

## **Learning to Communicate in Chinese with Social Media through Contextualized, Authentic and Socializing Means**

### Lessons Learnt from Implementations of Seamless Chinese Learning at Secondary School Level

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#### **KEY IMPLICATIONS**

- If the intention is to nurture the students' in seamless and self-directed learning dispositions, long-term interventions are required and should commence at the primary school level where students' disposition in learning are more malleable, and where both the teachers and students have greater bandwidths to sustain their active involvements in such pedagogy.
- If the intention is to foster other 21st century competencies through seamless learning pedagogy, then the intervention design can be episodic (e.g., task/project-based seamless learning)—such seamless learning pedagogy can be applied to secondary/tertiary students without prior seamless learning experience.
- In creating online social spaces for teaching and learning, if the intention is to make the interactions more informal so it can be blended into the students' daily lives, the teachers must be mindful of the students' existing preferred social network tools and their typical ways of communication in designing the pedagogy, playing the role of their students' friends in such social spaces, holding back their control or criticism

on students' postings, and establishing mechanisms for students' self-management and for rewarding active and quality participation on social media.

#### **BACKGROUND**

This project aimed to design a seamless language learning (SLL) environment. SLL is an emerging form of language learning that bridges the language learning efforts across different learning contexts (e.g., formal-informal learning, individual-social learning, and learning within both physical and digital realities). The project designed social interactions with social media to foster meaning making and idea sharing on authentic experience. The focus was to investigate how social media can be applied in an SLL environment to facilitate an iterative process of language learning, application and reflection.

#### **FOCUS OF STUDY**

Informed by the notion of SLL, we propose the Social Media as Language Learning Artefacts (SMILLA) Framework as a guide for constructing social media spaces to foster students' authentic communication abilities in second language. This framework may also explain the learning processes of MyCLOUD, our earlier SLL model

catered to primary school Chinese learners which was implemented with success. To enact this framework, we developed a 3-stage Chinese learning process to foster lower secondary school students' communicative abilities in four interactional types: narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative. Stage 1: enculturating students to the new social media space in Chinese; Stage 2: scaffolding students in improving and enriching their social media by retelling in the four interactional types; Stage 3: connecting social media activities with formal classroom compositions where students are allowed to co-develop materials based on their relevant authentic experiences and personal voices before writing compositions.

## KEY FINDINGS

We worked with two schools and co-developed with teachers two different SMILLA-informed curricula. However, due to external factors and our miscalculation on secondary school teachers' and students' bandwidths in carrying out such longer-term interventions, the interventions were unable to be advanced to Stage 3 and therefore did not yield the expected outcomes. However, there were lessons learnt which are laid out below.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

### Implications for practice

The SMILLA framework may be applied to seamless learning of other subjects with proper translation and mindful consideration of teachers' and students' constraints and needs. In addition, seamless learning, or self-directed learning, should commence earlier at the primary school level where students' habit-of-mind

are more malleable, and where both the teachers and students have greater bandwidths to sustain their active involvements in such longer-term pedagogy.

## Implications for research

Further research can be focused on: (a) the subject matter-independent aspects—on how SMILLA can be applied to other subjects and on the students' trajectory of development in motivation and learning dispositions across the longer-term intervention; (b) the subject matter-dependent aspects in Chinese learning—to redesign the process-oriented seamless writing process that would help the students in drawing out their intelligence in organizing and articulating ideas, to orchestrate and transform their intelligence into improved writing skills.

## POPULATION

Two neighbourhood secondary schools with a total of 102 students (Secondary 1–2) were involved in the study.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The intervention was conducted in the form of design-based research (DBR). Mixed methods were employed for evaluating the intervention. Pre- and post-questionnaires were administered and analysed by conducting paired samples t-tests. For the analysis of learning effectiveness, different methods were employed across the pilot classes due to varied intervention designs and intervention periods, and varied learning objectives set by the teachers. Additional audio/video recordings of in-class lessons were used to triangulate or make sense of the findings.

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