

## Exploring the Connection Between Attitudes Towards New Chinglish and Social Media Among Chinese College Students

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### ABSTRACT

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New Chinglish has emerged as an undeniable and popular trend on Chinese social media platforms, particularly among Chinese college students. These college students are not only the main force of English users and learners in China but also the major netizens on Chinese social media platforms. However, within a cultural context where 'standards and adherence to norms have traditionally been of paramount importance to the Chinese' (Kirkpatrick, 2017: 278), the conflicting attitudes and use towards either upholding traditional viewpoints or adopting opposing stances regarding the New Chinglish warrant intriguing and meaningful exploration. Thus, this study aims to explore the connection between their attitudes towards New Chinglish and its usage behaviors on social media among Chinese college students. It seeks to unveil the reasons underlying their attitudes towards the use of New Chinglish. The in-depth exploration reveals a contradictory and uncertain evaluation of their usage of New Chinglish on social media, despite its high level of understandability and acceptability among them. Personal acceptability and preference do not solely determine their attitudes towards their use of New Chinglish on social media; instead, various social factors, such as language inequality, influence their language use behavior and attitudes, leading to a compromise between individual preferences and social influences. Specifically, this study offers insight into the genuine reactions and usage tendencies of English in real-life situations, indicating the future trends in English language development in China.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study is one of the very few studies that have taken modern technology into consideration to explore the people's English language attitude in a Chinese monolingual society, contributing the existing literature about genuine reactions and usage tendencies of English in real-life situations.

## 1. Introduction

The term “New Chinglish” was proposed by Li (2016) in 2016 for describing the actual English use patterns on Chinese social media, totally differing from the traditional English learned in class. The global pandemic has compelled people to stay at home, resulting in a notable increase in the amount of time spent by individuals using the internet. This trend of prolonged internet and social media usage has persisted even after the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023) reports from 2020-2023 have highlighted two prominent features of Chinese netizens. Firstly, the number of hours spent online per capita has continued to grow. According to Sina News (2021), Chinese people spend an average of 5 hours and 22 minutes a day on the internet, with a significant surge observed on social media platforms. Based on the data from “Annual Report on Leisure Development in China” (Tourism Research Center, 2020), and news report from China News (2020), it was revealed that the average daily online leisure time of nationals was 4.9 hours. For different age groups, the younger the respondent, the longer the online leisure time with the “Post-90s” spending the most time online, ranging from 5 to 8 hours. Additionally, as the “Post-90s” are typically in their college years, it can be inferred that apart from time spent sleeping and studying, college students devote almost all of their leisure time to the Internet.

The second feature indicates that the use of Internet terminals and devices has become more diversified, suggesting that social media now permeates the lives of a wider range of Chinese people around the clock. Based on the statistics in China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023) reports spanning from 2020 to 2023, it is unsurprising to see that social media has become the preferred medium of communication among Chinese people, playing a pervasive role in every aspect of their lives, including study, work, and personal life. This reinforces Xu and Zhang’s arguments that “social media has emerged as one of the most dynamic platforms for English usage in China”. New Chinglish is not confined to social media platforms but has also been observed on certain official websites (Lim, 2014; Alvaro, 2015). For example, an official microblog account, Shanghai Release, has utilized code-mixing practices to engage with the public, showcasing a contemporary blend of government policy and the growing multilingual creativity of the Chinese internet population (Zhang, 2015).

Additionally, during the Covid-19 pandemic, China has suffered tremendous global challenges and scrutiny. Chinese people, especially the youth, have had to use English on social media to explain and counteract the unfounded accusations and vilification by foreign netizens, asserting that Covid-19 is not linked to China. Due to the complex English teaching environment in China and the varying levels of English proficiency among Chinese netizens, people are more inclined to use non-standard English on the Internet in practice. This non-standard English, which mixes Chinese grammar, pinyin and other Chinese elements, has become a powerful tool for Chinese people to resist smearing. Due to its inherently Chinese character, it is familiar and widely used by Chinese Internet users. According to Xu and Zhang (2021) “[c]Chinese netizens primarily utilize Chinese, alongside various hybrid forms that use Chinese as the foundational language, for social media communication”.

Bolton (2017) argues that “an ‘essential conundrum’ lies in understanding ‘how many people in China actually use the language in their everyday lives’”. Simultaneously, Bolton (2017) highlights that “at the micro-level, we also lack detailed studies of the

impact of English in the lives of the Chinese students". He notes that there is a dearth of nuanced examinations regarding the role of English within the language spheres of these young individuals.

Therefore, social media, as an integral component of daily life, should not be overlooked, especially during the era of the epidemic when people's travel and offline engagements were constrained. This period witnessed a significant upsurge in the utilization of social media, and this habit persisted even after the end of the epidemic. Within this context, college students, positioned prominently within the educational sphere and social media landscape, assume a pivotal role in English usage. According to the Chinese government's official website, college students were projected to account for one-fifth of all Internet users in 2020 ([The State Council, 2021](#)). Their perceptions wield substantial influence over the trajectory of English development in China for the forthcoming decades. The current research aims to investigate the connection between college students' perceptions regarding New Chinglish and their usage of New Chinglish on Chinese social media platforms. It further explores the hidden elements rooted in Chinese society to affect student's perceptions.

As early as 2010, the English learners and users in mainland China had risen to 440-650 million ([He & Zhang, 2010](#)). This number continues to grow as China increases foreign exchanges. Therefore, it is important to examine how New Chinglish has been perceived and used by Chinese College students. This examination provides valuable insights into the role of English in the language worlds of these young people's daily lives, as well as an understanding of the acceptance of integrating New Chinglish into the English language in a predominantly monolingual society.

## 2. Literature Review

This section delves into previous research concerning college students' attitudes toward the Chinese English variety and examines relevant studies on "New Chinglish" within the context of Chinese social media.

### 2.1. Attitudes and Use of Chinese English Varieties

"Attitude" originated in social psychology ([Gardner, 1985](#); [Baker, 1992](#); [Garrett, 2010](#)) and later evolved into an important concept in sociolinguistics ([Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003](#)). As [McKenzie \(2008, p. 64\)](#) emphasized "language attitudes may determine whether and to what extent languages or language varieties spread or decay". Language attitudes plays a significant role in language development and decline.

Applying the concept of "attitude" to language study allows for the exploration of people's usage and preferences regarding certain languages. [Garrett \(2010\)](#) pointed out that language attitudes research could explain "linguistic variation and change" and provides insights into differences within and across communities. Previous studies on language attitudes research in various domains have demonstrated that attitude can be measured ([Oppenheim, 1992](#); [Garrett et al., 2003](#)).

Traditionally, language attitude has been defined as favorable or unfavorable responses to the varieties of a single language, to a different language or to a speaking community ([Baker, 1992](#)). [Agheysi and Fishman \(1970\)](#) provided two approaches to define language attitude. Firstly, it could be defined in terms of referents, meaning that

language attitude is a kind of opinion on languages, language varieties and language behaviors. Secondly, language attitude could be defined from the consequences perspective, which suggests that attitude influences language behaviors, and behaviors can also be reflected by language. Later, [Obiols \(2002\)](#) restated that language attitude, as a mental disposition, provides a channel for connecting opinion and behavior.

According to the language attitude notion of [Lambert \(1984\)](#), cognitive, affective, and conative components are the three components of language attitude. Cognitive attitude refers to beliefs about the attitude object (including knowledge, understanding and prediction); affective attitude refers to emotional response (such as happiness or unhappiness, liking or disliking, pride or lack thereof, respect or disdain) to the attitude object; and conative attitude refers to the behavioral tendency toward the attitude object, which can help to predict linguistic behaviors.

[Ryan and Giles \(1982\)](#) expanded the conceptualization of language attitude as encompassing affective, cognitive, or behavioral indicators of evaluative reactions towards various language varieties or their speakers. Despite considerable controversy surrounding the precise influence of attitudes on behavior, it is widely acknowledged that attitudes serves as influential determinants, as noted by [Bohner and Wanke \(2002\)](#). Language attitude and language behavior exhibit a close interconnection, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between them.

The study of attitudes towards English varieties in China has garnered significant attention as a research field. Numerous studies investing the opinions of teachers students, and other individuals have been conducted ([Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002](#); [Hu, 2004, 2005](#); [Chen & Hu 2006](#); [He & Li, 2009](#); [He & Zhang, 2010](#); [Wang, 2013](#)).

Although these studies shed light on acceptability and preference issues, they may not fully capture the genuine reaction and usage tendencies towards the Chinese English variety in real-life contexts ([Heng Hartse, 2017](#)). Furthermore, the correlation between attitudes and usage behaviors remains inadequately explored, as does their connection with future language development.

An illustrative instance is provided by [Zhang \(2015\)](#), who highlighted a case on Sina Weibo (a social media platform) where a government-operated account utilized the Chinese English variety “*manga*” (a playful combination of “Monday” and “*mang*”, meaning “busy”) to exemplify “the growing multilingual creativity of the Chinese online populace”. This case illustrates the extension of Chinese English varieties into official domains. While there is no clear official endorsement of Chinese English variety, its use is becoming increasingly common, especially on social media platforms. Similarly, [Hu \(2021\)](#) asserted that the interplay of English learning with politics, economics, and culture in China is an undisputable reality. This interaction signifies evolving attitudes and the widespread use of the Chinese English varieties on social media platforms.

[Xu and Deterding \(2017\)](#) summarized “*several fallacies in a meta-analysis of related research on Chinese English varieties, emphasizing the ongoing need for further investigation in this area due to its inherent complexities*”. While China aims to amplify its global voice, the prevalent presence of the Chinese English variety on social media is noteworthy. However, within a cultural context where “standards and adherence to norms have traditionally been of paramount importance to the Chinese” ([Kirkpatrick, 2017: 278](#)), the conflicting attitudes towards either upholding traditional viewpoints or

embracing alternative stances regarding the Chinese English variety warrant intriguing and meaningful exploration.

College students, serving as a representative demographic of English users, offer pivotal insights for research. Their attitudes, as emphasized by [Kirkpatrick \(2017: 278\)](#), highlight the necessity for “future inquiries into the usage of English throughout China”. This research endeavor not only to demonstrate the link between the usage behavior of Chinese English varieties and attitudes on social media platforms but also addresses the inner conflicts and contradictions that exist between people’s attitudes and usage behavior, revealing the genuine reactions and usage tendencies of the Chinese English variety in actual texts.

## 2.2. New Chinglish and Related Research

Within the framework of translanguaging, a response to the challenges posed by multilingualism, [Li \(2016\)](#) coined the term “New Chinglish” and defined it as a unique form of English created and disseminated by a new generation of Chinese English speakers, primarily through new media channels. This innovative form of English, characterized by distinctive Chinese attributes, serves diverse communicative, social, and political functions in addressing post-multilingualism challenges within China and beyond. It exhibits features of being “reconstituted, re-appropriated, re-semiotized, and reinscribed” by Chinese English speakers using new media ([Li, 2016: 1](#)).

Subsequent to [Li's \(2016\)](#) introduction of this concept, “New Chinglish” gained traction as a keyword in research literature. Nonetheless, the available records remain limited. Notable studies within the translanguaging perspective include [Hou's \(2020\)](#) incorporation of the New Chinglish model into Chinese ELF (English as a lingua franca), leading to the conclusion that Chinese ELF lacks distinct recognition. [Dong \(2019\)](#) delved into the study of buzzwords on Chinese social networking sites. [Xu and Deterding \(2017\)](#) conducted a comparative analysis of New Chinglish with other varieties like Singlish, Taglish, Manglish, and Japlish. They concluded that “playfulness” is a shared characteristic of New Chinglish from a global English perspective. [Xu and Zhang \(2021\)](#) explored the use of English on Chinese social media to dissect language features and associated matters. Meanwhile, other researchers ([You, 2011](#); [Zhang, 2012, 2015](#)) investigated the multilingual creativity and code-mixing of New Chinglish within the mediated lives of Chinese netizens, revealing its extensive popularity and creativity on Chinese social networking platforms.

As advocated by [Xu and Zhang \(2021\)](#), the utilization of English on Chinese social media diverges from conventional English norms, giving rise to the term “New Chinglish” to describe this phenomenon. The widespread adoption of New Chinglish signifies a fusion of languages and cultures, resulting in a distinct linguistic expression characterized by the interplay of Chinese nuances and English elements. This phenomenon is not merely a dynamic language shift but rather a manifestation of cross-cultural interaction rooted in globalization.

New Chinglish introduces a novel concept, treating the languages of multilingual speakers as an integrated communication system. College students’ attitudes toward New Chinglish on Chinese social media exert considerable influence on English usage and linguistic trends in their daily lives, while also shaping the acceptance of integrating New Chinglish within a predominantly monolingual society. For these reasons, we

framed our study in the following questions: 1) What are the attitudes of Chinese college students towards New Chinglish? 2) Are there any connections between their New Chinglish attitudes and New Chinglish use behaviors? 3) What reasons (if any) underpin their attitudinal responses toward New Chinglish use?

### 3. Research Methods

Mixed methods were adopted in this study. A quantitative questionnaire survey was conducted to investigate the general acceptability and use of Chinese college students, while open qualitative questions were asked to explore the underlying reasons leading to participants' attitudinal responses in the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was designed based on several previous studies by [Oller, Hudson, and Liu \(1977\)](#), [Hu \(2004, 2005\)](#), [Jenkins \(2007\)](#), [Kunschak and Fang \(2008\)](#), and [Fang \(2017\)](#) with modifications aimed at specifically exploring attitudes and usage patterns related to New Chinglish. The total participants exclusively comprised non-English majors, a demographic that significantly outnumbers English majors in China and constitutes the majority of the online New Chinglish user community. The questionnaires were distributed to 356 respondents in total, comprising 34 provincial administrations and four grades in the university. This diverse participant pool encompassed varying backgrounds and years of English learning, including those who have been learning English since kindergarten, and those who have only been learning English since college. The first part of the questionnaire probes the participants' understanding and acceptance of New Chinglish. The second part concerns motivation for New Chinglish use. The third part invites respondents to express their opinions on New Chinglish. The 356 participants were initially invited to make selections for each item in the questionnaire, followed by being prompted to provide detailed explanations for the reasons supporting their attitudinal response for each choice. Additionally, at the conclusion of the study, they were encouraged to offer comments on an open-ended question regarding their experiences with New Chinglish in their daily usage.

For data analysis, we examined the general acceptability of New Chinglish. Next, we conducted a detailed exploration of the qualitative data pertaining to participants' explanations and expressions regarding their attitudes towards New Chinglish and their motivation for using it. Our focus was on identifying the major reasons influencing participants' acceptance or rejection of New Chinglish, as well as their behaviors related to its usage. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of themes and patterns emerging from participants' responses, guided by thematic analysis approach outlined by [Schreier \(2012\)](#). Specifically, we analyzed each item to determine whether participants' reasons were negative, positive, or uncertain. We then synthesized the explanations associated with each item and compared them across different categories (positive/negative/uncertain), systematically categorizing comments across items. The summarized results are presented below.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Chinese College Students' Attitudes Towards New Chinglish and New Chinglish Use Behaviors on Social Media

[Table 1](#) displays the statistical results of participants' responses to their New Chinglish. It shows that only 12.9 % of the participants found New Chinglish incomprehensible, while a substantial majority of respondents (71.1%) perceived it as highly

understandable. However, only 50.9% of the participants considered New Chinglish acceptable, with almost half (47.8%) deeming it unacceptable. By observing their New Chinglish use, only 27.8% of the participants expressed positivity regarding their utilization of New Chinglish use. These findings suggest that factors other than understandability and acceptance may play a significant role in influencing New Chinglish usage among these participants. Additionally, there appears to be some reservation among respondents concerning the use of New Chinglish on social media. This finding differs from the notion that language attitudes and language behaviors are closely interconnected (Bohner & Wanke, 2002; McKenzie, 2008). It suggest that participants' usage of New Chinglish is not solely determined by the acceptability and intelligibility. Despite a high level of understanding and acceptability of New Chinglish, half of the participants (53.9%) ambiguous remain ambivalent about their New Chinglish usage, while 18.3% are negative toward their usage behaviors. These findings contrast with the assertion made by Xu and Zhang (2021) regarding people's negative perceptions of New Chinglish usage on Chinese social media platforms.

Table 1: The understandability, acceptability and usage of New Chinglish in general

| Attitude          | Positive (%) | Negative (%) | Uncertain (%) |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Understandability | 71.1         | 12.9         | 16            |
| Acceptability     | 50.9         | 47.8         | 1.3           |
| Usage             | 27.8         | 18.3         | 53.9          |

Our study further revealed that participants' attitudes towards New Chinglish usage were characterized by contradictory elements. Regarding the understandability, acceptability, and usage of New Chinglish, participants provided comments based on their chosen selections were worthy of exploration. In the "positive" category for understandability and acceptability, a prevalent comment emerged : "*Chinese flavor makes New Chinglish more easily to understand*". This comment highlights the prevailing belief that the incorporation of Chinese elements contributes to the enhanced understandability and acceptability of New Chinglish. This reasoning is grounded in cultural familiarity, encompassing aspects such as the Chinese language, Chinese thought, and colloquial speech.

Notably, the prevalence of "informal language with Chinese flavor" emerges as a recurring theme, serving as the basis for both supporting and opposing viewpoints. Within the "negative" section of the usage category, the "Chinese flavor" emerged as one of the primary factors and was perceived as an informal language primarily suited for domestic contexts, with limited applicability beyond China. Furthermore, New Chinglish is regarded as lacking the level of propriety required for international communication.

Interestingly, it becomes evident that the attribute of "informal language with Chinese flavor" serves as a dual-edged factor, influencing respondents' perspectives. It can either contribute to the perceived advantage of New Chinglish, rendering it easier to comprehend or conversely, serve as a disadvantage, leading some respondents to consider New Chinglish as a less favorable language to use. This duality highlights the role of personal perceptions in shaping the attitudes of these participants. Therefore, the attitudes towards New Chinglish is not simply determined by personal perceptive factors.

## 4.2. Chinese College Students' Motivation Category of New Chinglish Use on Social Media

Table 2 illustrates the motivation behind New Chinglish use among participants. "Personal preference" emerges as the greatest motivation in contributing the New Chinglish use among respondents, with a rate of 30.4 %. Following closely is the motivation of "English ability", generating a rate of 28.2%. The next is the category of "funny and interesting features" of New Chinglish with a rate of 16.4%. Both "Chinese feature" and "communicativeness" share the same rate of 12.5%.

Table 2: The motivation category of New Chinglish use

| Motivation Category | Personal preference | Chinese features | Communicativeness | Funny and interesting | English ability |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Response Count (%)  | 30.4                | 12.5             | 12.5              | 16.4                  | 28.2            |

Meanwhile, the significance of "poor standard English ability" and the "negative influence of New Chinglish on standard English" appeared in English ability motivation were equally noteworthy. These categories, which reflect respondents' motivations toward their New Chinglish usage on social media, were closed intertwined with their proficiency in standard English ability. Thus, the social factors linked to proficiency in standard English would also play a role in eliciting motivation for New Chinglish usage accordingly.

These results gained insight into the potential factors in evaluating New Chinglish usage on social media. It may not be simply taken that personal preference determined the attitudes towards New Chinglish. On the contrary, we also need to understand that their proficiency in standard English ability influenced their sentiments toward New Chinglish usage on social media. This observation seems to focus on the negative influence of New Chinglish on standard English ability, and highlights the point New Chinglish on social media might suggest a deficiency in English proficiency.

## 4.3. Reasons Underpinning Participants' Attitudinal Responses Towards New Chinglish Usage Behavior on Social Media

By analyzing reasons underpinning participants' attitude responses towards New Chinglish usage behavior on social media, three aspects can be summarized: positive evaluation, negative evaluation and ambiguous towards New Chinglish.

### 4.3.1. Reasons for Participants' Positive Evaluation of New Chinglish

Despite the fact that half of the participants (50.9%) accept New Chinglish, only 27.8% expressed positive views towards New Chinglish usage behaviors on social media. One rationale for these participants to evaluate New Chinglish use positively was the potential fulfillment of communication purposes. This can be seen from the Table 3.

Table 3: The Explanations of New Chinglish's Communication Function

| Participants | Statements                                                                               |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P121         | <i>Sometimes, New Chinglish makes me communicate with others easily and effectively;</i> |

|     |                                                      |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------|
| P40 | <i>New Chinglish makes me express myself better;</i> |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------|

Some participants emphasized the “Chinese flavor” imbued in New Chinglish and associated it with Chinese identity, contending it was a unique way for Chinese individuals to speak English (see [Table 4](#)).

Table 4: The Explanations of New Chinglish’s Flavor

| Participants | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P40          | <i>Because I am Chinese, I can use it naturally;</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| P57          | <i>I often use New Chinglish unconsciously;</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| P12          | <i>I think New Chinglish is a kind of “internet celebrity” phenomenon, showing the cultural emerging of our country, and enhancing our cultural confidence;</i>                                                                                        |
| P13          | <i>The New Chinglish is the collision of English and Chinese, the exchange of the two cultures could promote the exchange of English-speaking countries and our country, go to the world stage, showing national influence and cultural tolerance;</i> |
| P20          | <i>It's in line with the Chinese expression.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Others focused on the “funny and interesting” aspect of New Chinglish (see [Table 5](#)).

Table 5: The Explanations of New Chinglish’s Funny and Interesting

| Participants | Statements                                          |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| P72          | <i>It is funny and interesting;</i>                 |
| P271         | <i>Sometimes, I use New Chinglish to have fun;</i>  |
| P301         | <i>It is full of humor and funny, so I like it.</i> |

In summary, the communicative effectiveness, unique Chinese features, and entertaining aspects of New Chinglish are the three major reasons leading to a positive evaluation of New Chinglish among the participants. As argued by many scholars, the potential advantage of New Chinglish, as an English variety rooted in the Chinese context, provided strong vitality and momentum ([Zhang, 2012](#); [Li, 2016](#); [Xu & Deterding, 2017](#); [Xu & Zhang, 2021](#)).

#### 4.3.2. Reasons for Participants’ Negative Evaluation of New Chinglish

Since nearly half of the participants (47.8%) rejected New Chinglish and 18.3% expressed negativity about their New Chinglish usage, we began exploring the reasons behind these negative attitudes by analyzing the explanations provided by the participants for their choices. After listing some frequently mentioned reasons category by category, we identified two distinct elements that connect with proficiency in the Chinese language and standard English. For the connection to the Chinese language, some typical explanations include (see [Table 6](#)).

Table 6: The Explanations of New Chinglish’s Negative Connection to Chinese

| Participants | Statements                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P193         | <i>New Chinglish has too much inherent Chinese thoughts;</i>                                                                  |
| P345         | <i>For its Chinese features, New Chinglish is limited in the domestic community.”</i>                                         |
| P77          | <i>New Chinglish has too many Chinese elements, cannot be used internationally, and cannot communication with foreigners.</i> |

These comments collectively convey the notion that New Chinglish, due to its distinct Chinese characteristics, is perceived as an informal language primarily suited for domestic contexts, with limited applicability beyond China. Furthermore, in comparison to standard English, New Chinglish is regarded as lacking the level of propriety required for international communication. Another concern for negative evaluation was the connection with standard English language proficiency. Here are some selected examples (see [Table 7](#)).

Table 7: The Explanations of New Chinglish's to Inefficient Language Proficiency

| Participants | Statements                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P9           | <i>I have bad English pronunciation and limited vocabulary, so I have to use New Chinglish other than standard English;</i>                                                              |
| P15          | <i>With poor standard English ability, I choose to use New Chinglish;</i>                                                                                                                |
| P169         | <i>It (New Chinglish) affects my pronunciation in the English learning process;</i>                                                                                                      |
| P243         | <i>The New Chinglish is very interesting and easy to understand in daily communication, but it has some side impact on English learning and it is not suitable in formal situations.</i> |
| P334         | <i>Incorrectly use of standard English caused the emergence of New Chinglish;</i>                                                                                                        |
| P350         | <i>I prefer to use standard English to express myself. If I cannot use standard English, I would like to choose New Chinglish.</i>                                                       |

This observation regarding the negative influence of New Chinglish on standard English highlights several key points:

- i. Respondents aspire to achieve proficiency in standard English
- ii. Standard English holds greater significance than New Chinglish
- iii. Employing New Chinglish on social media might suggest a deficiency in English proficiency.

Given these underlying motives, two distinct inclinations emerge:

- i. the level of proficiency in standard English appears linked to the usage of New Chinglish, potentially leading respondents to abstain from using New Chinglish to prevent any adverse impact on their standard English proficiency;
- ii. usage of New Chinglish, possibly signaling a weak standard English ability, has resulted in a substantial dissatisfaction among respondents. This is due to the predicament they face in deciding between language status — whether to utilize New Chinglish or not.

From this perspective, it can be inferred that their dissatisfaction may stem from their dissatisfaction or frustration with their standard English ability, rather than solely from their usage of New Chinglish.

#### 4.3.3. Concerns for Those Who Were Ambiguous Towards New Chinglish

With the high level of understandability (71.1%) and acceptability (50.9%) of New Chinglish, it is also notable that a considerable percentage of participants (53.9%) showed uncertainty regarding their New Chinglish usage behavior on social media. On the one hand, they perceived the New Chinglish as much easier to grasp and use than standard English. On the other hand, they feared that their usage behavior challenged the authority of the standard English status in society. As seen in some participants' comments (see [Table 8](#)).

Table 8: The Explanations of New Chinglish's Using Uncertainty

| Participants | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P56          | <i>Compared to standard English, New Chinglish is easier for me to comprehend and use. Sometimes I could know the meaning of New Chinglish expressions immediately without thinking;</i>                                      |
| P199         | <i>I like to use New Chinglish, but standard English is an officially recognized language, which is more important both at work and at school. I don't think this using New Chinglish behavior is appropriate in society;</i> |
| P281         | <i>Standard English is a publicly recognized language in Chinese society. Although I like New Chinglish, I think it's important to follow social norms and should not challenge it.</i>                                       |

Moreover, many participants acknowledged that New Chinglish, which blends the two languages and cultures, might be a natural and unavoidable element of their daily lives. The increasing prominence and popularity of the notion of English with code-mixing features in the daily lives of young people, driven by the widespread use of social media, was supported by mounting evidence (Bolton, 2013; Botha, 2014; Zhang, 2012, 2015). The process of dativization and localization were deemed indispensable for English development in China (Yu & Wen, 2010; Fang, 2012; Ma & Xu, 2017; Yang, Ao & Low, 2021). Some participants expressed this sentiment as follows (Table 9).

Table 9: The Explanations of New Chinglish's Using Uncertainty

| Participants | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P113         | <i>New Chinglish should be a cultural and linguistic phenomenon of the new era, a spice of life that makes everyday life livelier and more interesting;</i>                                                                                                   |
| P141         | <i>It (New Chinglish) is the trend of the times. When people need to express themselves better and more conveniently, a new kind of expression emerges. I think its existence is reasonable;</i>                                                              |
| P303         | <i>I think New Chinglish is an inevitable product in the context of the new era. In a country that is open and culturally diverse, and with the rapid development of new media, it is natural that New Chinglish has become prevalent among young people.</i> |

However, a small portion of responses exhibited ambiguity towards New Chinglish due to the conflict between conformity and imitation, which are rooted in Chinese culture and personal preference (Table 10).

Table 10: The Ambiguous Responses to New Chinglish

| Participants | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P148         | <i>My friends and classmates around me use New Chinglish, and you'd be out of place if you didn't use it, but I don't like it, so it's hard to say;</i>                                       |
| P217         | <i>I quite like the New Chinglish expression, but my friends around me don't use it and think it violates English grammar, so I try to avoid using it;</i>                                    |
| P333         | <i>It's weird and alternative, if you use New Chinglish and none of your friends around you, use it, but if everyone uses it, I use it too, so it's hard for me to judge my use behavior.</i> |

Such responses reflected the dilemma that the New Chinglish users were facing. They desired to use it, but they also felt the need to obtain permission and recognition from society and their social groups. Their language choice was constantly influenced by

various factors, including personal preference, the current language situation, the implicit relationship between proficiency in standard English and use of New Chinglish, as well as social recognition and acceptance.

## 5. Discussion and Implications

The study investigated the connection between attitudes towards New Chinglish and its usage behaviors on social media among Chinese College students. Through examining their choices and explanations, the study found that participants generally held positive evaluations of New Chinglish. However, a contradictory and uncertain evaluation of their New Chinglish usage behaviors on social media emerged, despite New Chinglish having a high level of understandability and acceptability to them. Personal acceptability and preference alone could not dictate their attitudes towards their New Chinglish usage behaviors on social media; instead, they emphasized the importance of social factors, especially those related to language inequality, in shaping their perceptions. This process involved a compromise between individual preferences and social influences.

This study largely confirms the results of previous studies indicating that Chinese college students hold positive attitudes towards English varieties in China (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002; Hu, 2004, 2005; Chen & Hu 2006; He & Li, 2009; He & Zhang, 2010; Jiang & Tian, 2011; Wang, 2013). Unlike the rigid and unquestionable requirement for English in traditional educational settings, there are no strict standards for English usage outside the classroom, granting students greater freedom in their language use.

As suggested by Zhang, Bolton, and Botha (2019), various language-mixing patterns have emerged in Chinese university education recently, and college students favor code-mixing of Chinese and English in their daily lives outside the classroom. Mix-coding language has become popular among these students. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2019: 274) noted that, impressive Chinese-English mixings are visible on the Chinese Internet, demonstrating a “*deviation from the conventional rules of English and Chinese usage in many unexpected ways*”. English used in Chinese social media ranges from the limited conventional use to code-mixing, to what scholars call “new” Chinglish (Li, 2016; Xu & Deterding, 2017). Thus, it is unsurprising that Chinese college students tend to hold positive attitudes towards New Chinglish.

However, the relaxed atmosphere regarding English usage outside the class does not imply that Chinese college students can use the language entirely free. Given the language reality in China, standard English holds an overwhelmingly dominant position that is officially recognized and widely utilized across various domains, including education, commerce, tourism, and individual lives (Jiang, 2003; Bolton & Grado, 2012; Zhang, Bolton & Botha, 2019; Hu, 2021).

Additionally, language inequality is also manifested in people's aspirations for language proficiency. As highlighted by Osnos (2014), millions of individuals in China, after emerging from poverty, take it upon themselves to learn English and ensure their children have every opportunity to partake in the new “age of ambition”. In China, English is not merely a language but is imbued with a variety of social meanings.

Contrary to Zhang's (2014) study in 2014, which suggested that English majors with high proficiency tended to use code-mixed language in their daily communication, the findings from this study indicate a different trend. The results here suggest that Chinese

college students, driven by the fear of being perceived as having poor English skills, use New Chinglish discreetly. This implies a perceived association between New Chinglish and lower English proficiency among these students. This concern is echoed by description from [Xu and Zhang \(2021: 194\)](#), who described the situation of using New Chinglish as causing concerns about 'limited English proficiency'.

Furthermore, the historical emphasis on written English, combined with limited opportunities for immersion or interaction with native English speakers through traditional language teaching methods ([Qiang & Siegel, 2012](#); [Rao, 2013](#)), has contributed to the development of unique language patterns and misunderstandings often associated with "Chinglish" and "Chinese flavor". The findings of the present study reveal that when given choices and the opportunity for comparison, college students prefer standard English. However, when they need to express something in English and are unable to do so in standard English, New Chinglish becomes the second option. This confirms that poor English proficiency does contribute to the tendency to use New Chinglish. Thus, there exists a vicious cycle where poor English proficiency and New Chinglish usage reinforce each other. People perceive New Chinglish users as lacking sufficient knowledge of linguistic rules, resulting in the use of incorrect expressions, non-standard English, and grammar mistakes, as well as spelling errors.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, another significant factor was the perception of New Chinglish as "heterogeneous." [Xu and Zhang \(2021\)](#) also noted that for most Chinese people, using New Chinglish was not considered a natural or normal activity, even on social media. Similarly, New Chinglish usage was also a heterogeneous behavior against the social norms of standard English behavior. This alienable action was prominent in society emphasizing conformity. Thus, the conflict between their desired language status and practical language use emerged, and reservations persisted concerning the extent of New Chinglish's usage on social media.

## 6. Conclusion

Language attitudes are intricately linked with language behavior and play a pivotal role in language development ([Bohner & Wanke, 2002](#); [McKenzie, 2008](#)). The findings of this study indicate that college students' perceptions indeed exerted some influence on their language usage patterns. However, it is essential to recognize that there are other influential elements that wield a decisive impact on language behavior. These results align with the understanding that, although language attitudes and behavior are interconnected, maintaining perfect consistency between the two can be challenging. Additional factors, including educational and social influences, also significantly shape and determine language behaviors ([Baker, 1992](#); [Garrett, 2010](#); [Bartram, 2010](#); [Gardner, 2010](#)). Thus, these findings emphasize that in a monolingual context, the connection between language and language behavior should be influenced by social factors.

Exploring New Chinglish usage within Chinese social media represents a nascent research domain. By unveiling college students' perceptions of New Chinglish, we gain insights into potential trajectories for English language utilization in China, alongside micro-level descriptions of its integration into students' daily linguistic practices, thereby enhancing our understanding of New Chinglish acceptance in a monolingual society. While this study centers on college students' New Chinglish perceptions, coupled with its relatively modest sample size, necessitates careful consideration of potential limitations. China is a vast country with a large number of English learners in

different regions, and there may be differences among various populations or populations from different areas. More research and the collection of larger samples are needed to verify the findings of this study.

Secondly, the current study simply concludes by calculating percentages and lacks rigorous statistical analysis. To enhance the study, more rigorous statistical calculations are required to determine the differences that exist between different regions, genders, ages, time spent learning English, and language usage behaviors regarding New Chinglish. To address these limitations, future research should delve into the roots of these perceptions, scrutinize daily New Chinglish usage among Chinese college students, and illuminate distinctions and connections between standard English and New Chinglish, fostering a comprehensive grasp of this linguistic phenomenon.

### **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Sabah Malaysia (UMS). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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