FY13 Funded Proposal: Web-Based and Mobile Device Supported Intermediate Chinese Reading Learning Website for Intermediate Classes

FY13 Innovations in Teaching with Technology Awards

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<th>Proposal Title:</th>
<th>Web-Based and Mobile Device Supported Intermediate Chinese Reading Learning Website for Intermediate Classes</th>
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<td>Investigators:</td>
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<td>Department(s):</td>
<td>Chinese Program, ASLL, DWLLC</td>
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<td>Funding Awarded:</td>
<td>$1,216</td>
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The purpose of this project is to build a computer (both Mac and PC) compatible and mobile-device-friendly website to accompany reading lessons of the Intermediate Chinese Reader textbook. This textbook is led by Professor Helen Shen in the Chinese Program at UI and I joined as the third author and it will be published by Routledge in spring 2013. That is, it will be used in our current intermediate language courses starting from fall 2013. The features of this website include: interactive multimedia vocabulary flashcard, audio files for all reading texts, multimedia resources, reading texts supported by built-in Chinese-English dictionary software and mobile apps, sample teaching resources for teachers and a mini blog site for teachers to exchange and share on developing course materials.

Chinese is listed as in critical need by the National Security Language Initiative program launched in 2006 by the White House for bringing up more advanced-level speakers. Accuracy and fluency in reading is a major instructional goal for the intermediate level learners. However, due to the logographic nature of the Chinese writing (it lacks obvious sound to script correspondence), reading in Chinese is a great challenge to American learners. Therefore, providing supplementary learning materials including audio to be accessed via mobile device for our intermediate learners is highly needed.

Needs: The need for a mobile device accessible website is based on the high request we received in our recent survey. The survey consist a total of 55 participants. Among them:
What do you intend to do?

- 76% participants suggested that it would be useful to be able to access reading texts, related learning resources and materials on their mobile devices.
- 82% strongly agreed that it would be useful to access vocabulary flashcards on their mobile devices.
- 80% strongly agreed that it would be useful to access audio of the text on their mobile devices.
- 60% strongly agreed that it would be useful to access multimedia materials of the reading text on their mobile devices.
- 71% strongly agreed that it would be useful to access additional exercises on their portable devices.

Many students also recommended that mobile apps are effective in facilitate their language study. In a word, the demand of new Chinese reading learning materials is extremely high. (Details of survey is available)

**Significance:** Despite the high need, the study on how to apply mobile technology in Chinese Reading instruction and learning is currently rare. Therefore, it is important to take an initiative to solve technical problems in developing such a web reading site. The success of this project, not only benefit to our UI Chinese learners (about 200 enrollment), more importantly, it will extend the benefits to the Chinese learners national and international wide. We will apply for external funding to extend the benefits of mobile technology to the existing Chinese Reading World website. That website is directed by Professor Helen Shen and hosted by UI ITS and currently has 8,000 of US and international users. That is, we will be able to make that website accessible through mobile devices to users.

**Design and Process:**

We intend to include: a user manual of the website; provide learning resources for students for each of the lessons; provide sample classroom activities for teachers and a mini blog site; contact information of the site maintainer.

The development of this project involves the following steps:

1. By December 2012: Developing text in built-in dictionary software and mobile app supported format.
2. By January 2013: Audio-record reading texts in digital files, developing extensive reading materials and tasks, locating appropriate multimedia materials.
3. By February 2013: Designing web pages and upload formatted texts, extensive reading materials and audio files.
4. By March 2013: Building online electronic vocabulary flashcard and linking character to external dictionary source.
5. By April 2013: Running the site, building the mini blog site, and conduct evaluation.
From fall 2013, the second-year to fourth-year Chinese students from our Chinese classes will be able to use it and an estimated of 100 students each year in the future according to enrollment. This website can also be used by other users with the textbook as a part of the distance learning and promote Chinese study nationwide. The site will improve students’ learning and help teachers’ instruction in the following ways:

- The interactive vocabulary flashcards will help students tackle the vocabulary obstacles before reading. It will provide detailed English explanation, part of speech, standard pronunciation and example of the vocabulary, it is also connected with an outside dictionary website that students can click on each character in the word to further examine the character and understand the word.
- The vocabulary flashcard can be downloaded and students can make note on them with other mobile apps or on their computer and store those for future review.
- Audio of the reading texts will be provided to students along with the text.
- All reading materials will be accompanied by a built-in Chinese-English dictionary both on computer and on mobile devices for students to check words.
- Supplementary multimedia resources will provide authentic firsthand materials for students and add visual to the text.
- Extensive reading will provide additional background knowledge or new information to supplement the text.
- These materials will be suitable based on students’ level and selected from Newspapers and Magazines.
- Designed tasks could evaluate students’ reading outcome, motivate students to apply their learnt knowledge and skills in solving real-life problems. Teachers can also adopt them in classroom instruction.
- All materials and resources are organized step by step from vocabulary preparation to extended readings to assist learning in each phase and students can make choice based on their personal needs.
- Students will keep access to the site so they could review or further study after the course.
- Sample teaching activities and guiding handouts are provided for instructors reference.
- A discussion mini blog site will be built along for instructors to share their idea on developing course materials.

The effectiveness of the site will be evaluated in the following ways:

- Students will complete a post-course survey to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the site and list advantages and disadvantages.
- Instructors will be invited to give feedback on the effectiveness of the site and make recommendations.
- In brief, the major advantages of this website are characterized by its mobility in use, rich in resources, systematic learning support in each step and language knowledge and skill building for students.

**What resources will you need?**

Xiaoyuan Zhao, who is currently an instructor with the Chinese program, will serve as the website developer for this project, and maintainer of the website in the future. She will also be responsible for controlling quality of the materials on the website. We have identified a number of qualified graduate students who will be available to work on developing related materials, making audio recordings for the texts and developing vocabulary flashcard and we need fund to support that. We also need personnel support from the ITS for consultation in developing computer and mobile device compatible website.

**Rough estimate of costs**

Budget (TOTAL PROJECT COST: $13,216)

1. Required software and hardware equipment: $ 1,216

   - NJ Star Chinese Word Processor Pro. Version 5.30 ($169)
   - 1 Ipad (IOS compatible device) ($399)
   - 1 Google Nexus 7 (Android compatible device) ($199)

2. Required personnel: $ 12,000

   - TA to help with developing materials: The TA will help in locating appropriate reading and multimedia resource, developing flashcard and text audio recordings. It will take an average of 30 hours per lesson to complete these works including proofread. (20 lessons x 30 hours x $20 per hour=$12, 000)
   - Personnel from ITS for consultation in developing computer and mobile device compatible website (20 lessons x1 hour=20 hours)

**ITSupport Information**