Chinese Character Errors from Learners of Chinese as a Second Language

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cognitive development of Chinese orthography between learners of Chinese as a second language (CSL) and native Chinese (NC) learners in Taiwan by assessing their traditional Chinese (繁體中文) character errors. The study used a paper-and-pencil test to examine errors in CSL and NC learners' writing. For this study, there were forty-eight participants, including twenty-four CSL learners and twenty-four NC learners. The participants were third-grade students from an elementary school in central Taiwan. By employing error analysis, the participants' errors were collected, and the error frequency was calculated. The results firstly demonstrated that both CSL and NC learners experienced difficulties in the stroke and component of Chinese orthography. This implies their vital roles in Chinese character learning.

Secondly, CSL learners' stroke and component errors were statistically significant higher than NC learners'. This suggests that CSL learners may ignore the process of practice. CSL learners' structure error was not statistically higher than NC learners'; however, it was statistically less than either the stroke or component error. This implies that the awareness of Chinese character structure between the two groups were not statistically different. However, when radicals, instead of components, were examined, error patterns differed statistically significantly between the two groups. One possible explanation is that radical awareness from CSL learners is not fully developed.

In this study, the participants' errors were firstly identified on wrongly-written Chinese characters (CWWC). The patterns of CWWC were observed under the paradigm of the orthographic effects (Just & Carpenter, 1987; Liu, 1984; Zhu & Taft 1994) including the stroke effect, component effect, and structure effect (the position of the radical and the component). In this study, there were forty-eight participants, including twenty-four CSL learners in Taiwan and twenty-four NC learners. The participants were third-grade students from an elementary school in central Taiwan. They undertook a paper-and-pencil test of seventy-six Chinese characters selected from the CSL and NC learners' textbooks. By employing error analysis, the participants' errors were collected, and the error frequency was calculated. The results firstly demonstrated that both CSL and NC learners experienced difficulties in the stroke and component of Chinese orthography. This implies their vital roles in Chinese character learning.

Primary Research

The study was carried out to investigate the cognitive development of Chinese orthography between CSL and NC learners in Taiwan. The participants were third-grade students from an elementary school in central Taiwan. They undertook a paper-and-pencil test of seventy-six Chinese characters selected from the CSL and NC learners' textbooks. By employing error analysis, the participants' errors were collected, and the error frequency was calculated. The results firstly demonstrated that both CSL and NC learners experienced difficulties in the stroke and component of Chinese orthography. This implies their vital roles in Chinese character learning.

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