

## Audioblogging: Supporting the Learning of Oral Communication Skills in Chinese Language

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## What is audioblogging?



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## Differences between audioblogging and podcasting

- **Genre of content**
  - Reflective journal *vs* radio show
- **Composition of postings**
  - Voice + hypertext, picture/graphics *vs* human voice(s), sound effects/music
- **Interaction with audience**
  - Exchange of comments *vs* responses factored into subsequent shows

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## Background of research

- ICT is one of the **21<sup>st</sup> century life skills** (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003)
- Use of ICT in Chinese language education can be further improved to **encourage interaction** (Chen, 2004; Li, 2004; The Chinese Society of Education, 2004)
- The MOE Chinese Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee recommended the exploration of **more advanced uses of ICT** (Ministry of Education, 2004b)

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## Chinese language learning

- **Oral communication skills** (as part of CL learning)
  - Two components assessed at primary school level
    1. oral reading
    2. picture conversation

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## Research questions

1. How are Chinese language oral skills being taught in schools? What are the gaps? Following up with the gap analysis, how could Audioblogs be used to enhance the teaching and learning of Chinese language oral skills?

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## Research questions

2. How do the teachers and students react to the use of Audioblogs?
3. With the use of Audioblogging, are there any effects on students' oral conversational skills?

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## Sample

- **Pilot study**
  - 2 classes of Primary 6 students (equal no. of boys/girls)
    - 18 students (middle Chinese language ability)
    - 26 students (low Chinese language ability)
  - 2 teachers
    - with 8 and 3 years of teaching experience respectively
- **Comparison study**
  - 18 Primary 4 students involved
    - random allocation into experiment and control group

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## Method

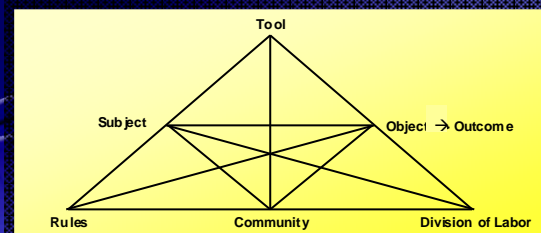
- **Three parts** to the study:
  1. **Classroom observation** - analysis of the teaching and learning processes in the pre-intervention phase
  2. **Pilot study** - to gauge the teachers and students' reaction to the implementation
  3. **Comparison study** - to assess the impact on students' learning

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## Method

- Using a framework (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999) based on **Activity Theory** (Engeström, 1987) as a lens to analyse observed situation and identify potential gaps



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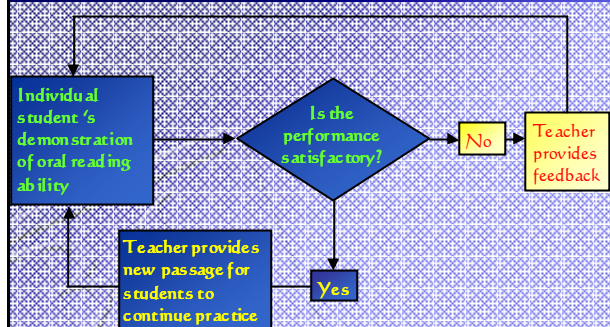
## Applying the AT lens

- **Tool:** oral practice sheet flashed on OHP; oral performance rubrics
- **Subject:** students
- **Object:** oral performance
- **Outcome:** produce good oral performance
- **Community:** students and teacher
- **Rules:** how teacher and students interact
- **Division of labour:** teacher's and students' roles during oral skills learning

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## Teaching of oral skills in schools



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## Where are the gaps?

- Teacher is the **main evaluator** of performance, students externalise their evaluation **only when asked to do so**
  - **Initiate – Response – Feedback** discourse structure used during classroom interactions
  - evaluation is **not negotiated**
  - identification of the rubrics for good Chinese language performance was **internalised by the teacher only**

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## Where are the gaps?

- Most students are **mere producers** of oral performance
  - relied on the **consciousness of the few others** in the community (teacher and selected students) to decide on the quality and consequently actions to be taken to improve the product
  - **no rules exist** to govern students' interactions with each other on the oral performances

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## Redesigning the Activity System

- Tools
  - Audioblogs provides the subject a **medium to reify the artefacts** of oral performances, for use as reference
  - Rubrics for providing feedback on oral performance made **freely available** to all in the community
- Rules (of interactions)
  - re-drawn so that students **also comment on other students' performance**, not just the teacher alone

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## Redesigning the Activity System

- Division of labour
  - Teachers
    - Evaluator of oral performance
    - Model oral performance for students (scaffold)
    - Scaffold commenting by students
    - Facilitate evaluation by students
  - Students
    - Producer of oral performance
    - Evaluator of oral performance by other students

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## Teachers' observations

- Students "read using a **louder voice**, and they **felt natural** when reading."
- Students "**welcomed the idea** of being able to listen to others' recordings."
- Students "**on their own**, will seek out recordings that have good comments to listen."
- Students improve on their weaknesses and mistakes after listening to the **recordings of other students**.

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## Students' responses

- **Improving on pronunciations**

"some **words which I don't know** and my friends know and I heard he said and we write the *hanyu pinyin* (Chinese phonetics) in the passage paper and we know how to read."  
"I don't know how to say the part then I listen to my friend one I know how to say ... I don't know how to say **把柄**, after I listen I know how to say."
- **Awareness of pacing**

"If our reading speed is **too fast** if we listen to other people then we can we will know how to sometimes the **speed must put slower** sometimes the speed must **put faster**."

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## Students' responses

- **To become more expressive**  
"sometimes in the passage when you need to **strengthen the sound** something like that if you didn't you can learn from them."
- **Monitoring of own performance**  
"listen if too fast **delete** away then **read another** then do it slowly."

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## Effects of commenting

- **Students felt that comments from the teachers helped them be more expressive**  
"sometimes teacher commented that I reading too fast and no feeling and I would **change it the second time** when I recording better second recording."
- **Simple comments not beneficial**  
"one boy from my class go and comment me just the word 'not good' then I **don't know where is not good** I don't feel really." *zhun* (precise) just 'not good' don't tell me which part not good."

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## Effects of commenting

- **Improved consciousness of own performance**  
"I give comments to other people like that some part they all didn't strengthen, then I hear to my recording of the same passage, then **if I never strengthen that part I will remember.**" (after commenting on pronunciation) "...and I hear mine got the same mistake like his, **I check.**"

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## In summary

- **Audioblogs provided a tool to**
  - **mediate the collective effort of the community to improve Chinese language oral performance.**
  - **enable students to reflect and monitor their own performance**
  - **refine oral performances for future reference**

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This set of presentation slides  
and the research paper  
are available for download at  
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# Thank you

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