Chapter 26
Designing Interactive Cross-Cultural Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Pin-Hsiang Natalie Wu
Chien-kuo Technology University, Taiwan

Michael W. Marek
Wayne State College, USA

ABSTRACT

Using communication technology for learning is a path to new patterns of thinking. This chapter examines the affordances provided by using smartphone technology in English for cross-cultural understanding. University students from Japan and Taiwan used the popular app LINE collaboratively for five weeks, culminating in jointly-written essays. Data collection used a survey, open-ended questions, and analysis of the essays. The students saw English as an important international language in which they need competency, strongly favored use of technology to assist language learning, appreciated the study's cross-cultural experience, and found the dynamics of the group to be interesting and motivating. The authors provide four best practices for using LINE and similar applications for English learning: that they be thought of as communication tools, that students need strong support concerning required tasks, that students must understand how tasks using technology benefit them, and that true online communities may include multiple platforms.

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing emphasis around the world on interaction processes and the socio-cultural aspects of language learning. Raising cultural understanding and increasing cultural sensitivity are both necessary in the language learning process, if students are to progress beyond basic knowledge into idiomatic language use (Wu & Marek, 2013).

Collaboration is a key ingredient of teaching and learning (Bruning, H. R., Schraw, J. G., & Norby, M. M.,2011). Many studies have shown the benefits of collaborative learning of English as a Foreign

Language (EFL) (Li, L., Liu, X., & Steckelberg, A.L., 2010; Shih, 2011; Tchounikine, P., Rummel, N., & McLaren, B. M., 2010). Collaborative learning is also a major focal point of research in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Carter & Stockwell, 2008; Chai, C. S., Wong, L. H., & King, R. B., 2016; Wu & Marek, 2010).

The understanding of other cultures as a tool for language learning has also been an area of research emphasis (Chun, 2006) and Web 2.0 technology can be a tool for improving cultural understanding (Toetenel, 2014), given its ability to provide fast, interesting, and low-cost channels of communication among collaborators from different cultures. Stockwell (2014) found that while there is considerable research citing development of cultural awareness as an outcome of the study, these elements are often unplanned and not a purposeful goal of the study.

One way to gain the advantages of collaboration is to use Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications to facilitate communication among different cultural groups. CMC/CALL scholarship is paying growing attention to such applications because today's college students virtually all have mobile data access (Chen & Li, 2010; Huang, Y. M., Huang, Y. M., Huang, S. H., & Lin, Y.T., 2012; Ma, 2017). Adopting smartphones in language learning can successfully motivate students (Leis & Tohei, 2015) and promote autonomous study (Wang, D., Zou, B., & Xing. M., 2014). Zou & Yan (2014) also stated that there is a strong motivation among students for learning English via mobile devices, and there is also a wide diversity of mobile learning activities appearing in higher education curricula.

This study used MALL technology to mediate a collaborative learning environment focused on cross-cultural understanding. The researchers selected the LINE text messaging platform because it provided individual and group interaction while providing a strong level of student privacy. LINE was well-known to Asian college students and did not require a significant learning curve for convenient use, yet it had not been widely researched. The goals of the study were to (a) understand the experiences of students who used LINE as a MALL platform, (b) raise cultural understanding via cross-cultural collaboration in language learning, (c) identify the affordances of the technology used, and (d) develop best practices recommendations for instructional use of smartphone applications, such as LINE, for cross-cultural understanding. The specific research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the perceptions of the participants on the role of the English language today and their resulting attitude toward learning English?
2. What do the participants feel about using technology to assist language learning, which technology or network do they prefer, and why?
3. What are the reactions of the participants about learning via cross-cultural interaction and how did cross-cultural interaction affect their willingness to communicate?
4. What are resulting instructional technology design best practices for English learning activities using LINE?

Although determining the affordances of the technology was a key goal of the study, the authors determined that they should not ask students about affordances directly, because it is an academic term outside their experience. The research questions addressed the perceptions, feelings, and reactions of the students. The data were then used to understand the resulting affordances.

This study, therefore, is significant because of the resulting analysis of affordances provided by purposeful use of the little-researched smartphone application LINE for collaborative learning about culture.

Related Content

A Better Medical Interpreting Service: Interpreter's Roles and Strategies Under Goffman's Participation Framework
Jifei Zhangand Fei Wang (2021). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics (pp. 1-14).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-better-medical-interpreting-service/266312

Bilingual Education From Learner Perspectives
M. Dolores Ramírez-Verdugoand Linda Gerena (2022). *Research Anthology on Bilingual and Multilingual Education (pp. 1069-1088).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/bilingual-education-from-learner-perspectives/292788

Modeling Predictors of Accuracy in Web-Translated Newspaper Stories
Emmanuel C. Ifeduba (2022). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/modeling-predictors-of-accuracy-in-web-translated-newspaper-stories/304074

Designing Controlled Chinese Rules for MT Pre-Editing of Product Description Text
Ying Zheng, Chang Pengand Yuanyuan Mu (2022). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/designing-controlled-chinese-rules-for-mt-pre-editing-of-product-description-text/313919

Increasing Retention of Linguistically-Disadvantaged College Students in South Africa
Denise Carpenter Mussmanand Venicia F. McGhie (2020). *Beyond Language Learning Instruction: Transformative Supports for Emergent Bilinguals and Educators (pp. 146-180).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/increasing-retention-of-linguistically-disadvantaged-college-students-in-south-africa/241665