

汉字的认知与教学

——西方学习者汉字认知国际研讨会论文集

顾安达 江新 万业馨 主编

The Cognition,
Learning and Teaching
of Chinese Characters

Andreas GUDER
JIANG Xin
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汉字因其悠久的历史、强大的生命力、独特的书写方式、特殊的历史文化价值和艺术审美价值而受到世人的关注，但是对于西方学习者来说，汉字却是一只斑斓猛虎，威风凛凛地站在景阳冈上，使得很多学习者望而却步。对于熟悉字母文字的人来说，要一个一个地记忆那么多的方块字，的确是一个非常大的挑战。德国美因兹大学的顾安达（Andreas Guder）教授组织的“汉字认知——西方学习者汉字认知研讨会”吸引了中国、美国、法国、德国、英国、丹麦的40多位研究者聚集德国，共同探讨汉字学习中的认知问题，希望大家同心协力发现汉字学习的秘密，我认为这是一次非常有意义的尝试。因为分身无术，无缘参加这次研讨会，我感到十分遗憾。顾安达教授希望我能为这次会议的论文集写一个序言，给我提供了一个参与的机会，让我也可以借此机会谈谈我对汉字学习的看法。

汉字到底难不难？难。汉字对于中国人来说尚且不容易学，何况是在字母文字环境中长大的西方学习者。但是我们应该看到一个事实：中国的儿童通过4~5年的学习可以具备基本的阅读能力，也就是说，学会汉字并非可望不可即。这是一种信念，有了这样的认识才会对汉字学习有信心。中国人能学会的，西方学习者也一定能够学会。当然，这需要一点儿耐心和恒心。

汉字有没有规律？有。我们内省自己学习汉字的经验不难发现，汉字作为一种记录语言的符号本身是有系统性的，汉字可以分析为一些基本的部件，这些基本的部件之间可以组合。汉字有形音义三个维度，字形只是其中的一个维度，我们不能只在字形上打转转，字音和字义也是很重要的维度。通过一些声符和意符也可以学会很多汉字。很多字是我们从未见到过的，但是通过声旁我们可以推知它的读音，通过意符我们可以推知它的意义。比如“鲋”，我们知道它的读音是“付”，它的意义是“一种鱼”；再比如“桐”，我们知道它的读音是“同”，它的意义是“一种树”。当然这种方法并非什么时候都灵验，因为字有古今，地分南北，字的读音和意义会发生变化。尽管如此，我们可以说学习汉字也跟学习其他知识一样，可以举一反三。

汉字到底难在哪里？很难一言以蔽之。我想对于初学者来说莫过于汉字的

外形太奇怪，每一个字看起来都不顺眼，有很多长得还很像，比如“土”和“士”、“未”和“末”，区别特征不太明显。最要命的是这些字都要一个一个地去记忆。与字母文字相比，一个一个的汉字当然需要花更多的时间去记忆。而记忆不是成年人的优势。其次是有些汉字有几种念法，要根据词汇组合去分辨它到底该念什么，比如“中”可以读成阴平或者去声，“中国”的“中”读成阴平，“中弹”的“中”读成去声；又如“重”有 chóng 和 zhòng 两种念法，“重叠”和“重要”两个词汇，同一个汉字要念成不同的读音。第三个难处是汉字有繁体和简体两套，比如“图书馆”是简体写法，“圖書館”是繁体写法，每一个学习者都会遇到繁简汉字，尤其是有些西方学习者开始学习的时候学的是繁体字，后来又改学简体字，两套系统对学习来说无疑是雪上加霜。第四，学习者可以借助汉语拼音学习口语，于是出现了语言和文字学习不同步的局面，学语容易学文难，学习者往往会舍难就易。当然汉字的难学之处还不止这些。如果教法不得当，也会平添新的困难。

汉字认知有哪些问题？中国人的启蒙教育叫做“识字”，所以汉字认知首先应该是汉字识别，只有先认识才能慢慢熟悉，最后成为好朋友。第二是发现规律，认字到一定数量时学习者自己会发现汉字的内在规律，尤其是形声字系统在汉字学习中的作用，会帮助西方学习者学会更多的汉字。第三是循序渐进，积少成多，集腋成裘。学习汉字应该与学习语言同步进行，这样可以一举两得，免得语文分家。第四，我认为应该把学习汉字和学习中国的历史文化结合起来，因为每一个汉字都是一个记录中国历史文化的化石，通过汉字的学习可以了解许多中国的历史文化，这样汉字的学习就不是一件枯燥的事了。比如，“安”为什么是一座房子里有一个女人，“家”为什么是一座房子里有一头猪，“美”为什么是一只大羊，“颖”为什么有“禾”字在里面，“脱颖而出”的“颖”是什么意思，等等。汉字不仅仅是记录汉语的符号，汉字里面有很多关于中国的知识。第五，形声字在汉字识别中到底起什么作用，据万业馨教授统计，从春秋战国至今，形声字始终是汉字的主要结构方式（约占 80%），这个发现可以改变我们以前对汉字认识的许多误区。虽然有“六书”，但是声旁提示语音线索的作用不可小视。第六，汉字家族的认知研究。我们所熟悉的汉字大多数都不是孤立的，他们彼此之间通过一些共同的特征联系在一起组成字族。比如“亻”、“冫”、“艹”、“彳”、“扌”、“扌”等，每一个偏旁都是

Preface

With their long-standing history, tremendous vitality, singular writing style, exceptional historical and cultural value as well as aesthetic value, Chinese characters have always fascinated people from all over the world. But to Western learners, Chinese characters seem like a majestic yet fearsome tiger, who makes them shrink back in fear. For people who grew up with an alphabet have to memorize each and every single one of those square-shaped characters individually, an enormous challenge indeed. The symposium “*Hanzi Renzhi: How Western Learners Discover the World of Written Chinese*”, organized by Prof. Andreas Guder (School of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies, University of Mainz, Germany), brought together more than 40 scholars from China, the USA, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark, to discuss the role of cognition in the process of learning Chinese characters, in a concerted effort to uncover the secret of learning Chinese characters. I consider this effort a very worthy one; much to my regret, I was otherwise tied up with business and thus not able to take part in the conference. Yet, by asking me to write a preface for this compilation, Prof. Guder enabled me to “participate” after all, and I would like to use this opportunity to present my views on the learning of Chinese characters.

So, are Chinese characters really difficult to learn? The answer is yes. They are not easy to learn even for Chinese people, how hard must it be for a Western learner who grew up with an alphabet! Yet, we cannot omit the fact that Chinese children can acquire a basic reading ability within 4-5 years of learning, meaning that learning Chinese characters is by no means impossible. With this kind of conviction one can have the confidence to study Chinese characters. What Chinese learners can master, Western learners should also be able to master, even if it obviously requires a bit of patience and perseverance.

Do Chinese characters follow certain rules? They do. If we analyze our own experience in learning Chinese characters, we will easily see that the symbols of Chinese characters as a means of recording language are of a very systematic nature. Chinese characters can be divided into many different subgraphemes (部件 *bùjiàn*). These subgraphemes can be combined in various ways. Chinese characters have three dimensions, namely shape, sound and meaning. Character shape is just one factor and we must not revolve about it only, as sound and meaning are also very important factors. Many Chinese characters can be learned with the help of phonetic and semantic components. There are many characters we have never seen before, but the phonetic element can help us guess the pronunciation of a character, and the semantic element can help us guess its meaning. Take, for example, the character 鲈 (pronounced *fù*, meaning “crucian carp”). The phonetic element 付 *fù* tells us that the pronunciation is *fù*, and the semantic element 鱼 “fish” tells us that we are dealing with some kind of fish. Similarly, the character 桐 (pronounced: *tóng*, meaning “phoenix tree”) consists of the phonetic element 同 *tóng* and the semantic element 木 “wood”, thus we know we are dealing with some kind of tree named *tong*. Of course, this method is not always accurate, because there are both ancient and modern characters, and some characters may have a different pronunciation and meaning in different regions in the north and south of China. Nevertheless, it can be said that learning Chinese characters is just like studying anything else: You can draw inferences about other cases from one instance.

It is hard to sum up in one word what exactly it is that makes Chinese characters so difficult to learn. In my opinion, for elementary learners, the shape of Chinese characters is very weird, none of them seems too pleasing to the eye, and many of them look very similar and are hard to distinguish from one another, for example 土 and 士 or 未 and 末. The hardest part, however, is that you need to memorize each and every single one of them. Compared to the alphabetic writing, it will obviously take a lot more time to store every single Chinese character in your mind. Memory becomes even more difficult for adults. Furthermore, some Chinese characters also have

different pronunciations. The character “中”*zhong*, for example, can be read as the level tone or the falling tone, in the word 中国 *zhōngguó* meaning “China”, it is read as the level tone, whereas in 中弹 *zhòngdàn* meaning “to be hit by a bullet”, it is read as the falling tone. The character 重 can be read as either *chóng* or *zhòng*, for example, in the words 重叠 *chóngdié* “to overlap” and 重要 *zhòngyào* “important”. Thus the same character can be pronounced in different ways. The third difficulty lies in the fact that there are simplified and unsimplified forms of Chinese characters: 图书馆 *túshūguǎn* “library”, for example, is the simplified form of 圖書館. Learners of Chinese will always encounter with both simplified and unsimplified forms. Especially Western learners sometimes start with the unsimplified character form, and then switch to simplified characters at a later stage. The two writing systems definitely “add frost to the snow”, meaning they do not make learning any easier. In addition, many people use *pinyin* to learn spoken Chinese. This has led to different levels of written and spoken language acquisition: spoken language is easy and the writing system is hard to learn. Thus students tend to learn spoken Chinese very well, giving up written Chinese quite early. These are just a few of the arguments explaining why Chinese characters are so difficult to learn. Inappropriate teaching methods can further intensify these difficulties.

What are the problems in the cognition of Chinese characters? Chinese elementary education is called 识字 *shí zì* “knowing characters”, thus the knowledge of written Chinese first of all means the ability to distinguish and recognize characters. You need to know the characters in order to slowly familiarize yourself with them until they become old acquaintances. The second point comprises the recognition of rules and patterns. Once learners have acquired a certain reading ability, they will become aware of the rules and patterns Chinese characters are based on, and will understand how important the pictophonetic character system is for their studies and how it can help Western learners in learning even more characters. Thirdly, there is a very detailed and step-by-step learning progress. Written and spoken language should be learned simultaneously in order to kill two birds with

VI

忆忒切叮杞忤恹忖忙他帆攸伸极忤价忧忼松快忪忭枝低粹忱忭恧怜佻恼
扭枉忻汽怀愠怅怙恒慥懣招恹忤挾愠怔怖栝估怛怦怗怪佛惕秘
憊怯……

Among these characters, there will be quite a few we do not know, but what we can deduct is that they all depict some kind of psychological activity or experience, the common semantic component links them all together.

Chinese characters have a unique position within the context of Chinese language. Some people even say that the most basic grammatical element of the Chinese language is neither a morpheme nor a word but a character. In Chinese, we always say “write a few characters”, but we hardly ever say “write a few words”. The research on how to get to know Chinese characters is indeed very valuable and thus the research on the cognition of Chinese characters is an important task that still lies ahead of us, and I hope that, in the future, more scholars will turn their attention to the research on the cognition of Chinese characters.



(Translation: Katrin Zimmermann and Andreas Guder)

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Eloquent but Blind

— The Problem of Reading Proficiency in Chinese as a Foreign Language

Peter Kupfer

Abstract Despite the impressive developments of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) during the past more than two decades, there are three main problems concerning the position of the Chinese language and TCFL on a global scale: 1. Chinese as a “hermetic” language; 2. Chinese as a highly demanding language; and 3. the exclusiveness of Chinese script. Therefore urgent measures have to be taken to develop sinographemic didactics as an integrated discipline of TCFL, like statistical and analytical investigation of the systematism of Chinese script for TCFL purposes, methods and types of processing different kinds of Chinese texts by adult learners with non-Chinese educational backgrounds, the role of influences and differences within cultural and educational traditions, background knowledge and previous information, reading experience and automaticity in decoding etc., as well as physical conditions, like brain activities, eye movement, processing of faulty texts or non-standard script etc.

口才与识字之间的矛盾

——在汉语作为外语教学中提高阅读技能的问题

柯彼德

摘要 虽然汉语作为外语教学二十多年以来得到了突飞猛进的发展,但是在全球范围内汉语教学还面临着三种关键问题:一、汉语是对外极为封闭的语言;二、汉语是学习要求最高的语言之一;三、汉字的排外性很强。因此,为了推进汉字教学成为汉语作为外语教学的重要内容,应该加强各种有关的统计和分析工作,并对没有中国背景知识的非汉族成人如何习得和处理汉字的各种问题进行了广泛和深入的研究。



1. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND NEW CHALLENGES IN TEACHING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In language policies, as in her rapid political, economic and social development, China has undergone remarkable changes recently. Since China's opening to the outside world in the 1980s, not only the exchange of information with the rest of the world in all fields has expanded in an extraordinary manner, but also the Chinese language itself has gradually achieved international recognition as well as an upgraded position among the world languages. On the one hand, the acquisition of foreign languages has become a matter of course among the younger generation in China. On the other hand, Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) has become emancipated as an independent academic discipline, and has unfolded a large range of activities and research projects while at the same time establishing a complete network of institutions and scholarly exchange in China and around the world.

Especially since the beginning of the new millennium, the “Chinese fever” (*Hànyǔ-rè*) as it is called, is spreading all over the world — with the increasing support of government and mass media in China. According to the latest statistics, there are 30 million learners of Chinese in the world, and the number is expected to increase to 100 million in 2007. Just recently, too, at the end of July 2005, the Ministry of Education of the PRC and its administrative organ, the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, abbreviated as Hanban, organized the first World Chinese Conference with an impressive opening ceremony headed by prominent state leaders in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

This is just one sign showing emphasized efforts by the Chinese government to implement a Chinese language and culture policy on a global scale. In this context, there are quite a few lately started programmes, which demonstrate China's determination to promote Chinese language teaching and learning around the globe as, for instance, the implementation of the international standard proficiency test, HSK (*Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi*), and the annual worldwide competi-

tion, Chinese Bridge, the enforced education and training of teachers of CFL in China and abroad, a delegation of its own CFL teachers to universities in different countries, the support of research and teaching material projects, as well as conferences, and the setting-up of Confucius Institutes in many parts of the world.^[1]

During the past twenty years or more, a dramatic change could also be observed in the quality, targets and demands of Chinese language acquisition. Whereas until the 1980s most of the beginners at Chinese language courses were still motivated by an exotic fascination for language and culture, and in literary studies, since the late 1990s the tendency for professional application and specialization among learners is something which prevails worldwide. Most of the young people deciding to learn Chinese nowadays have a specific objective for its later use in their future career, mostly in economics. They are no longer primarily attracted by the philosophical, historical and literary aspects of the Chinese language.

This inclination towards pragmatic demands in language acquisition and the need to obtain more or less professional skills in Chinese in order to gain access to the growing Chinese market has changed the worldwide TCFL situation fundamentally since the turn of the century. At the same time it has released a remarkable increase in the standards and specialization of language skills demanded in communication with China. This means that TCFL faces new challenges on a global scale.^[2]

The recognition of China as a global partner in all fields of human activity and the growing role of the Chinese language in international communication, directly provokes the question with regard to the present and future status of the Chinese writing system within the globalisation processes. It could be that we in

[1] The recent developments of TCFL in the world have been widely spread in the Chinese mass media.

See for instance the two editorials in 人民日报海外版 (People's Daily Overseas Edition) of April 2nd and June 16th, 2005.

[2] Kupfer (2001: 414-431) and (2004).