From CALL to MALL: The Case of Free Learners of Chinese in Israel
(Poster)

Orit Ezra

Tel Aviv University

oezra1@gmail.com

Anat Cohen

Tel Aviv University

anatco@tauex.tau.ac.il

Rafi Nachmias

Tel Aviv University

nachmias@post.tau.ac.il

Abstract

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which has emerged in recent years, was reported as different from Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013). The present research employed quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the degree to which 46 types of learning activities of 9 free learners of Chinese in Israel shifted away from CALL to MALL by checking their degree of mobility as suggested by Pegrum (2014) – device mobility, learner mobility, learning mobility, and total mobility.

Main findings suggest that these MALL activities still fall short of mobility, particularly learning mobility and to a certain degree device mobility, and therefore are lagging in the transition to MALL. Suggested impeding operational factors represent a lack of Pegrum's (2014) mobile affordances (local, episodic and extended, and personal and social). Thus, learning in Israel may represent a lack of local affordance as a learner using Google Translate explained: "Sometimes it's just interest and sometimes it's because I really need it like when the Chinese business people were here". Lack of level adaptation may represent hindered personal affordance as embodied in the following activities on YouTube and a Chinese reading app, respectively: "I am basic level therefore I see general things"; "at the moment it's too hard so I don't do it too often…I understand maybe thirty percent". Lack of community ties perhaps insinuate a lack of social affordance, as expressed by one learner referring to her Facebook Chinese activity: "I don't report from the field". This unwillingness to share may also point to a lack of personal habits adaptation (Pachler, Cook, & Bachmair, 2010) that may hinder the personal affordance.

Moreover, a comparison of generic versus dedicated activities shows that pedagogically dedicated materials seem to also hinder device mobility and learning mobility, signifying perhaps a lack of personal and social affordances, as learners – unlike in generic materials – are lacking in their ability to produce and share. This was demonstrated in generic social media activities as embodied by a learner who, sitting in a restaurant, reported on Facebook: "很好吃，我喜欢" ("It's tasty, I love it"). Conversely, a learner who used an electronic dictionary during group learning at a regular coffee place narrated: "There is a lesson about post and we are at the coffee place so no connection…it's all textbook material, the situation is not related to the learning materials".

Keywords: MALL, CALL, Mobile learning, language learning, Chinese.

References

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