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Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles and the teaching and learning of Chinese as a Foreign Language

Panel: Modern education technologies and Chinese language teaching

In previous work we have established that teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language may in fact involve different aspects of one's intelligence, as proposed by Howard Gardner in his Multiple Intelligences Theory. This idea sprang mainly from the Chinese language system specific characteristics such as its visual-semantic writing system, its tonal and monosyllabic phonetic system, and its lexical category, which in itself measure up fairly well to some of Gardner's multiple intelligences.

However, we believe that the sole use of this theory in the teaching and learning of Chinese language is not enough to optimize and motivate students in their learning process. In order to maximize its use, we propose in this paper that combining students' multiple intelligences (what they learn) and their learning styles (how they learn) may enrich, heighten and further develop their learning and acquisition of Chinese language.

In order to establish the validity of our hypothesis, we have designed specific tests to uncover students' multiple intelligences strengths and weaknesses and learning styles. We have then isolated a group of students with whom we have been carrying out a case study to establish the relation between their intelligences, learning styles and Chinese language learning and acquisition, and if this approach may in fact help them to overcome their shortcomings.

In this paper we will present not only our preliminary results on this case study, but also what type of methods and exercises Chinese language teachers may use to encourage and motivate students in learning and acquiring Chinese, making use of their strongest intelligences and learning styles preferences.