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DEVELOPING L2 LEARNERS' CHINESE READING ABILITY WITHOUT REQUIRING THEM TO LEARN TO WRITE CHINESE CHARACTERS----AN EXPLORATION

Panel: Modern education technologies and Chinese language teaching

Abstract: A key issue being explored in this paper is whether it is possible to develop our L2 Chinese

learners' Chinese reading ability without requiring them to write Chinese characters. This issue is of

genuine concern in a target language environment such as Taiwan where L2 learners have the need to

recognize complex characters in their environment but have found the task of learning to write very

difficult. This paper presents three case studies in L2 students learning Chinese in a target language

environment (Taiwan). The first case study outlines some of the conditions under which a curriculum

which does not focus on the writing of Chinese characters for reading purpose might be possible. Case

studies 2 and 3 outline how three L2 students learned Chinese themselves through a number of mobile

apps and how they decided not to learn Chinese characters. In the final part, the availability of Chinese

learning apps necessitated a rethinking of how the reading skill in Chinese could be developed. A

possible teaching intervention is proposed. The teaching intervention will be in a context of using the

somatically-enhanced approach in teaching Chinese (Zhang, 2006). Oral language will be taught using

active techniques such as humming, clapping, using gestures and so on. Character teaching intervention will include a variety of teaching techniques such as raising L2 learners' consciousness of radicals and other ways of character creation. L2 students will also be exposed to reading passages early in the course of their study. They are not required to write characters. The research on the teaching intervention will collect data on L2 learners' mid semester and end of semester oral and written test performances; as well as conduct in-depth interviews with a number of students from different language backgrounds. Interviews will be designed to explore the strategies and techniques L2 learners used in learning Chinese characters on their own and their opinions on how Chinese characters could be learned more efficiently in a target language environment such as Taiwan.

Keywords: Chinese characters, reading, writing Chinese characters

Introduction

Teaching Chinese in a Teaching Chinese as a Foreign language environment