

A Case Study of Digital Natives Using English Buzzword ‘cue’ in Vocabulary Capacity in Second Language Acquisition in China: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: In an age marked by rapid advancements in information technology and the widespread use of the Internet, the popularity of Internet buzzwords has become widespread and serves as one of the important forms of popular culture. However, there seems to be scant research on the relationship between popular Internet buzzwords and vocabulary capacity, especially the relationship between the use of Internet buzzwords and the vocabulary of English as a second language. To explore the relationship between the use of Internet buzzwords and English vocabulary capacity, this research will use a case study with 12 different categories of digital natives conducted through focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews to explore the use of specific Internet buzzword ‘cue’. The possible outcome is that different types of digital natives will have different views on the use of online buzzwords. Research may need to integrate the use of oral buzzwords in the context of offline to further demonstrate the relationship between the use of Internet buzzwords and the vocabulary of a second language, such as English. The research may shed light on the oral buzzword use in communication. This research focuses on how the specific English buzzword "cue" has developed into an Internet buzzword. Further, it discusses how similar Internet buzzwords have influenced the vocabulary aspects of English as a second language learning by digital natives. The study delves into the challenges faced by these learners and the opportunities presented by the use of such buzzwords in the language learning process". It is expected that this will shed light on the research aspect of internet buzzwords on language proficiency and further research on the impact of internet buzzwords in oral communication.

Keywords: digital natives, second language acquisition, Internet buzzword

1. Introduction

1.1. Research context

Digital natives grew up in the digital technology or information age and were born after the 1980s [1,2]. Digital natives grew up under the influence of information technology and are comfortable and comfortable with technology. This term contrasts with those born before the digital age, who may have more difficulty and hesitation in learning to use new technologies [3]. There are three types of digital natives: avoiders, minimalists, and enthusiastic participants [2]. Avoiders were born in the

digital age, but they are not attached to digital technology and represent a minority group of digital natives. In contrast to their age group, they do not have a strong interest in social media, text messaging, or mobile technology. These digital natives may own a smartphone but often lack access to electronic technology and do not have home internet access [2]. Minimalists recognize the ubiquity of electronic technology but use technology rarely and only when necessary. They access information via the Internet when needed and only shop online in special circumstances, such as when the local grocery store is out of stock. Though they may have social media accounts, they use them with limited frequency. Also, the traditional way of asking for directions is their preferred method, rather than relying on GPS [2]. Enthusiastic participants are the majority of digital natives. They actively engage with technology and extensively use it. They are active on social media, posting frequently using various social platforms, and are online throughout the day. Internet search engines are their favourite way to access information. They prefer online communication to phone calls and enjoy real-time, ongoing interactions through smart electronic devices [2]. In this article, different digital users will be categorized based on the frequency of using digital platforms rather than by age.

Foreign academic research on network language originated in 1997, while domestic research in China on network buzzwords is more recent, originating in the 1990s [4]. However, there are not many studies on the effects of Internet terms on second-language vocabulary capacity. In this study, the vocabulary capacity pertains to the collection of words, encompassing their definitions and application, which a student acquires and employs. Acquiring vocabulary is a fundamental element in language instruction, significantly influencing reading comprehension, expressive and receptive language abilities, and academic performance [5]. Therefore, it is important to study the relationship between the use of buzzwords and vocabulary capacity. Moreover, there are limited studies on individual English Internet buzzwords in China. The word "cue" in this study is a Chinese Internet buzzword often used in domestic entertainment shows to point out the meaning of asking the other person to follow or perform [6]. The usage of this word is directly evolved from the meaning and usage of the English word "cue", and the popularity of this word as a network language is entirely dependent on the prevalence of entertainment shows in recent years, which has made some words that appear more frequently in the original shows spread as network terriers. After the word became popular, it is still more commonly used as an entertainment industry phrase. In addition, the use as an everyday internet phrase means being named and called to [6].

1.2. Research questions

To address the gap identified in the literature, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Any differences between different types of digital natives' ability to comprehend the cultural meaning and social context behind 'cue' when using it?
2. What is the relationship between the use of internet buzzwords and vocabulary capacity?

1.3. Research Significance

In conclusion, this study aims to offer insights into the connection between Internet buzzwords and second language vocabulary skills. The results may yield valuable understandings regarding the influence of English buzzwords in language instruction among Chinese digital natives. Additionally, it may shed light on their grasp and proficiency in employing contextual vocabulary during second language acquisition. Furthermore, exploring the evolving dynamics and derivative aspects of Internet buzzwords can invigorate language development.

2. Literature review

The term "cue" has evolved and assumed diverse meanings throughout history. Its earliest

documented usage can be traced back to the 15th century, believed to be inspired by the letter "Q" [7]. In 1553, it found its place in theater as a concluding phrase for a speech, signifying the entrance or commencement of another actor's dialogue [7]. In the realm of stage theater, it was understood as an abbreviation of the Latin word "quando," meaning "when." This Latin term can be linked to an earlier Indo-European root, *kwo-, denoting a cue-board utilized for teleprompting [8].

Subsequently, in 1731, "cue" was employed to describe the long, straight, tapered wooden instrument with a leather-coated tip used for striking billiard balls and similar games [7]. Its usage extended to the field of music, where it denoted a signal or prompt for speech or action, a figurative meaning that emerged during the 1560s [8]. Additionally, "cue" also took on the role of denoting reminder signs, a sense that first appeared in 1948 [8]. Thus, the polysemous word "cue" has carried a variety of meanings throughout history, from theatre and music to billiards, and it has been used in various ways. The word 'cue' has emerged on the Chinese internet in recent years. The term was introduced to the internet with the rise of the entertainment industry. As an internet buzzword, the word cue meaning question and mention is often used [6]. This is called Anglo-Chinese Style Expression, where the form remains unchanged, and the meaning of the word differs from that of the original English word [9]. It is a type of language or communication that combines elements from both Anglophone (English-speaking) and Chinese linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It involves using English words or phrases influenced by the Chinese language and culture, or vice versa, using Chinese words or phrases influenced by the English language and culture [9].

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Firstly, a screening test will be conducted to sample our participants. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) will be spread on the WeChat platform by sending it to our friends and family and then spreading it by a snowballing method, responses over 150 people are expected to collect. The snowballing method is a non-probability sampling technique that involves introducing their friends as participants in a study through existing research subjects [10]. The sample size gets larger, like a snowball. Individuals with hidden characteristics can engage in our study through this method, which not only provides a diverse research sample population but also speeds up the participant collection process [11]. Although avoiders are a minority group among digital natives [2], our adoption of snowball sampling has the strategic advantage of including them in our study, thus enriching the comprehensiveness of our study. Having participants at hand, the quota sampling will be applied for participants of our focus group study. The quota sampling method requires that the sample proportionately reflects the population in terms of key features, for the results of the study to be representative and to reflect the characteristics in a comprehensive manner [12]. The research question of this study is how different digital natives understand and use online buzzwords, which include different groups of people. Therefore, the use of quota sampling is applicable to this experiment. It is crucial to decide on which features the sample quota should be based on, and in this study, the features that determine the sample quota are the distinctions of the digital native generation. Once the quota has been reached for a particular feature, it is still necessary to continue sampling other features to ensure the quota [12]. Therefore, this study will sample 9 out of 150 people for semi-structured interviews and the focus group until the number of digital natives for each feature reaches 3 participants.

3.2. Research Design

This study will implement qualitative approaches, including semi-structured interviews and focus group study. Qualitative research places prioritization on depth rather than breadth. It is well suited

to gaining a deep understanding of a phenomenon in a particular context, especially where measurement is challenging due to its individuality [13]. Given that this study delves into the subjective feelings of the participants, which are difficult to measure, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate choice. Furthermore, qualitative research is in harmony with constructivist theory, further cementing its applicability in this study [14]. A semi-structured interviews will be introduced to address research question 1. Semi-structured interviews contain both non-open-ended and open-ended questions, and the order in which these questions are asked is not fixed [15]. The interview will include three stages, which will propose opening questions, content questions and ending questions. The advantage of employing these three stages is that it informalizes the interview. Apart from learning about the topic to be explored, more insight into their personal thoughts and personalities will be gained [16], which helped me to better complete my research on categories of digital natives.

For the purpose of answering research question 2, the focus group study will be applied. Focus group research can deepen the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon while deepening the participants' understanding of the topic. In addition, the focus group study helps participants discuss collective threads of topics [17]. Furthermore, interviews are suitable for exploring issues individually, whereas focus groups are more suitable for studying people's perspectives in a social context [18]. For this study, initial steps for identifying participants through screening questionnaires and, in order to reduce the influence of avoidants who are included in other categories of digital natives in the focus group, semi-structured interviews will be conducted first (see Appendix B), followed by the application of a focus group study (see Appendix C). Semi-structured interview settings will be in an informal setting, such as a group discussion room in a library, where interviews and group-focused discussions can occur. The interview and focus group study will be conducted face to face and recorded by the audio recorder, a common instrument for recording the process [16].

3.3. Pilot study

Before the questionnaires are handed out to our participants, a pilot study will be carried out on our class WeChat group (comprising around 30 students) to determine if any adjustments need to be made [17]. These participants will not participate in future research as it could influence data reliability.

3.4. Research analysis

The processing of focus group study data and interview data involves an orchestrated series of steps aimed at systematically organizing, analyzing, and extracting meaningful insights from the collected information. The first phase includes transcription. Transcription is the transformative process of transcribing spoken discourse into written textual form. This task can be accomplished either through the utilization of specialized transcription software or the engagement of professional transcribers [18]. Following the transcription of the recorded data, organization is the next phase. Establishing a structured data storage system, and facilitating effortless access to individual transcripts is an indispensable facet of this phase. The next phase embodies systematically applying the designated codes to the data. Specialized qualitative analysis software, such as ATLAS.ti, may expedite the processing, affording researchers advanced tools for efficient coding [18]. A strict review of the coded data is vital to ensure inter-coder reliability in instances where multiple researchers will partake in the process.

With the coded and summarized data in hand, the next undertaking is the identification of patterns and emergent themes. The extraction of representative quotations or excerpts from the transcripts is integral to this process, as these are examples of key points or themes that can substantiate the findings. This is followed by the interpretation phase, where the findings are thoroughly analyzed to

determine their impact and significance in relation to the overall research question or objective [19]. In addition, peer review by colleagues or experts who are well-versed in qualitative research methods is a way to ensure the data is reliable. In summation, the systematic processing of raw focus group data involves transcription, organization, coding, summarization, pattern identification, quotation extraction, data triangulation, interpretation, and report [18]. This process is instrumental in the transformation of raw data into nuanced and meaningful insights, thereby advancing the research inquiry at hand.

3.5. Ethical considerations and possible risks

The target audience for these guidelines includes a wide range of individuals engaged in educational research, whether or not they specialise in research or are conducting research in the field of education for a variety of different reasons (e.g. academic qualifications or practice improvement. This scope covers independent researchers as well as researchers working in a wide range of educational organisations including, but not limited to, early years settings, schools, colleges and universities [20]. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between Internet buzzwords and word usage skills in English as a second language. The conclusions may provide inspiration for educators to apply to their teaching. Therefore, this study will follow BERA code of conduct [20]. Participants' consent to the recordings will be obtained prior to the interviews and group focus studies, and they will be informed of their right to stop participating at any time and that they can withdraw [20]. All participants will be anonymous participants and the data will be used by us only for the purposes of this study [20]. As this experimental topic does not involve sensitive information, potential risks of this study may include leakage of recorded data.

4. Limitations

Reflexivity in this research may impact the research process. The process typically involves a review of own judgment practices and identifying factors that may have influenced behavior and thinking in a particular way during the data collection and analysis process [21]. The reflexivity is characterized by a minimalist approach, where a tendency to be patient with minimalist groups and compromise the reliability of the study may occur. There is a possibility of researcher bias during interviews, with a heightened sensitivity towards certain groups. It is important to note the disadvantages of the interview design, primarily being face-to-face, which may lack geographical diversity [22]. Additionally, the interview consumes time and incurs costs in both conduct and raw data processing [22]. Focus group study design also has limitations. According to Breen [18], there is a potential for the dominant group to influence the views of the minority group, negatively impacting the reliability of the research when reporting the results of the discussion.

5. Conclusion

In this research proposal, the process of development is embarked upon to explore the research area of Internet buzzwords, particularly focusing on the English buzzword "cue" and its influence on the vocabulary capacity of Chinese digital natives in the context of second language acquisition. The introduction contextualized our research, highlighting the significance of understanding the digital natives and their interaction with Internet buzzwords. The research questions aim to address differences in the comprehension and usage of "cue" among various types of digital natives and to explore the broader relationship between Internet buzzwords and vocabulary capacity. The literature review applied the chronological evolution of the word "cue" from its origins in theater to its modern-day usage in various contexts, including the Chinese Internet. This section underlined the scarcity of research on individual English Internet buzzwords in China and emphasized the importance of

studying their impact on second language vocabulary capacity.

The methodology section detailed our research design, including participant sampling, which will use a combination of quota sampling and snowball sampling. The research will employ qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus group research, adopting constructivist theory to have insights into participants' perceptions. To ensure the reliability and validity of our research, the proposal discussed the pilot study's role in testing our questionnaires and procedures. The data analysis process, from transcription to interpretation, was systematically outlined. Ethical considerations are highlighted, and the BERA code of conduct will be followed. Informed consent and anonymity of participants will be emphasized, and all data will be used for research purposes only. While this research has its limitations, it is crucial to state them clearly. Reflexivity and potential researcher bias, especially in the interview, were identified as potential limitations. Furthermore, the focus group study design poses challenges related to group dynamics and the potential dominance of certain individuals. In conclusion, this study aims to reveal the relationship between Internet buzzwords and the language acquisition of digital natives in China. To contribute to the field of applied linguistics, this underexplored area is sought to be illuminated, and valuable insights are aimed to be provided to educators for enhancing language teaching and learning for digital natives.

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Appendices:

Screening questionnaires

<p>* 1. Age</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 0-20</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 20-40</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 40-60</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 60+</p>	<p>* 5. How many hours per week do you use your electronic products for your job or study?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Less than 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 to 2 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 3 to 5 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> over 5 hours</p>	<p>* 7. What do you primarily use the internet for? (Please check all that apply) Multiple choice question</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Shopping/gathering all product information</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> communication with others</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Work/Business</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gathering information for personal needs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Wasting time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Others_____*</p>
<p>* 2. Occupation</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Work with internet</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Work has nothing to do directly with internet</p>	<p>* 6. Which of the following do you think you belong to?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Avoider: use landlines and to avoid email and internet.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Minimalists: rarely use electronic devices, and although they may have social media accounts, they don't like the...</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Tourists: concerned about digital culture itself and will learn about it to some extent, but they will not overuse it.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Enthusiastic: enjoy the latest digital technology and talk about its feature.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Innovators: not only enthusiastic, they work with digital technology to improve it.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Addict: heavily dependent on technology to occupy their time.</p>	<p>* 8. What events do you often express your opinions about on internet? Multiple choice question⁴</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social hot points</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> entertainment news</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Topic related to your own experiences, life or work</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Others_____*</p>
<p>* 3. On average, how often do you use your WWW browser? By this, we mean using your browser f...</p> <p><input type="radio"/> More than 9 times/day</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 5 to 8 times/day</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 to 4 times/day</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A few times a week</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Once a week</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Once a month</p>		
<p>* 4. How many hours per day do you use your electronic products for fun/play?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Less than 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 to 2 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 3 to 5 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Over 5 hours</p>		

Interview Design

● **Opening question:**
Our research is focused on the use of internet buzzwords, and this interview is to understand digital natives' perceptions of using internet buzzword. You can terminate the interview at any time. We would like to get consent to record our interviewing by audio recorder. All the data would be recorded anonymously, the data would be only used on our research purposes. And the potential risk is the leak of data. Would you agree to carry on the interview?

Could you tell me how often you use the digital platform?

● **Content question:**

1. Have you heard of word 'cue' or other words like 'cue' on internet? (if no, go to q5)
2. How often do you use words like 'cue' on internet? If you use the word, can you give a few examples of scenarios where you use it?
3. If you used, could you understand the meaning of it? And could you distinguish in what occasions can or cannot use internet buzzword?
4. In your interactions with different types of digital natives, have you noticed any interest in the cultural meaning and social context of "cue"? Did they refer to these aspects in their interactions?
5. (If you haven't heard of them) What do you think about the use of buzzwords on the internet these days?
6. (For people work with digitals and digital enthusiasts) Have you ever created new social contexts of using words like 'cue'?

● **Final question:** Do you have any other thoughts about the interview that you would like to share with us?

Focused group study process

-Introduction and welcome (5 minutes):

Introduce the research topic and purpose.
State the goals and importance of the group discussion.
Briefly introduce the participants.

- Icebreaker activity (10 minutes):

To create a relaxed atmosphere, a small activity related to Internet buzzwords can be conducted, e.g., the group shares recent popular Internet phrases or add each others' WeChat.

-Topic guide and discussion (30 minutes):

Question 1: Do you feel that using buzzwords requires a certain amount of vocabulary support? Why?

Question 2: In your experiences, is there a relationship between the use of buzzwords and a person's vocabulary? Why?

Question 3: Has your vocabulary capacity to use vocabulary changed in any way after the popularity of the internet buzzword compared to before? What do you think has caused this change?

Question 4:

1. when you use these kinds of words, do you use them as words you really understand or do you use them because they are a trend
2. when you use these words, do you think you are using an English expression or are you using it as a special tool to express a momentary feeling?

Question 5: When you use this kind of buzzword, do you aware that there are Chinese words with the same meaning that can be used, or do you have a difficulty in finding a Chinese word with the same meaning to replace this buzzword?

- Data Swap and In-Depth Discussion (20 minutes):

Ask group members to share their perspectives, experiences, and observations.
Encourage the exchange of different perspectives and in-depth discussion of the issues.

- Summary and Conclusion (10 minutes):

Summarise the key insights and ideas from the discussion.
Suggest possible future research directions or further thoughts.

- Acknowledgements and Conclusion (5 minutes)

Note: the research topic, questions and design were proposed with Shirley Yu (Chenchu Yu)