

## **Learner Variables, Technology Application and Putonghua Learning: an Investigation of Hong Kong College Students**

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### **Abstract**

Computer-Assisted language learning (CALL) has been gaining increasing popularity in the field of language education, exerting profound influence on modern language teaching and the teaching of relevant subjects (See Garrett, 1991, 2009; Liu et al., 2002). With a special historical background, Hong Kong now nurtures a great market for Putonghua learning. However, studies on computer-assisted Chinese learning are rather scant. Therefore the current study aims at exploring the application of GoChinese, a CALL tool for Putonghua learning at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. A questionnaire was designed specifically for the purpose of gathering information on learners' background, motivation in language learning and their behavior and feedback of using the language learning tool. Data on learners' use of the software as well as their test scores and exam marks were also collected. Findings of the study showed that motivation, technology use in learning and learning outcomes were interrelated. The achievement scores of the GoChinese users were significantly higher than those who had not used the software. Gender and grade level differences were also identified. Female students demonstrated higher motivation in learning the language and spent more time in using GoChinese, as a result, they obtained significantly higher marks in all three exams than male students. Learners of different levels of study demonstrated different motivation levels and their learning outcomes differed. Two factors were identified in students' motivation of learning Putonghua, which were labeled as "liking of leaning Putonghua" and "effort in leaning Putonghua". The factor "liking of learning Putonghua" was stronger in predicting the average time students spent on learning Putonghua. The study carries important implications for computer-assisted Chinese learning and teaching. Further exploration into the learning differences under the technology methods will be discussed.