Exploring the use of tutorial recordings for beginner learners of Chinese

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Introduction

Previous research into listening to tutorial recordings highlights their potential as a scalable resource in online contexts (Lee, 2005, Mayes 2015). Dialogue between tutor and learner or between peers 'externalizes' the learning process and may mediate the understanding not just of direct participants, but also of overhearers, and facilitate deep learning. Findings from previous studies suggest that there are cognitive, social and emotional benefits of listening to tutorial dialogue with learners who are at a similar level of understanding. (Ohta, 2001; Lee, 2005; Mills, 2014; Mayes, 2015; Fernández Dobao, 2016)

The issue we addressed

The newly established Open Centre for Languages and Cultures (OCLC) offers language courses, but, to keep fees low, does not include tutorials. A re-usable resource such as tutorial recordings could be a sustainable option.

There are two types of tutorial recordings
- o Screencasts (tutor only)
- o Recorded tutorials (tutor and students)

Both offer a teaching voice supported by visuals, explanations of learning points and scaffolded practice. The latter additionally offer access to dialogue and opportunities for vicarious participation.
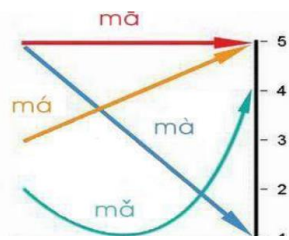
What we did

We recorded four tutorials with volunteer students on the Chinese beginners' course LXC001-20J. We then made the recordings available to learners on the course and its subsequent presentation (LXC001-21B).

We explored how learners worked with the recordings by
- o collecting user statistics
- o inviting learners to give brief feedback via online surveys after accessing each recording
- o conducting, transcribing and analysing 5 stimulated recall interviews

User statistics and survey data
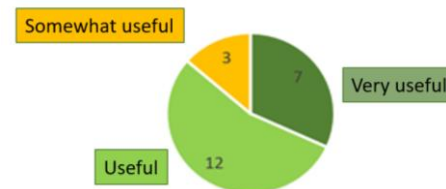
How useful did you find the recorded tutorials? (n=22)

There were 56 viewings of the recordings, survey respondents spent between 45 and 120 minutes watching each tutorial, and, on a five-point-Likert scale "useful" or "very useful" was selected 19 out of 22 times.

Findings from qualitative data

In the interviews, participants reported imagining that they were, themselves, present at the recorded tutorials. Aspects they referred to repeatedly are summarized below:

- o Participating vicariously
- o Replaying and pausing
- o Learning and consolidating words and phrases
- o Reinforcing character learning and pronunciation
- o Understanding language points they had struggled with previously
- o Noticing learner errors and teacher feedback
- o Building confidence
- o Experiencing "real interaction"
- o Feeling connected to other students

Although a static resource, participants perceived the recorded tutorials as **fundamentally different** from their other study materials.

…here you got someone speaking and giving explanations, it seems to me that that makes it quite memorable just hearing the voices. You can imagine you're participating." [Sophie, interview]

Recommendations

This project explored potential learning benefits of watching tutorial recordings for beginner learners of Chinese and is making recommendations regarding the use of tutorial recordings as part of OCLC courses and as a scalable resource in online learning more generally, for example, in MOOCs.

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