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A Learner Support Model for Tertiary Web-based English Language Education in China

—Dialogues Between Learner Support System Design, Utilisation, and Learning Ecologies

# 中国高等英语网络教育 学生支持服务生态体系建模研究

王彤 著

ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE  
EDUCATION

外语教学与研究出版社

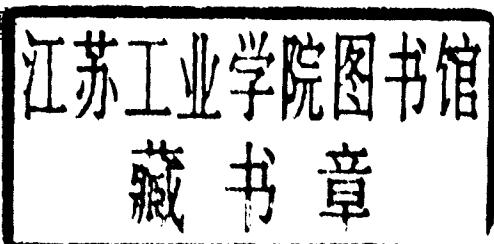
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北京 BEIJING

## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国高等英语网络教育学生支持服务生态体系建模研究 = A Learner Support Model for Tertiary Web-based English Language Education in China:  
英文 / 王彤著. — 北京: 外语教学与研究出版社, 2008.12

(北京外国语大学 2007 年博士文库系列)

ISBN 978 - 7 - 5600 - 8086 - 4

I . 中… II . 王… III . 英语—高等教育：远距离教育—支持终端网络—系统建模—研究—中国—英文 IV . H31 TP393.1

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2008) 第 211559 号

出版人: 于春迟

责任编辑: 周春梅

封面设计: 袁璐

出版发行: 外语教学与研究出版社

社址: 北京市西三环北路 19 号 (100089)

网址: <http://www.fltrp.com>

印 刷: 北京外国语大学印刷厂

开 本: 650×980 1/16

印 张: 23

版 次: 2009 年 2 月第 1 版 2009 年 2 月第 1 次印刷

书 号: ISBN 978 - 7 - 5600 - 8086 - 4

定 价: 49.90 元

\* \* \*

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物料号: 180860001

## Acknowledgements

I owe many thanks to many people who have played important roles in supporting me completing this PhD project and the thesis.

First, my son, husband, and parents were such a quiet but staunch force with me in the eventful research and writing process. It is fair to say that this thesis is a joint family effort as all the beloved family members did their best to provide me with the valuable time and invaluable love. During the three years, I was more a qualified researcher than a mother, wife, and daughter.

My deepest gratitude also goes to my supervisors—Professor David Wood and Dr. Charles Crook at Nottingham University. They displayed tremendous courage and creativity in e-supervising me at a distance which geographically sets us apart between Britain and China but academically creates many more spaces for intellectual exchange. In the unforgettable research process, they guided me not only academically but also morally. Without their continuous support, this thesis would not have taken this shape.

Special thanks go to Professor Gu Yueguo at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Some thoughts in this thesis originated from his guidance in work and in research. The ecological learner support model proposed in this paper builds upon his ecological model for elearning. Moreover, as the head of my organisation, his firm support makes it possible for me to combine research with work.

The list goes endless as so many people were so supportive of my research: Dr. Helen Spencer-Oatey (project manager of eChina-UK eLearning Programme); Professor Mary Thorpe of the Open University of the UK; Professor Sir Colin Campbell, Professor Mike Sharples, Professor Carol Hall, Dr. Richard Pemberton, Dr. Gordon Joyce, Dr. Caroline Windrum of Nottingham University; Professor Chen Naifang, Professor Hao Ping, Professor Li Pengyi, Professor Han Baocheng, Professor Yu Chunchi of Beijing Foreign Studies University; my colleagues of BeiwaiOnline; the eight

**Chinese online institutions under study in this project...**

Here I would like to present this thesis as the best gift from me to all the people who have supported me in various ways. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to say “thank you” to the lovely and important people in this research endeavour; from the top of heart, I wish them the very best in the Chinese year of Pig in 2007—the year of prosperity and good health!

## **Abstract**

This project is one of the first research attempts in China designed to explore learner support system design and utilisation by tertiary Chinese e-learners. It investigated how tertiary English language e-learners interacted with the elearning systems and how they managed their learning activities in their elearning process. The project was carried out for the purpose of empirically informing learner support system design. Based on the research findings, a learning-process-based ecological support model was proposed in the thesis.

This research aims to examine four major issues: what is the national pattern of learner support system design and utilisation by tertiary English language e-learners in China? How do different achieving groups utilise online and offline learning resources and support services? What are the learning ecologies of the e-learners? How can the e-learners be supported ecologically?

The empirical project is organised into three phases: Phase 1—a national study on tertiary learner support system design and service utilisation by English language e-learners in China; Phase 2—an institutional case study on the utilisation patterns of learner support provisions by different achieving groups; Phase 3—a longitudinal study on learner-system interaction and on how learners manage their elearning activities.

A variety of research methods were employed in different phases of the study: questionnaire survey, one-on-one interview, focus-group interview, and self-reporting learner diary. Important findings were discovered in relation to the national patterns of learner support system design and reception, the patterns of using resources and services by different achieving groups of e-learners, and the learning ecologies of tertiary English language e-learners.

Based on a literature review of distance education theories, learner support theories, and the findings of three research phases, a learning-

process-based ecological support model was proposed for tertiary English language elearning. Preliminary pilot study yielded positive results about the effectiveness of the model. Though the project was carried out in a discipline-specific setting, that is, English language education in an elearning environment, it is believed that the ecological learner support model can serve as a reference to other disciplines as well in elearning settings.

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