth and increasing popularity of social media tools in English learning in China thus inspired me to look into whether and how teachers and students use different social media tools and functions in English teaching and learning within and outside of the College English classes.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The theories of multiliteracies, new media literacies, and connectivism learning theory provide the conceptual underpinning for this study.

2.3.1 Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies, a term that was created by the New London Group to describe "the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity" (New London Group, 1996, p. 63). The New London Group proposed *multiliteracies* to address the challenges and influences that technological developments and cultural and linguistic diversity bring to education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). One of the New London Group's (1996) focuses sheds light on myriad modes and media of meaning making due to the rapid technological

changes in the new era. Multimodality is a significant characteristic of multiliteracies

and reflects that people use different modes to communicate (Lankshear & Knobel,

2011). Moreover, Raith (2009) proposes that

> in Web 2.0, which networks people from all over the world, intercultural
>
> communicative competence as an integral part of multiliteracies is of great
>
> importance. Consequently, foreign language learners must be prepared for
>
> these multimodal environments, as speaking the language without
>
> understanding the multimodal contexts in which it is embedded, is not
>
> sufficient for global communication. (p. 276)

For this research, multimodality inspires me to explore different semiotic tools

that teachers and students use to communicate and facilitate English teaching and

learning. It also provides lenses for me to look at how students practice English in

various social media communities all over the world in response to the cultural and

linguistic diversity. Multiliteracies also provides insights into how College English

teaching and curriculum in China could be inclusive of technological diversity.

2.3.2 New media literacies

New Media Consortium (2005) conceived the new media literacies as:

    the set of abilities and skills where aural, visual, and digital literacy overlap.

    These include the ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to

    recognize and use that power, to manipulate and transform digital media, to

    distribute them pervasively, and to easily adapt them to new forms (p. 8).

    Compared with New Media Consortium (2005), Jenkins (2009) further

summarized new media literacies as "a set of cultural competencies and social skills"

which change the core of literacy from "individual expression to community

involvement" (p. 4). Moreover, Jenkins (2009) proposed eleven new media literacies

skills:

·Play: To learn through experimenting freely and speculating open-endedly.

·Performance. To take other's roles and positions and to think and act from

different perspectives.

·Simulation. To interpret existing models and constructing new models.

·Distributed cognition. To use diverse tools to expand cognition and intelligence.

·Collective intelligence. To achieve the same goal through collaboration, networking, and using other members' knowledge.

·Appropriation. To choose appropriate media content through different media and to integrate and reconstruct media content based on people's understandings and needs.

·Transmedia navigation. The ability to use different media and collect and integrate information through different media.

·Networking. To search for, synthesize, and disseminate information by navigating through different communities.

·Multitasking. The ability to scan the whole information change concentrations at the same time.

·Judgment. The ability to think critically and evaluate the reliability and credibility of information in order to obtain the accurate information.

·Negotiation. To understand and respect different ideas, culture, and value while navigate across different communities.

Most of the research reviewed focused on the technical part of the new media (Kron, Gjerde, Sen, & Fetters, 2010; Kukulska-Hulme, 2009), while some other studies tend to address the socio-cultural aspects of new media (Jenkins, 2009; Lin, Li, Deng, & Lee, 2013). The socio-cultural aspects of new media suggest users could choose the most appropriate new media tool to express their own ideas, and also add value to their media contents based on their own needs and purposes (Lin et al., 2013). As Chen, Wu, and Wang (2011) stated, the notion of new media literacies has highlighted the shift from consuming media to prosuming media. Consuming media literacy is regarded as the ability to "access and use media", while prosuming media literacy is regarded as the ability not only to access and use media but also generate "media content" (p. 85).

For my research, new media literacies provides a theoretical lens for me to understand how social media use influence students' literacy practices within and outside of the College English classes. It would also provide insights into exploring how teachers and students analyze, evaluate, and critique social media use for English teaching and learning with regard to its affordances and constraints.

2.3.3 Connectivism learning theory

Karen Stephenson (n.d.) stated:

Experience has long been considered the best teacher of knowledge. Since we

cannot experience everything, other people's experiences, and hence other

people, become the surrogate for knowledge. 'I store my knowledge in my

friends' is an axiom for collecting knowledge through collecting people (n.p.)

In 2005, Siemens and Downes proposed connectivism learning theory which

particularly emphasizes the key role of learning networks in connecting learners to

share knowledge and search for new knowledge. A learning network can simply be

defined as connections between "learning communities, information sources, and

individuals" (Marhan, 2006, p.4). Connectivism learning theory accounts for the fact

that "knowledge and cognition are distributed across networks of people and

technology, and learning is the process of connecting, growing, and navigating those

networks" (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009, p. 11). According to Siemens (2005),

learners could learn new knowledge through connecting to and providing information

into a community. A community can be viewed as a connection point of a network---

which is called node. Two or more nodes are connected to form a big network in

order to share information (Kop & Hill, 2008). Connectivism specifically stresses the

importance of learning networks and the connections between them (Tinmaz, 2012).

Learning networks could provide learners with opportunities to link various

disciplines. As Siemens (2005) asserted, "the ability to see connections between

fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill" (p. 7).

In the digital age, one crucial role of social media is to provide and maintain

connections among people. It also provides learners a huge network for them to

connect with one another to share and obtain information (Tinmaz, 2012). Just as

Siemens (2006) said on connectivism, "the learning is the network" (p. 16).

Therefore, learning in the age of social media requires the ability to connect to

networks to access and use specialized information as needed (Selwyn, 2011).

For this research, connectivism provides a theoretical basis for me to view teachers'

and students' creation of or participation into social media communities through the

lens of creating and participating in various learning networks.

2.4 Summary of theoretical framework

The theories of multiliteracies, new media literacies, and connectivism learning theory closely relate to the research problem under investigation. Multiliteracies expands the scope of literacies to guide the process of analyzing different social media tools used within and outside of the College English classes. New media literacies provides prisms for me to understand how teachers' and students' English literacy practices could be enabled and constrained by social media use. Connectivism learning theory provides insight into how teachers and students could teach and learn English within different social networks.

2.5 Introduction to Literature Review

By examining the existing literature, I found that there was an abundance of studies about applying social media in higher education and language teaching and learning in several Western and Asian countries, but only a few studies examined this topic in China. Given the focus of this study, relevant literature necessary to this study includes social media in higher education, social media and language teaching and

learning, and affordances and constraints of using social media for language teaching

and learning.

2.5.1 Social media in higher education

Research on social media in the educational field has increased significantly as social

media began to impact how teachers and students teach, learn, and interact in and out

of class (e.g., Abe & Jordan, 2013; Baľöz, 2016; Kanasin, 2014; Tess, 2013). Ziegler

(2007) suggested that social media may change educational system as it could

stimulate students to be proactive learners rather than passive learners.

Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2011) conducted a research through an

online survey in higher education in the US which addressed that "nearly two-thirds

of all teaching faculty have used social media in their class sessions … and 30% have

posted content for students to view outside class" (p. 11). Abe and Jordan (2013)

examined relevant studies on the use of social media in higher education and

acknowledged that social media allowed students to access resources in ways that

they could never before. They also suggested that "social media provides educators

with the exciting new opportunity to connect with students in a manner that continues

to provoke thought and discussion outside of the classroom setting" (p.16). Students

and teachers are becoming more aware of how social media facilitated the

collaborative aspects of their learning and teaching (Chen & Bryer, 2012). George

and Dellasega (2011) explored the influence of integrating social media into two

graduate-level medical humanities curricula. Their case studies demonstrated that

social media could help students with problem-solving, network building, and

collaboration.

Some of the literature shows how students' use of social media could

positively influence their educational performances. Junco et al. (2011) examined the

influence of Twitter on College students' engagement and grades through a

quantitative method of controlled experimental research. They found that student

engagement and grades were improved by integrating Twitter into their studies. Tess

(2013) reviewed and summarized research about the role of social media in the higher

education classrooms. The findings indicated that social media could be an effective

tool for teaching as well as to promote students' active learning. Though these studies

reveal positive influences of integrating social media into higher education, there are

also some debates on the use of social media in higher education. For example, Junco

and Chickering (2010) pointed out that some barriers might exist between teachers

and students when they are using social media to communicate. They stated that

social media might cause misinterpretation of communications because the nonverbal

aspects of communication (i.e., body language, eye contact, vocal tone, and volume)

are missing. Gikas and Grant (2013) conducted a qualitative research through focus

group interviews which demonstrated how much social media could distract students

because of its entertainment functions.

As social media is widely used in the educational field nowadays, there is an

increasing number of inquiries into integrating social media in higher education all

around the world. Research on how social media can be integrated into higher

education is still in high demand.

2.5.2 Social media and language teaching and learning

With the continuous development of social media technologies, more and more

researchers have noticed its great possibilities for language teaching and learning

(e.g., Chao & Lo, 2011; Laire, Casteleyn, & Mottart, 2012; Yang, 2013). Digital

storytelling website is one type of social media that features user-generated contents

and interactivity. Digital storytelling can be defined as "giving expression to old

forms of storytelling in a modern way" (Xu, Park, & Baek, 2011, p. 182). Digital

storytelling through a website allows users to generate and publish their own stories

online, and share their stories with audiences and receive feedbacks. The emergence

of digital storytelling websites aroused researchers' attention. Many studies have

explored the effectiveness of integrating digital storytelling into language teaching

and learning and demonstrated that digital storytelling could help to develop students'

writing skills (Ballast, Stephens, & Radcliffe, 2008; Gakhar & Thompson, 2007).

Gakhar and Thompson (2007) demonstrated that students could become more creative

and active in digital storytelling writing process, as they could select and design

materials by themselves to make their own stories. Ballast et al. (2008) examined

whether digital storytelling could have effects on students' attitudes toward writing.

The result showed that digital storytelling could better engage students in the writing

process and in careful revisions of their stories. Laire et al. (2012) examined how

social media influences writing activities within the EFL classroom. They focused on

Storify (i.e., a digital storytelling website) and designed a lesson with it. They taught

5 different classes and then obtained feedback from their students regarding their

attitude towards using Storify as the teaching tool. The results showed that using

social media to teach writing had a positive effect on student engagement during their

learning processes. Most of the students believed Storify could help to improve their

writing performance and they regarded Storify as a useful teaching and learning tool

in EFL practices.

According to Baſöz (2016), many researchers have focused on learners'

attitudes towards the use of social media in EFL context. Yang (2013) investigated

EFL learners' attitudes towards using Facebook in a university language course. The

result showed that the students were positive towards using Facebook for interactive

learning. Razak (2013) found that EFL learners perceived that Facebook could be a

useful tool to help with their writing performances in an interactive learning

environment, which promoted interactions between learners and teachers and

"develops a sense of belonging" (Baſöz, 2016, p.431). Furthermore, Kanasin (2014)

also found that students had positive attitudes towards integrating Facebook into their writing classes which increased their motivations in English writing.

Grosseck and Holotescu (2008) noticed that Twitter has great potential in the language classrooms. They found that Twitter has the potential to promote collaborative writing and idea stimulation among different users. With Twitter, users could write sentences in the form of tweets to interact with other users and social groups. Besides, Sekiguchi (2012) suggested that the learning groups on Twitter could motivate EFL learners to participate regularly in learning activities.

Wikis is always used as a tool for group activities because it allows users to edit the webpage together (Richardson, 2010). Chao and Lo (2011) did a survey in a university in Taiwan to investigate ELF learners' attitudes toward Wikis, and they found that EFL learners showed positive perceptions toward wikis as a collaborative writing platform. Similarly, Thorne and Payne (2005) found that writing platforms such as wikis promoted students' interaction with their peers when reviewing existent literature. Singman (2012) did a quantitative research in EFL classes at a Taiwan university to examine whether wiki-based activities could help to improve students'

abilities of grammar usage. The result showed that there was a positive correlation

between students' time spent on wiki and their improvements in grammar.

YouTube has been utilized in a wide range of practices in EFL classrooms

(Brook, 2011). According to Silviyanti (2014), YouTube enabled practices in

listening. Moreover, EFL leaners can easily access audio-visual materials on

YouTube which may improve their listening comprehension skills (Kuo, 2009).

Furthermore, YouTube has positive effects on promoting students' motivation and

their speaking and listening because students could find various videos materials on

YouTube based on their own interests (Baẙöz, 2016).

Hung (2010) examined the utilization of video blog in English course and

found that video blogs helped English learners to organize and reflect on their

learning activities. According to Aydin (2014), video blog had some prominent

advantages on career development, collaborative learning, and "visual representation"

(p.247).

To conclude, social media has been widely used in language teaching and

learning. The major findings of the literature reviewed refer to the positive effects of

applying social media in language teaching and learning.

2.5.3 Summary of affordances and constraints of using social media in language teaching and learning

Researchers also have some concerns toward using social media for language teaching and learning. The following sections will discuss the affordances and constraints in more details.

2.5.3.1 Summary of affordances of using social media in language teaching and learning

The benefits of using social media in language teaching and learning can be summarized into three parts.

To begin with, students feel much more relaxed and would be more willing to engage and interact when learning language with social media (Kamnoetsin, 2014). Wu and Hsu (2011) conducted a research on the influences of social media on EFL learners in a university in Taiwan. Yunus, Salehi and Chenzi (2012) explored integrating social media into ESL writing classroom in a university in Malaysia. They both found that English language learners could release their pressure when

expressing thoughts and sharing ideas on social media and be more confident to

interact with classmates in English. According to White's (2009) study in Japan as

well as Yunus and Salehi's (2012) study in Malaysia, the use of social networking

sites in English writing classes promoted students' motivation and engagement in

online EFL classrooms and increased the interaction between teachers and students.

Zaidieh (2012) investigated the challenges and opportunities in the use of social

media in education in Malaysia and found that social media lowered students' stress

levels when they answered questions since they did not need to answer questions right

away like in a regular onsite class.

Secondly, the discussion group feature of social media could enhance

students' investment and motivation in English learning processes (White, 2009).

Students gained more confidence and become more motivated through interacting

with Facebook friends with diverse English proficiency levels (Yunus, et al., 2012).

According to Promnitz-Hayashi (2011), students with lower English proficiency

levels were engaged in online discussions in an enjoyable way because they were able

to control their own paces and choose different difficult levels of their questions.

Moreover, students could make online activities easy or challenging according to

different levels of proficiency to realize student-centered learning. In White's (2009)

study of using Facebook to motivate Japanese students' academic writing, it showed

when a student comes across a problem posted by his group members, this student

would seek the way to solve the problem by himself and returns to answer the

question more carefully, because he knows that his group members would read his

answers and reply back.

Thirdly, the use of social media could promote learners' thinking capacity

(Kamnoetsin, 2014). According to Yunus and Salehi (2012), integrating social media

in English language learning had positive effects on students' creative thinking and

brainstorming abilities. They found that group discussions on social media promoted

students' brainstorming as well as their critical thinking skills. Shyamlee and Phil

(2012) explored the effect of technology-assisted English teaching and learning.

According to them, multimedia technology could enhance students' language learning

interest, improve students' thinking and communication capacity, and improve

teaching effectiveness.

2.5.3.2 Summary of constraints of using social media in language teaching and learning

Despite those advantages discussed above, researchers also mention some main

problems about the use of social media in language teaching and learning

environment. For example, researchers suggested that social media cannot "play the

leading role in teaching" (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012, p.153). The use of multimedia

technology may lead to the "loss of speaking communication" and may cause

"restriction of students' thinking potential" as students could always search for

answers or ask for others' help through social media (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012, p.153).

Besides, Wu and Hsu (2011) mentioned that some students worry that other group

members could see their mistakes. Therefore, some students feel that such an open

environment of social media might decrease their motivation in writing. Furthermore,

some other students were more willing to write on papers and read books instead of

using social media as a learning tool. They did not consider social media a suitable

platform for teaching and learning English (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010).

Another main concern of using social media in English classes is distraction

(Kamnoetsin, 2014). For instance, when using Facebook in classes, students may be

distracted by other information or they might want to look at other people's homepage

or post their own news instead of focusing on English learning (Yunus et al., 2012).

2.6 Summary of literature review

The literature review has shown that social media could be a useful tool to serve

educational purposes as well as to facilitate language teaching and learning. The

major findings of the reviewed literature refer to the positive effects of applying social

media in language teaching and learning. As shown in the reviewed literature, there

was a large amount of research that investigated the use of social media in EFL

settings. However, only a few studies that document social media use for English

teaching and learning purposes in China (Chao & Lo, 2011; Singman, 2012; Yang,

2013). And none of them focuses on social media use in a College English Class

setting. Therefore, I considered it necessary to conduct this research to address the

gap in the literature regarding how teachers and students use social media to facilitate

English teaching and learning within and outside of the College English classes in

China and the ensuing influences upon their English teaching and learning.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology

3.1 Why qualitative research?

Qualitative and quantitative research methods are two popular approaches for

educational research (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). According to Newman

(1998), quantitative research is conducted "when one begins with a theory (or

hypothesis) and test for confirmation or disconfirmation of that hypothesis" (p. 3). In

contrast, qualitative research might lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon

or issue by using words to describe the subject (Babbie, 2001). Qualitative researchers

tend to view the social world as their fields of inquiry (Whitley & Crawford, 2005).

According to Stake (1995), subjectivity is an essential part for qualitative researchers

to investigate and understand a phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated,

"qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make

sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.

3). Thus, in this study, I consider a qualitative approach as a good fit to explore and

understand teachers' and students' use of social media for College English teaching

and learning in China. Besides, given the above-mentioned research gap, I concur

with Creswell (2009) that "if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood

because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach" (p.

18).

3.2 Why case study?

Yin (1984) defined the case study method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a

contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clear; and in which multiple sources of evidence are

used" (p. 23). In this study, I collected multiple sources of data from interviews and

class observations. Case study researchers investigate a "bounded system (a case) or

multiple bounded systems (cases)" over a period of time by collecting multiple

sources of data and describing the case and summarizing themes (Creswell, 2013, p.

97). This study focused on how teachers and students used social media within and

outside of the college English classes in China. Thus, in this study, I define the case as

a college class in China where the College English teacher and students used social

media within and outside of the classroom. Geographically, the case of the college

class is situated in a comprehensive university in Shandong province in China. This is

a 2017 college class and all the students in this college class are in their second term

of the first-year undergraduate study.

Yin (1994) elaborated on three categories of case studies, namely,

explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. Stake (1995) pointed out the purpose of the

inquiry determines the type of case studies. I define the study as an exploratory case

study because my research aimed to explore the phenomenon of new media use in a

Chinese College English classes "which serves as a point of interest to the

researcher." (Zainal, 2007, p. 3).

3.3 Research design

Since this study aimed to explore how teachers and students used social media to

facilitate English teaching and learning within and outside of the College English

classes in China, I chose a university which located at my hometown as the research

site. My network allowed for easy access to this university and teachers and students

in College English classes. Considering the manageability of the research, the study's

participants consist of one College English teacher and twelve students who sat on this teacher's class in this university (see Table 3.1 for participants' profiles). The criterion for selecting the one College English teacher participant was that he or she was using social media tools to teach College English class and was willing to participate in this research, and students' participation was based on their willingness. Interested students therefore contacted me directly and granted me consent.

Table 3.1

Participants' profiles

	Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Major**
Teacher	Tian	Female	
Student 1	Zhang	Male	Vehicle Engineering
Student 2	Li	Male	Transportation
Student 3	Wang	Male	Transportation
Student 4	Zhou	Female	Linguistics and Chinese Literature
Student 5	Gao	Female	Linguistics and Chinese Literature
Student 6	Ma	Female	Linguistics and Chinese Literature

Student 7	Sui	Male	Communication Engineering
Student 8	Han	Male	Communication Engineering
Student 9	Fu	Female	Accounting
Student 10	Liu	Female	Accounting
Student 11	Wu	Female	Accounting
Student 12	Yang	Female	Accounting

In this case study, I used classroom observation and interview as data collection methods. For social media use in class, I drew on both interview data and observation data. For social media use outside of class, I only drew on interview data and relied on students' report of their social media practices outside of class since it was challenging to follow and observe each student's social media use outside of class.

Triangulation is a frequently used strategy in strengthening qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). In this research, I collected interview data from both teacher's perspective and students' perspectives. I also conducted classroom

observation. Data from various sources formed a triangulation of data which ensured

the trustworthiness of the research findings.

3.3.1 Class observation

Observation is defined as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and

artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.79).

Observation enables researchers to observe participants and gather data in a natural

setting. The college English class that I observed was a 2017 college class in a

university and all the students in this class were in the second term of their first-year

undergraduate study. For this research, I conducted non-participant class observations

to collect data about how social media were used within classes. For example, what

kinds of social media tools teachers and students used, what kinds of the social media

activities they did, and how they did such activities. According to Taylor-Powell and

Steele (1996), "seeing and listening are key to observation" (p.1), and one of the

obvious strengths of using observation as a data collection method is that researchers

could record what they intend to investigate according to their own needs other than

relying on "people's willingness and ability to respond to questions" (p.1). I observed

six classes over one month. Because recoding was not permitted in class, I took field

notes in class and also added details into the field notes after class.

3.3.2 Interview

As a widely used data collection method of qualitative research, interviews can help

"explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific

matters" (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 292). According to

Silverman (2000), interviews are regarded as a useful data collection method to gain a

deep understanding of social phenomena. Interviews are good fit for qualitative

research "where little is already known about the study phenomenon or where

detailed insights are required from individual participants" (Gill et al., 2008, p. 292).

Interviews as a data collection method allow the researcher to get a more detailed

response from the participants (Bryman, 2006). Thus, by interviewing student and

teacher participants, I gained more detailed responses and insights about their use of

social media within and outside of the College English classes as well as their

perceptions towards using social media to facilitate English teaching and learning.

In this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. Interview with the teacher participant lasted for approximately thirty minutes. For each student participant, it lasted for about fifteen to twenty minutes. Interview questions were closely related to the research questions, such as how teachers and students used social media to facilitate English teaching and learning, their perceptions toward it and suggestions (See Appendix E and F). Interviews were audio-record with permission from the participants. All interviews were conducted in Chinese. After I transcribed the interviews, member checking was conducted to help me to enhance the trustworthiness of the research, as participants were given the opportunity to review and make corrections and suggestions on their interview transcripts.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is a sustained process as the researcher continually reflects upon the data throughout the whole research process (Creswell, 2009). According to Glesne (1999), the complicated processes of coding data in qualitative research are as follows:

coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting

those scraps of collected data (i.e., observation notes, interview transcripts,

memos, documents, and notes form relevant literature) that are applicable to your

research purpose. By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, you

create an organizational framework. (p. 135).

After I transcribed all the interviews and fieldnotes, I applied a "hybrid

approach" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 2) of inductive and deductive

thematic analysis to analyze data. I generated deductive themes which derived from

the theoretical framework and literature review (See table 3.2), such as "multimodal

meaning making" developed from multiliteracies; "collective intelligence",

"transmedia navigation", and "networking" derived from new media literacies. These

deductive themes shed light on the teacher and students' social media practices within

and outside of the College English class. Besides, the deductive themes such as "it

was convenient to build relationships and networks through social media" were

derived from the connectivism learning theory; "social media promoted

communications between students and teachers", "social media promoted

collaborative study", and "social media could easily distract students from learning"

were developed from literature review and were insightful for the influences of using

social media to facilitate English teaching and learning. I coded the transcripts by

matching the segments of data with the deductive themes. Inductive analysis refers to

the development of "concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from

the raw data" (Thomas, D. R., 2006, p. 238). Accordingly, I generated inductive

themes through detailed coding of raw data (See table 3.3), for example: I found that

the topic about social media breaking the space and time constraints for College

English teaching and learning constantly emerged from both interviews and class

observations. Therefore, I developed a theme of "fewer constraints on space and

time". I found in the interviews that the teacher and students constantly mentioned

they could get access to rich English study materials and information through social

media, thus, I added the inductive theme of "social media provided rich English

materials and information".

Based on both the deductive and inductive analysis of the data, I identified

themes to "indicate areas of consensus in response to the research questions" (Fereday

& Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 7). Eventually, I categorized and summarized themes to

report findings and reached the conclusions.

Table 3.2

Deductive themes

Theoretical Perspectives / Literature Review	Themes
Multiliteracies	Multimodal meaning making
New media literacies	Collective intelligence Transmedia navigation Networking
Connectivism learning theory	It was convenient to build relationships and networks through social media
Literature review	Social media promoted communications between students and teachers. Social media promoted collaborative study.

	Social media could easily distract students from learning

Table 3.3

Inductive themes

Data source	Themes
Interviews	Fewer constraints on space and time Social media provided rich English materials and information Social media could easily cause miscommunication and spread unreliable information Using social media tools on cellphone or laptop may hurt eyes and skin
Fieldnotes	Social media made study relaxing and interesting

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues were taken into consideration throughout the whole process of participant recruitment and data collection. I started recruiting participants after I received the ethics approval from Western University. To begin with, I firstly secured permission from the president of the college to enter the research site. Then I began to recruit teacher participant first. I talked to the potential teacher to see if he or she used social media tools. After I found the teacher who met this criterion, I gave her the letter of information (See Appendix A). Then with the teacher's consent, I went into her class to recruit student participants. I introduced my research in one of her classes and disseminated letters of information (See Appendix B). Each student participant then got a consent form (See Appendix C and D). I began to involve participants in my research after I obtained their consents. Participants were notified in the letter of Information that participation in the study was completely voluntary; they could withdraw from the study at any time; there are no known risks to participating in this study, and there was no penalty for refusal to participate. As a researcher, I act ethically through the whole process of data collection. The nature of the study is fully explained to participants and all questions are answered to participants' satisfaction.

The interview sites and time are based on participants' preference and interviews are

only audio-recorded with permission from the participants. A pseudonym was given

to each participant in order to protect their privacy. My supervisor and I are the only

people who can have access to the data. The information collected is used for research

purposes only and is kept in a secure place.

3.6 Limitations of the research

There are several limitations of the research. First, it was challenging to follow and

observe each student's social media use outside of class. To ensure manageability of

this Master's level research project, I only drew on interview data and relied on

students' report of their social media practices outside of class. I would suggest that

future research could also observe students' social media use outside of class in order

to achieve greater depth of the study. Second, the faithfulness of interview translation

was considered as one potential limitation of my study as all interviews were

conducted in Chinese, and I translated the direct quote into English by myself to

report findings. Besides, I assume that readers of my thesis might have concerns about

the generalizability of case studies (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). I would like

to highlight Yin's (2003) viewpoint that case study does not draw on "statistical

generalization" due to the limited amount of sample. Instead, he emphasized the

"analytic generalization" of case studies (p. 33) because they are "generalizable to

theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (p. 10). Therefore, it is

my hope that the conceptual conclusions developed from my research findings could

"be exported to provide explanatory theory for the experiences of other individuals

who are in comparable situations" (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 311).

3.7 Summary

With the theoretical lens of multiliteracies, new media literacy, and connectivism

learning theory, a single case study was designed in this research in order to gain in-

depth understanding of the research topic. To achieve the goal, data were collected

through interviews and class observations. Through inductive and deductive analysis

of the data, themes are generated in order to get the general conclusions and

understandings. I will report the findings of the research in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

4. Findings

In this chapter, I present findings to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and students use social media for English teaching and learning

   purposes within and outside of the College English classes in China？

2. How do teachers and student think that social media may be influencing their

   English teaching and learning (including affordances and constraints)?

3. What would teachers and students suggest for social media use to facilitate English

teaching and learning in EFL contexts?

   I provide direct quotes from the interviews and vignettes of the class

observations to illustrate my findings.

4. 1 The use of social media within and outside of the College English Classes

Both interview and observation data showed that teacher and students used various

social media tools in multiple ways to facilitate English teaching and learning within

and outside of the College English classes for both formal and informal learning.

According to Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012), formal learning refers to "learning that is

institutionally sponsored or highly structured (i.e., learning that happens in courses,

classrooms, and schools)" (p. 4). In contrast, informal learning is described as

"learning and engagement that occurs outside formal school settings and happens

throughout people's lives in a highly personalized manner based on their particular

needs, interests, and past experiences" (Bull et al., 2008, p.103). Informal learning

always happens in a social context where learning activities are "loosely structured,

learner directed, and mediated by peers who often share the same values, attitudes,

interests, and beliefs" (Boekaerts & Minnaert, 1999, p. 536).

4.1.1 Multimodal meaning making

Through the interviews and class observations, I found that teacher and students used

different semiotic resources to make meaning through multiple social media tools

within and outside of the College English classes. The following table represents the

most popular social media tools that students and teacher use to facilitate English

teaching and learning within and outside of the College English classes.

Table 4

Most frequently used social media tools

Participants	Social media tools
Teacher Tian	QQ: instant message tool WeChat: instant message tool Network teaching platform (网络教学平台): an online educational platform Lan Mo Yun Ban Ke (蓝墨云班课)：an App which allows teachers to manage class activities Ke Tang Pai (课堂派)：an online interactive classroom App
Students	QQ: instant message tool WeChat: instant message tool Sina Weibo: microblog

	RenRen groups: an online social media community
	Lan Mo Yun Ban Ke(蓝墨云班课) :an App which allows students to join class activities
	Ke Tang Pai (课堂派): an online interactive classroom App
	CC talk：an live video App for real-time interaction between teachers and students
	Ying Yu Qu Pei Yin(英语趣配音)：an English dubbing App
	Ying Yu Liu Li Shuo (英语流利说)：an App of English speaking community
	Wang Yi Gong Kai Ke (网易公开课)：an E-Learning website

	Taisha forum (太傻论坛)：an online English study forum

In the interview, Student Li stated that he used many various types of social media tools in different ways to help him learn English in an informal learning context:

I think there are a few popular social media tools such as QQ, WeChat, and Sina Weibo. These tools provide me multiple ways to learn English. For example, my classmates and I always text each other or send pictures and voice messages in QQ to communicate about homework and questions emerged from English study. We often share passages, videos as well as beautiful English songs with each other in Sina Weibo. Besides, I follow a few good "WeChat Official Accounts"(公众号) regarding English learning in WeChat, so that I could browse the passages and view videos posted by "Public Numbers" everyday.

Student Fu added:

I use Ying Yu Qu Pei Yin (an English dubbing App) to practice my oral English. I can dub a film and have it posted, so that other learners can click my videos and listen to it. Sometimes, the other learners could point out my shortcomings and provide me feedback, which is really helpful.

Student Yang noted that she liked using QQ voice chat to practice oral English with her classmates for informal learning. Similarly, Student Han mentioned that he always chatted with his friends in English by text or voice messages in WeChat to practice English writing and speaking. He also practiced English writing by posting

his status in Moments (a personal blog in WeChat). Student Wang said that with

social media, he could pose a question not only in text but also in forms of picture,

voice, as well as video, which made this question easy to understand.

Teacher Tian mentioned that she used different resources to help students

learn English. She uploaded different kinds of English learning materials such as

documents, audios, and videos onto the network teaching platform regularly. Every

student could have access to them.

4.1.2 Collective intelligence

Data showed that collective intelligence is a significant character of the teacher's and

students' use of social media in informal learning contexts. All the student

participants mentioned that they had both a WeChat group and a QQ group which

were made up of their College English teacher and the whole class students. Student

Li said that when someone came across great English learning materials, he or she

would share them in these two social media groups and the other members could learn

from these materials. In this way, students could use other's knowledge to achieve

English learning goals through shared English learning materials and online collective

discussions. Student Sui noted that when he encountered an English learning problem,

he would ask for help in their social media groups. The other members would come

up with different solutions to help him solve the problem. Besides, he used to post his

own English learning questions on Sina Weibo so that he could gather ideas from

English learners from all over the country. In this example, Student Sui made good

use of other's knowledge to solve his own problems. Student Han echoed Student Li

and Student Sui:

> I like to search for useful English learning experience and strategies through
> different social media groups and forums. Moreover, I followed a few good
> WeChat Official Accounts regarding English study in WeChat. These WeChat
> Official Accounts would share many English learning essays with learners. I
> often read the essays and then discussed with other readers by reading and
> writing comments under the essays. Through reading the comments under
> these essays which were wrote by other readers, I feel I learn quite a lot from
> these comments.

4.1.3 Transmedia navigation

Transmedia navigation refers to meaning makers' ability to use different media and

collect and integrate information through different media (Jenkins, 2009). The

following vignette of Student Fu's presentation represents her way of transmedia

navigation in a formal learning context.

Vignette 4.1.3.1

>Student Fu had a presentation in class and her topic was to introduce the very
famous movie called "The Pursuit of Happiness". During her presentation, she
firstly showed a small clip of the film to the class through Youku (an online
video site). Next, she presented several screenshots of movie reviewers'
comments toward this film that she picked from different social media
communities. At the end, she summarized these comments and put forward
her own points of view towards this movie.

>In Vignette 4.1.3.1, Student Fu showed her ability to orchestrate different

social media tools to make meanings, and to collect and synthesize information. For

example, in her presentation, she showed video from Youku as well as screenshots of

movie reviewers' comments from multiple social media communities. She

synthesized all the information and redesigned them in PowerPoint. All these

demonstrated her new media literacies skill of transmedia navigation. In the

interviews, Student Ma and Student Zhou also mentioned about the skills to search,

collect, and synthesize new media information. For instance, Student Ma shared

>When I need to do a presentation in class, I would search for various
information and materials through different social media platforms. I could
pick up helpful information and recombine them to serve my own purpose.

Student Zhou added that when writing a report or essay, she would gather materials

from different social media platforms such as passages, pictures, and PowerPoints.

She could integrate all information the materials together to show her thoughts.

Student Liu noted that she could gather tons of information about English learning

strategies and materials through different social media platforms for informal

learning, and she elaborated:

> I always navigate across multiple social media platforms, just like a hungry
> fish swimming in the sea of knowledge to search for "food". I gather different
> kinds of "food", put them together, digest and absorb them, to make them my
> own nutrition.

According to Jenkins (2009), students' new media practices of transmedia

navigation manifest through using different media to collect and synthesize

information. All the above examples demonstrated students' capabilities of

transmedia navigation in both formal and informal learning contexts, as they could act

both the role of new media consumers and new media designers.

4.1.4 Networking

Networking penetrated into the teacher's and all student participants' daily English

teaching and learning practices. The teacher and all students held the same viewpoint

that social media played an essential role in English teaching and learning practice

when they try to "search for, synthesize, and disseminate information" (Jenkins, 2009,

p. 91) in informal learning contexts. Student Fu elaborated:

> I join different English study groups and forums on social media platforms,
> such as RenRen groups (an online social media community), WeChat groups,
> QQ groups, and Taisha forum (an online English study forum). I like browsing
> the posts from each social media community in my spare time. I sort out all
> the useful information and try to absorb and synthesize them into my own
> knowledge. And I also like to share my own point of view in my class groups
> and on different social media communities. Besides, I always reply to or
> comment on other people's posts using my own knowledge. This gives me a
> strong sense of achievement.

Student Yang added that,

> It is very convenient to use different social media tools to search for
> information that I need. I enjoy the process of synthesizing pieces of
> information into one complete idea. For example, once I saw a group member
> posted an English study question on a social media community and I wanted
> to help her solve the problem. I searched for posts regarding the similar
> question through several English learning social media groups. Then, I
> summarized all the replies and comments and replied to that group member in
> detail.

From the interviews, I could see that both Student Fu and Student Yang

showed abilities to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information by navigating

through different communities. In addition, Teacher Tian noted that she always

encourages students to share their English learning strategies or knowledge on social

media communities. She said that in this way, students could not only provide

information to other learners, but receive various feedback from them. She also noted

that it is very helpful for students to further improve themselves by synthesizing the

constructive feedback into their English learning. In this example, Teacher Tian

encouraged students to disseminate information to social media communities and to

make a "meaningful synthesis" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 95) of feedback from other learners,

which reflected the new media literacies skill of networking.

4.2 The influences of the use of social media on College English teaching and learning

The research data reveal that there are both advantages and disadvantages of using

social media in College English teaching and learning.

4.2.1 Affordances

Fewer constraints on space and time. All teacher and student participants

held the view that social media could break constraints of space and time. As Student

Wu emphasized, using social media to learn English is quite convenient. She stated

that she could have easy access to all the online coursewares and materials anytime

anywhere. Besides, she mentioned that she could have a discussion with teacher and

classmates in their social media group whenever and wherever she wanted. Student

Ma echoed Student Wu's viewpoint:

> I do not have to submit my homework at school anymore. With social media,
> there is no restrictions on space to submit my homework. Also, I can store and
> review all the course materials anytime. And social media provides the
> possibility for me to go back and check previous discussions in our own class
> social media group outside of the College English class anytime anywhere so
> that I would not miss previous discussions.

Student Gao added that social media disturbed the space restrictions, which offered

her the opportunity to chat with foreigners all over the world outside of College

English class. She said that she could practice oral English with foreigners anytime

anywhere by logging into CC talk (a live video App). Here is another example about

how social media disturbed confined space:

Vignette 4.2.1.1

> Teacher Tian needed to use multimedia tools to show PowerPoint in class.
> However, the multimedia tools did not work in this classroom. So, she
> uploaded the PowerPoint onto their WeChat group. Then, she asked students
> to use their cellphones to find the PowerPoint in their WeChat group and view
> the slides on their phones. In this way, teacher and students did not need to
> move to another classroom to ensure the normal class teaching.

Teacher Tian also mentioned that with social media, she could post

assignments, make announcements, and remind students about important deadlines

outside of the classroom. Moreover, she could post videos, photos, documents, and

other materials on their social media groups that allow students to access them

anytime anywhere if needed.

Both the observation and interview data demonstrated that social media could

disturb the space and time restrictions for English teaching and learning within the

College English class, which facilitated College English teaching and learning within

classes.

Social media provided rich English materials and information. All of the

13 participants held the view that they could get access to unlimited English study

materials through social media. Student Ma said that, "social media significantly

broadens the range of my learning sources and I could search for English learning

materials that I need on social media platforms." Student Zhou reflected Student Ma's

viewpoint：

> I could get more information about English learning strategies and materials
> by participating in various social media groups and exchanging information
> with each other. I feel I save a lot of time by using social media to assist my

English study because I could get access to unlimited information and materials in only a few seconds. I do not need to spend a lot of time to look for these information and materials in books or in library. Using social media is convenient for my English study.

Student Wu elaborated:

I could find various English study resources on social media. For example, I follow many WeChat Official Accounts and Sina Blogs regarding to English study. They update and share English study resources everyday so that I could obtain supplemental English resources regularly. I also participate in a few English study forums, such as RenRen and Taisha. You could get much useful information by browsing these forums. And you could catch hot and new English words from these social media platforms which you cannot find them in books.

Teacher Tian also mentioned that she could always get good teaching ideas by watching other teachers' Podcasts on Wang Yi Gong Kai Ke (an E-Learning website), and she can learn different teaching strategies by browsing other teachers' blogs.

Based on the interviews, I could see that social media provided rich English materials and information for the teacher and students, which provided great support for their English learning outside of class.

Social media promoted communications between students and teachers.

All of the 13 participants reported in the interviews that social media could promote communications between students and teachers. Social media helped students and

teachers to keep in touch outside of classrooms. For example, Student Sui mentioned

that she used social media to connect with the teacher and classmates to study or work

on class assignments almost everyday. Student Li noted that social media facilitated

the receiving of teacher's answers and feedback from outside of the classroom.

Teacher Tian also mentioned that she was able to utilize social media tools to

communicate and support students outside of class, and students were also able to

communicate and gain support from each other. She said she was able to post

assignments, answer questions, and provide additional explanations for students

outside of class. Moreover, she added that online communication could stimulate shy

or quiet students to participate in group discussions in a way that they felt more

comfortable. Student Sui added：

> The teacher sometimes assigns and checks homework through the Lan Mo
> Yun Ban（a mobile class activity App）and provides immediate feedback to
> us. Students could post questions on this App and teacher could pick some of
> the most asked questions before class and prepare to answer them in class.

In the interview, Student Yang mentioned a live video App called "CC talk". This

App allows teachers to conduct a live broadcast for an English lesson. English

learners could join any teachers' channel to watch live lessons and interact with

teachers who hosted these channels through some unique functions. For example,

learners could use "raise up their hands" functions to ask a question and teacher could

answer the question immediately during the live broadcasting. Teacher Tian

mentioned that she joined a WeChat group of English teachers from different

universities which was a big network that allowed teachers to communicate, to share,

and to learn from each other.

Interview data in this section showed that social media significantly enhanced

the communication opportunities for teachers and students outside of the College

English class.

It was convenient to build relationships and networks through social

media. The teacher participant and eight student participants mentioned that social

media could help to build relationships and networks with English teachers and

students from different universities. They said that social media provided a

convenient way for them to build relationships with students and teachers from

different universities in China. Student Wang mentioned that he could participate in

various study groups from different universities through social media platforms. In

this way, he built relationship with students from all over the country. He also noted

that they could exchange English learning materials and strategies within the big

university community.

Interview data in this section demonstrated that both the teacher and students

regarded social media as a convenient channel to build relationships and networks

with teachers and students all over the country.

Social media made learning relaxing and interesting. In interviews, nine

student participants reported that it was more interesting and relaxing to use social

media tools to teach and learn English. Student Li mentioned that with the support of

social media, he could learn English based on his interests and choose whatever

learning method he liked. For example, he noted that he always listened to English

broadcast through social media Apps on his mobile while walking down the street.

Student Zhou echoed Student Li by noting that:

> I like using social media to learn English because it makes English learning
> relaxing and fun. Social media tools are user-friendly and have many different
> functions. Teacher and students are able to do activities through different
> social media tools. For example, the teacher uses the Ke Tang Pai (an online
> interactive classroom App) to divide students into several groups and assigns
> homework to each group. In next class, the teacher will randomly pick up a

group from the App and ask this group to share their homework with the whole class.

Here is another example, in one class, teacher and students used social media

App to do class activity:

Vignette 4.2.1.2

In one class, Teacher Tian posted three questions on the Lan Mo Yun Ban Ke (a mobile class activity App). She asked students to log into the app on their mobiles. Teacher Tian asked the whole class to have a competition to see who could be the first one to respond to the question. The competition was divided into three rounds and each round contained one question. Each student needed to respond to that question on the app. The student who gave the right answer in the shortest time would be the winner. The winners would receive a medal on the app.

In the interviews, Student Fu mentioned that she enjoyed the new ways of English

learning through social media tools a lot, she stated:

I use the Ying Yu Liu Li Shuo (a mobile App of English speaking community) to practice my oral English outside of class. It is a lot of fun to choose various scene dialogues and take different roles to practice English speaking. I could also join different groups to chat with people to see what they did to improve oral English.

From this section, I could see that students perceived social media as a

relaxing and entertaining tool for their English learning both within and outside of the

College English classes.

Social media promoted collaborative study. During the interviews, I noticed

that collaborative study had been addressed by the teacher and seven student

participants. As Student Wang emphasized:

> One of the most important thing regarding the use of social media in my
> English learning is that it provides collaborative study opportunities. It allows
> me to share, to learn, and to cooperate with other English learners. For
> example, When I encounter an English study problem, the only thing I need to
> do is to post it onto a study group or a discussion board. The other learners
> would answer my question and help me find the solution. Another thing is that
> I could receive the feedback and comments from other learners and they
> always point out my problems which are really helpful for my English study.

Student Han made similar comments regarding the use of social media for

English learning purposes:

> There is a discussion board on the Network Teaching Platform. When I have a
> question out of class, I would post it on the discussion board, so that teacher
> and other classmates would provide me with suggestions and solutions after
> they see it. Beyond that, we also share English learning materials on the
> discussion board with all the classmates. We can help each other and work
> together on such social media platforms.

> Teacher Tian also added that social media provides more opportunities for

collaborative study after class. For example, she created a writing project on the Lan

Mo Yun Ban Ke (a class activity App) and divided students into several groups, and

asked students to work together in their group to finish the writing project.

In this section, the interview data revealed that social media played an

essential role for collaborative study outside of the College English class.

4.2.2 Constraints

Social media could easily cause miscommunication and spread unreliable

information. While the majority of participants held positive views towards the use

of social media in College English teaching and learning, a few participants expressed

the pertaining constraints. For example, Student Zhang noted that face-to-face

instructions would make it easier for him to accept and understand the information

than interactions via social media. He elaborated:

> I like face-to-face communication better than virtual world communication
> because I feel that communication on social media might be distorted or
> misunderstood. For me, face-to-face communication is more direct and easier
> to express my exact meanings. I feel it is easy to cause misunderstanding
> when I try to explain something using social media. So, I think social media
> cannot replace the traditional teaching mode.

Similarly, Student Sui mentioned the same problem as Student Zhang in the

interview. Besides, he pointed out some other concerns:

> There are tons of English learning information and materials that you can find
> on social media, so it's hard for me to choose the right one among them. Much
> information on social media is inaccurate and unprofessional which may
> mislead learners. And I also feel that the knowledge that I obtained from

social media is too fragmented and is not systematic enough to facilitate my English study. I think learning in class is more efficient than learning via social media.

Not only did student participants express the pertaining constraints of using social media for English learning, Teacher Tian also noted that she needed to guide students to choose the appropriate social media tools for their College English learning. She always asked students such questions as "what do you want to obtain from social media?" and "what's your English learning goals?" to help them choose the suitable social media tools. She also noted that she always reminded student to distinguish between right information and wrong information on social media.

Based on the interview data, I could see that both the teacher and students expressed concerns about some of the unreliable information that was constructed by users in certain social media communities such as RenRen groups, Taisha forum, and Sina Weibo. Moreover, a few students believed that social media could easily cause miscommunication when compared with face-to-face communication.

Social media could easily distract students from learning. The teacher participant and five student participants held the view that social media could easily distract students from learning. Teacher Tian mentioned that it was a challenge to use

social media in class as social media is easy to distract students' attention from their

studies. She said that it could become very hard to control students' use of social

media tools in class. In the interview, Student Gao also mentioned that sometimes she

could not focus on learning when using social media as it had so many entertainment

functions. Student Wang had similar thoughts regarding the use of social media in

English learning, "it is easy to transfer the focus from studying into making friends".

The interview data in this section showed that both the teacher and students worried

that social media might distract students' attention from learning within and outside

of classes.

Using social media tools on phone or laptop may hurt eyes and skin.

During the interviews, another main concern that four student participants pointed out

is that they thought using social media tools on cellphones and laptops would be

harmful to eyes and skin. Student Fu said that, "I do not like to use social media on

my mobile phone or laptop because I feel my eyes easily become tired and my

eyesight becomes poor." Another two female participants (Student Liu and Student

Yang) also worried about their skin due to the radiation from cellphones and laptops.

4.3 Suggestions for the use of social media within and outside of the College English classes

All student participants suggested that English learners could try to integrate social media into their English study. Student Han said that:

> Social media has a lot of advantages which could provide a lot of convenience for English learning. Thus, I suggest English learners at least have a try and find out whether it is suitable for them or not.

Student Ma suggested English learners to get more in touch with native English speaker on social media platforms. Student Ma said it was not that easy to have the opportunity to practice oral English with foreigners in their daily life because the university is located in a third-tier city in China and there was few opportunities to meet with native English speakers.

Teacher Tian suggested that teachers could experiment with use social media in class for a certain period of time to see whether it is an appropriate English learning approach for a certain cohort of students. She also suggested that teachers not rely too much on social media in teaching, they need to decide whether or not to use social media according to different courses and teaching tasks. Moreover, she suggested that teachers also need to guide students to analyze the credibility of information on social media.

In this section, the interview data demonstrated that both the teacher and students suggested that College English teachers and learners could give a try to integrate social media in English teaching and learning, and to find out whether it was an appropriate method for them.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the findings of the study by answering the research questions. According to the data from interviews and class observations, the findings demonstrated that students and teacher used various social media tools in multiple ways to facilitate English teaching and learning within and outside of College English classes. Teacher and student participants reported both affordances and constraints of using social media in College English teaching and learning. Reported affordances mainly include: a) there was fewer constraints on space and time; b) social media provided rich English materials and information; c) social media promoted communications between students and teachers; d) it was convenient to build relationships and networks through social media; and e) social media made study relaxing and interesting, and social media promoted collaborative study. The

participants' perceived constraints encompass: a) social media could easily cause

miscommunication and spread unreliable information b) social media could easily

distract students from learning, and c) using social media tools on cellphone or laptop

may hurt eyes and skin. Both the teacher and students suggested that College English

teachers and learners could try to integrate social media into College English teaching

and learning. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings and the implications of

my study.

<center>Chapter 5</center>

5 Discussion and implication

In this chapter, I discuss the major findings to respond to the research questions:

"How do teachers and students use social media for English teaching and learning

purposes within and outside of the College English classes in China?", "How do

teachers and students think that social media may be influencing their English

teaching and learning (including affordances and constraints)?", and "What would

teachers and students suggest for social media use to facilitate English teaching and

learning in EFL contexts?". Then, I reflect upon the implications for pedagogy and

curriculum with regard to integrating social media in 21st EFL contexts. At the end of

the chapter, I illustrate the significance of this study.

5.1 How do teachers and students use social media for English teaching and
learning purposes within and outside of the College English classes in China？

This study shows that the teacher and students used various social media tools such as

instant message tools, microblogs, social networking sites, online video sites, and

online educational platforms to facilitate English teaching and learning within and

outside of the College English classes. Based on the findings, students' new media

literacies that I identified included collective intelligence, transmedia navigation, and

networking. More specifically, students' skills of collective intelligence concern their

use of social media to achieve English learning goals through shared English learning

materials, collaborative problem solving, and online collective discussions. They

exhibited their skills of transmedia navigation through using different social media

tools to search for, collect, and integrate English learning information. Showing

networking skills, the student participants searched for, synthesized, and disseminated

English learning information by navigating through different social media

communities.

Research findings show that students acted both as new media consumers and

new media designers within and outside of classes. For example, Student Yang

mentioned she used different social media tools to search for information, then she

synthesized pieces of information and generated one complete idea. Student Fu

showed her ability to gather materials through different social media platforms and

recombine them to serve his own purpose. However, I observed that students' roles as new media designers were more often found in the outside-of-class practices. During my classroom observations, there is only one occasion (see Vignette 4.1.3.1) that demonstrated the student's role of new media designer. In this example, Student Fu collected screenshots of movie reviewers' online comments from multiple social media communities. She synthesized all the information and redesigned them in her PowerPoint slides. In contrast, several student participants demonstrated their roles of new media designers in outside-of-class practices. For example, Student Zhou mentioned she gathered materials from different social media platforms and incorporating them in her essays. Student Wang said he was able to generate questions in the form of picture, voice, as well as video with different social media tools. Student Fu motioned he used Ying Yu Qu Pei Yin (an English dubbing App) to dub a film. Based on my classroom observation, I think the potential reason for the more frequent new media designing practices outside of class was that the in-class literacy practices were constraining and the students were passive learners who followed the teacher's instruction for most of the time. However, in the outside-of-

class contexts, students had more opportunities to engage themselves in meaningful

new media practices, that is, to make connections between their new media literacy

activities and their real-life interests and needs (Zhang et al., 2016). As daily

communications are becoming "increasingly multimodal" (Christie, 2005, p.123) in

the globalized world, I suggest that teachers provide more opportunities to harness

students' "multimodal communicative competence" (Royce, 2007, p. 366) as new

media designers to better engage them in English learning as a foreign language.

5. 2 How do teachers and student think that social media may be influencing their English teaching and learning (including affordances and constraints)?

Previous research indicated that social media had both positive and negative effects

on language teaching and learning (Kabilan et al., 2010; Kamnoetsin, 2014; Shyamlee

& Phil, 2012; Wu & Hsu, 2011). My study concurs that there are both affordances

and constraints of using social media tools to facilitate College English teaching and

learning in the Chinese university.

  Affordances. With regard to the affordances of using social media to facilitate

English teaching and learning, first of all, this study suggests that social media could

make study relaxing and interesting. For example, Student Li mentioned that he could

learn English based on his interests and choose whatever learning method he liked,

while Student Zhou indicated she enjoyed the social media actives in College English

classes. This finding echoes the existent literature, indicating that social media could

enhance students' language learning interest as well as release their pressure when

expressing thoughts and sharing ideas (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012; Wu & Hsu, 2011;

Yunus, et al., 2012; Zaidieh, 2012).

Second, this study found that social media could break the constraints of space

and time. As reported in Chapter 4, Student Wu mentioned that she could have easy

access to all the online coursewares and materials anytime anywhere, and she could

have a discussion with teacher and classmates in their social media group whenever

and wherever. This finding is similar to quite a few studies, which indicated that

social media could break the confinement of the physical world and provide expanded

learning opportunities in the virtual world (e.g., Abe & Jordan, 2013; Moran et al.,

2011).

Next, the study found that social media could provide rich English materials

and information for college English learners. All of the 13 participants held the view

that social media could significantly broaden the range of English learning sources. This finding resonates with Abe and Jordan's (2013) argument that social media allowed students to access resources in ways that they could never before.

Besides, the findings reveal that social media could promote communications between students and teachers. For example, Student Sui mentioned that he used social media to connect with the teacher and classmates to study or work on class assignments and Student Li added that social media facilitated the teacher's and students' communications about exercise answers and feedback outside of the classroom. However, besides communications regarding the structured language exercises, data did not reveal opportunities that "provoke thought and discussion outside of the classroom setting" (Abe & Jordan, 2013, p.16).

Moreover, my research finding indicates that social media could promote collaborative learning. Based on the interview data, seven student participants mentioned that with social media tools they could share materials, learn from each other, and collaboratively finish course projects. Similarly, Grosseck and Holotescu (2008) proposed that social media has the potential to promote collaborative writing

and idea stimulation among different users. Just as Teacher Tian mentioned in her interview that writing platform could promote collaborative writing and students' interaction with their peers (Chao & Lo, 2011; Thorne & Payne, 2005). In addition, both the teacher and student participants reported that social media provided a convenient way for them to build relationships and networks with English teachers and students from different universities in China. This is in line with George and Dellasega' s (2011) argument that social media could help students with network building and collaboration. However, both the interview and the observation data showed limited opportunities for students' critical evaluation of information that they collected across social media communities. Likewise, data did not reveal in-class and outside-of-class practices of negotiation, that is, occasions where students negotiated and respected diverse perspectives and values while navigating and networking across different communities.

Constraints. Regarding the constraints of using social media to facilitate English teaching and learning, there is an interesting finding which suggests that using social media tools on cellphone or laptop may hurt eyes and skin. A few

students are reluctant to integrate social media in their English learning as they

worried about their eyes and skin due to the radiation from cellphones and laptops.

The findings also suggest that social media could incur miscommunications. A

few participants mentioned that they felt that communication on social media is not as

direct as face-to-face communication. The participants agreed that it was easier for

them to accept and understand the information through face-to-face instructions than

interactions via social media. Junco and Chickering (2010) also held the viewpoint

that social media might cause misinterpretation of communications because the

nonverbal aspects of communication (i.e., body language, eye contact, vocal tone, and

volume) are missing.

Besides, the study shows that social media could easily distract students from

learning. This idea was also reflected in the studies of Kamnoetsin (2014) and Gikas

and Grant (2013). These scholars proposed that the main concern of using social

media in English classes is distraction as social media could easily distract students

because of its entertainment functions.

Moreover, findings suggest that both the teacher and students expressed

concerns about the unreliable information on social media. In my view, this is where

critical media literacy shall play a role. Critical media literacy could enhance students'

abilities to "critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information

and power" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p.4). Critical media literacy could also help raise

users' awareness of "how media construct meanings, influence and educate audiences

and impose their messages and values" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 4). Teachers

should teach students to critically analyze and use media (Kellner, 2004). However,

none of my reviewed literature regarding the use of social media in EFL contexts in

China mentioned about critical media literacy. Thus, I suggest that Chinese EFL

teachers should be aware of the importance to incorporate critical media literacy into

English teaching practices with regard to integrating social media in 21st EFL

contexts. For example, when writing English essays and incorporating online

information, teachers could guide students to compare different sources and initiate

discussions about the credibility and reliability of the information on the social media.

The online interactions could also include discussions about biases that are encoded in texts (e.g., those related to racism, sexism, or other types of discrimination).

5. 3 Teachers' and students' suggestions & implications for pedagogy and curriculum with regard to integrating social media in 21st EFL contexts

Based on the review of the literature, I found that quite a lot studies examined the impacts of using social media in EFL contexts and students' attitudes towards it (Baſöz, 2016; Laire, et al., 2012; Razak, 2013; Yang, 2013). However, none of the studies explored teachers' and students' suggestions about the use of social media in EFL contexts. This study addresses this gap by seeking teachers' and students' suggestions for social media use to facilitate English teaching and learning in EFL contexts. In this study, both the teacher and students suggested that FEL teacher and leaners could give a try to integrate social media in English teaching and learning, and to find out whether it was an appropriate method for them. Student participants also suggested that English learners seize opportunities to practice English speaking with native English speakers on social media platforms as there were limited opportunities for them to meet with native English speakers in their daily life in the small city where the university was located.

According to (Wang, 2017), College English classes are often of big sizes

with over sixty students in the majority of universities in China, which leads to

limited chances for students to speak and to communicate with teachers in class. As

my findings indicate that social media could break the space and time constraints, I

suggest offering online College English courses through social media platforms with

small groups of students. In this way, each student could get more chances to speak

and interact with teachers in and outside of classes.

Based on the finding that integrating social media in EFL curriculum could

make learning relaxing and interesting, I suggest integrating more social media

activities in and outside of classes to motivate students' learning interest and

engagement.

A main concern of College English teaching in China is that "the input

teaching methods still dominate the classroom" (Wang, 2017, p.19). Here, input

teaching methods refer to that teachers directly deliver content to students as they

regard students as passive knowledge receivers. In my view, the use of social media

in EFL contexts could change such input teaching pedagogy. Teachers could

incorporate social media activities in EFL classes. Then teachers should take the

leading role in promoting discussions on social media groups after class to promote

students' initiative and engagement in English learning outside of classes. However, I

am aware that integrating social media in EFL contexts would not necessarily grant

English learners agentive roles in learning. The social media activities shall be

meaningful for students, that is, closely related to students' interests, strengths, and

real-life experiences, for them be engaged in both in- and outside-of-class English

learning as a foreign language. Moreover, there should be professional training for in-

service and pre-service teachers to gain more professional skills and knowledge about

various kinds of social media tools in order to integrate engaging and meaningful

social media activities into their English teaching practices.

5.4 Significance of the study

The findings of this study contribute to the current body of literature regarding the use

of social media in English education in higher education in China. More specifically,

this study addresses the gap about how teachers and students use social media within

and outside of the College English classes in China. This study enriches the existent

literacy about the impacts of using social media in EFL context by offering insights

into both the affordances and constraints of using social media to facilitate English

teaching and learning within and outside of the College English classes in China. In

addition, this study also addresses the gap in literature by seeking Chinese English

teachers' and students' suggestions regarding the use of social media in EFL contexts.

Based on the findings, this study contributes insights into EFL curriculum and

pedagogy with regard to integrating social media.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Western Ethics Approval

Western Research

Date: 1 May 2018

To: Dr. Zheng Zhang

Project ID: 111481

Study Title: An Analysis of Social Media Use Within and Outside of College English Classes in China

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: June 1 2019

Date Approval Issued: 01/May/2018

REB Approval Expiry Date: 01/May/2019

Dear Dr. Zheng Zhang

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview Questions	Interview Guide		
letter of information and concent for student participant(clean version)	Written Consent/Assent	25/Apr/2018	3rd version
Letter of Information and Consent for Teacher Participant(clean version)	Written Consent/Assent	25/Apr/2018	3rd version
Non-participant observation guide	Non-Participant Observation Guide		
Recruitment information for the principal ?-2	Oral Script	11/Apr/2018	first version
Verbal Recruitment for Student Participant	Oral Script	10/Apr/2018	second
Verbal Recruitment for teacher participant	Oral Script	09/Apr/2018	second

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Western
Education

Project Title

An Analysis of Social Media Use Within and Outside of College English Classes in

China

Investigators

Dr. Zheng Zhang – Principal Investigator, ██████████

Yuze Gao – Graduate Student Investigator, ██████████

Faculty of Education

Western University, London, ON, CA

Letter of Information and Consent (For Teacher Participant)

You are invited to participate in a research regards the use of social media within and

outside of the College English classes in China. I would like to invite you to

participate in this study.

This study aims to explore how teachers and students use social media for English

teaching and learning purposes within and outside of the college English classes in

China and the ensuing influences upon their English teaching and learning. If you

agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to join me in an interview which

will last about thirty minutes and your College English classes will be observed by me

for about four to six weeks. The interview will be conducted in a site that is mutually

agreed upon between you and me. The interview will be audio-recorded with your

permission and transcribed into written format. If you do not wish to be audio-

recorded, hand-written or electronic notes will be taken. In the interview, you will be

asked to talk about your opinion about social media use within and outside of College

English class in China (e.g., how do you use social media to facilitate English

teaching, how do you perceive the impacts of using social media for English teaching,

your suggestions for social media use to facilitate English teaching and learning). You

will be invited to check the transcripts and offer clarification. Transcripts will be sent

to you in-person and the member-checking process will be conducted in a site based

on your preference. For the College English class observation, the graduate student

researcher Yuze Gao will observe how social media are used within your classes, for

example: what kinds of social media tools do teacher and students use, what kinds of

social media activities do teacher and students do, and how do teacher and students

use social media to facilitate English teaching and learning in class. Classroom

sessions will not be audio-recorded, only field notes will be taken.

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study. There may be benefits

to society, this study may contribute to the existent social media knowledge in

Chinese educational field. It may also contribute to the teaching practice, College

English teachers' educational training, as well as College English curriculum design.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only. Your name will be

collected since you will need to sign the consent form. Pseudonyms will be used for

all the data (including all the field notes of classroom observations, all the interview

audio recordings, and transcripts.). A "pseudonym key" document will be created

with participants' full names and their assigned pseudonyms and save this document

in a secure device. The principal investigator Dr. Zheng Zhang and the graduate

student investigator Yuze Gao are the only people could have access to all the data. In

addition, Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical

Research Ethics Board may require access to participants' study-related records to

monitor the conduct of the research. All the data will be stored for no less than 7 years

and will be completely deleted by the researcher. Data will be erased using

commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device

in order to make sure data cannot be recovered. If the results of the study are

published, your name will not be used. De-identified quotes will be used in the

dissemination of results base on your consent.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is

voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw

from the study at any time. Participants are able to withdraw their data from the study

anytime by contacting the researcher, and there is no limitation on doing so.

You will not be compensated for your participation. If you choose not to participate or

to leave the study at anytime it will have no effect on your academic standing. We

will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your

decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

You are also invited to contact me to know the findings of the research. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study, you may contact Yuze gao, the graduate student investigator at ███████████ ██████████, or the principal investigator Dr. Zheng Zhang at ███████████. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics ██████████, email: ██████████.

If you are interested in participating this research, please contact the graduate student investigator Yuze Gao directly. The consent form could be signed at the time of the interview. Thank you very much.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent Form

An Analysis of Social Media Use Within and Outside of College English Classes in China

Principal Investigator

Dr. Zheng Zhang, Ph.D, Education

Western University

███████████████

Graduate Student Investigator

Yuze Gao, MA, Education

Western University

███████████████

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research.
Yes_   No_

I allow you to use de-identified quotes in the dissemination of results.
Yes_   No_

Print Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant and I confirmed that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and all the questions asked have been answered to the best of my ability.

A copy of this informed consent form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C: Letter of Information and Consent (For Student Participant)

Project Title

An Analysis of Social Media Use Within and Outside of College English Classes in China

Investigators

Dr. Zheng Zhang – Principal Investigator, █████████

Yuze Gao – Graduate Student Investigator, ████████

Faculty of Education

Western University, London, ON, CA

Letter of Information and Consent (For Student Participant)

You are invited to participate in a research regards the use of social media within and outside of College English classes in China.

This study aims to explore how teachers and students use social media for English teaching and learning purposes within and outside of college English classes in China and the ensuing influences upon their English teaching and learning. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to join the graduate student investigator Yuze Gao in an interview which will last about fifteen to twenty minutes and your

College English classes will be observed for about four to six weeks. The interview will be conducted in a site that is mutually agreed upon between you and me. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission and transcribed into written format. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, hand-written or electronic notes will be taken. In the interview, you will be asked to talk about your opinions about social media use within and outside of College English class in China (e.g., how do you use social media to facilitate English learning, how do you perceive the impacts of using social media for English learning, what's your suggestions for using social media to facilitate English learning). You will be invited to check the transcripts and offer clarification. Transcripts will be sent to you in-person and the member-checking process will be conducted in a site based on your preference. For the College English class observation, the graduate student researcher Yuze Gao will observe how social media are used within your classes, for example: what kinds of social media tools do teacher and students use, what kinds of social media activities do teacher and students do, and how do teacher and students use social media to facilitate English teaching and learning in class. Classroom sessions will not be audio-recorded, only field notes will be taken. For those who do not consent, or are not participating in this research, their data will not be used in this study.

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study. There may be benefits to society, this study may contribute to the existent social media knowledge in Chinese educational field. It may also contribute to the teaching practice, College English teachers' educational training, as well as College English curriculum design.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only. Your name will be

collected since you will need to sign the consent form. Pseudonyms will be used for

all the data (including all the field notes of classroom observations, all the interview

audio recordings, and transcripts.). A "pseudonym key" document will be created

with participants' full names and their assigned pseudonyms and save this document

in a secure device. The principal investigator Dr. Zheng Zhang and the graduate

student investigator Yuze Gao are the only people could have access to all the data. In

addition, Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical

Research Ethics Board may require access to participants' study-related records to

monitor the conduct of the research. All the data will be stored for no less than 7 years

and will be completely deleted by the researcher. Data will be erased using

commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device

in order to make sure data cannot be recovered. If the results of the study are

published, your name will not be used. De-identified quotes will be used in the

dissemination of results base on your consent.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is

voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw

from the study at any time. Participants are able to withdraw their data from the study

anytime by contacting the researcher, and there is no limitation on doing so.

You will not be compensated for your participation. If you choose not to participate or

to leave the study at anytime it will have no effect on your academic standing. We

will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your

decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

You are also invited to know the findings of the research. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study, you may contact Yuze gao, the graduate student investigator at ███████ ██████, or the principal investigator Dr. Zheng Zhang at ████████. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics █████████, email: █████████.

If you are interested in participating this research, please contact the graduate student investigator Yuze Gao directly. The consent form could be signed at the time of the interview. Thank you very much.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent Form

An Analysis of Social Media Use Within and Outside of College English Classes in

China

Principal Investigator

Dr. Zheng Zhang, Ph.D, Education

Western University

███████████

Graduate Student Investigator

Yuze Gao, MA, Education

Western University

███████████

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study

explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered

to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research.

Yes_   No_

I allow you to use de-identified quotes in the dissemination of results.

Yes_   No_

Print Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant and I confirmed

that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and all

the questions asked have been answered to the best of my ability.

A copy of this informed consent form has been provided to the participant

Print Name of Researcher:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Sample Interview Questions for Teacher Participants

1. What kind of social media do you use to facilitate English teaching within class?

2. How do you use social media to facilitate English teaching in class?

Could you give some examples of social media use within your English class?

3. What kind of social media do you use to facilitate English teaching outside of class?

4. How do you use social media to facilitate English teaching outside of class?

Could you give some examples of social media use outside of your English class?

5. How do you think social media has changed your ways of English teaching?

Could you explain in detail?

6. How do you perceive the affordances of using social media for language teaching purposes? Could you explain in detail?

7.   How do you perceive the constraints of using social media for language teaching purposes? Could you explain in detail?

8.   What are your suggestions for using social media to facilitate English teaching and learning in College English classes in China?

Sample Interview Questions for Student Participants

1. What kind of social media do you use to facilitate English learning within class?

2. How do you use social media to facilitate English learning within class?

Could you give some examples of social media use within your English class?

3. What kind of social media do you use to facilitate English learning outside of class?

4. How do you use social media to facilitate English learning outside of class?

Could you give some examples of social media use outside of your English class?

5. How do you think social media has changed your ways of English learning?

Could you explain in detail?

6. How do you perceive the affordances of using social media for language learning purposes? Could you explain in detail?

7. How do you perceive the constraints of using social media for language learning purposes? Could you explain in detail?

8. What are your suggestions for using social media to facilitate English learning in College English classes in China?

<h1 style="text-align:center">Curriculum Vitae</h1>

Name:	Yuze Gao
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Communication University of China' Nanjing Nanjing, Jiangsu, China 2007-2011, B.A.
	University of South Florida Tampa, Florida, US 2011-2013, M.A.
	Western University London, Ontario, Canada 2016-present
Honours and Awards:	Western Entrance Scholarship 2016-2017, 2017-2018
	AER Graduate Scholarship for Literacy Studies in Education 2016
Related Work Experience	Chinese teacher Tampa Chinese Presbvterian Church School, 2013
	Teaching assistant Yinghua Academy, 2014
	English teacher Zibo Huayang International Exchange Service Co. LTD, 2015