Title: Investigation into the Effects of Orthographic Strategy in Teaching Chinese Characters to English Beginners

Abstract

Research Value:

Acquiring Chinese characters is a great challenge for foreign students, especially students from non-character culture background. What makes thing worse is that there are not efficient strategies in teaching Chinese characters. This essay tries to testify the efficiency of orthographic strategy by comparing it with the traditional teaching strategy on the basis of experimental studies with British university students and primary students.

Take the features of Chinese characters and learners into consideration, the researchers and educators have developed various strategies in speeding up the process of learning characters and make it not only more effective but more enjoyable. Consequently, there are more and more strategies in improving the effectiveness of teaching characters. Studies indicate that among the various commonly used cognitive strategies, the orthographic-knowledge-based strategy is most heavily used. Orthographic knowledge can greatly enhance students’ memory, since Chinese characters should be interpreted as a combination of components rather than a collection of unrelated strokes. According to many previous studies, the most effective way of teaching characters is to emphasize the radical structure of a character at the time that the character is first encountered, because the links between character and radicals can then be constructed. My dissertation tries to analyze the use of orthographic-knowledge-based strategy in teaching English speakers Chinese characters and testify its effectiveness by the questionnaires and studies with the Chinese majors.

Theories:
1. The cognitive process of learning characters: Gestalt psychology. The “Gestalt” which fully explained and demonstrated graphic visual perception of the organization should also deal with Chinese characters on the identification and understanding of fundamental as a guiding role.

2. Baker and Torgesen’s theories on orthographic knowledge, Helen Shen’s theory of “the orthographic-knowledge-based learning strategies”.

**Methodology:**

This investigation is based on the teaching practice with British freshmen in East Asian Study of The University of xx and beginning learners at Year 5 in xx Primary School. The adult and child students are respectively divided into two groups. Each group is taught the same characters but with different strategies. After the class, their learning results are measured by tests or dictations and then analyzed through a deep comparison. All the data in the studies were analyzed in SPSS V17.0. With a deep and critical analysis, the research tries to find out the reasons for all the differences in students learning results.

**Major Findings:**

Through comprising their performance, tests scores and error analysis under two different strategies, this essay found the orthographic teaching strategy showed its advantages in activating the classroom, strengthening students’ memory of particular types of characters as well as avoid of making certain mistakes. Therefore, in the future teaching practice, the orthographic strategy should be applied appropriately with other strategies.

**Bibliography:**
