

# Empirical Study on the Use of Chinese Fantasy Novel for Vocabulary Acquisition among the Non-Native Learners of Mandarin

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**Abstract—** This article discussed the use of Chinese fantasy novel for vocabulary acquisition among the non-native learners of Mandarin. Research findings have been affirmative.

**Keywords-** Chinese fantasy novel, vocabulary acquisition, non-native learners of Mandarin

## I. INTRODUCTION

The research published of fantasy novel is abundant, such as Studies on Chinese Fantasy Novel [1], Studies on Web-based Fantasy Novel [2], Fantasy Novel of the 80s [3], Chinese fantasy novel in the university campus [4, 5], and etc. The creation of the fantasy novels attempts to merge the latest science development such as the way of existence in time and space, man-made intelligence and various mysterious abilities such as free spirit power, prediction of dreams. However, the practical use of these fantasy novels in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language still has to be validated. The objective of this article is to focus on exploring the use of these Chinese fantasy novels for vocabulary acquisition among the non-native learners of Mandarin based on an empirical study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories related to vocabulary acquisitions cannot be apart from motivational learning theory. Non-native learners have to be strongly motivated in ensuring that they are keen in vocabulary acquisition process [6]. For new word cognitive instruction theory in Chinese fantasy novel, this is typically relevant. Studies have explored the effects of the potentially inefficient strategy on motivation [7]. Vocabulary learning is hence related to motivational beliefs. Students with higher motivation are therefore able to acquire vocabulary in the learning process. Instructors cannot overlook but have to give ample of attention to the motivational aspect.

Another important related theory is affective theory in learning [8]. Instructors have to understand the cognitive factor related to the affective aspect for effective vocabulary instruction. Second language vocabulary learning strategies have to be arranged in accordance to affective state of the learners [9]. The cognitive domain is the core learning domain. The other domains such as affective, interpersonal, and

psychomotor require at least some cognitive component. Students who are keen to learn new word for sure would give extra efforts in the learning process. When instructors consider the affective domain, they frequently think only in terms of a student's motivation to learn. Yet the affective domain can significantly enhance, inhibit or even prevent student from learning. The affective domain describes learning objectives that emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection. Hence, instructors have to ensure that students understand the need of their vocabulary expansion by informing the instructional goals for instance in the use of new word of Chinese fantasy novel. Once the students are receptive of the instructional goals, they are more ready to learn affectively.

In brief, the review of related literature does not mention any previous studies related to the problem of incorporating Chinese fantasy novel for vocabulary acquisition among non-native learners as the idea of using Chinese fantasy novel for vocabulary expansion is rather new. However, there are some actions that the instructors can do in making sure that new word instruction in Chinese fantasy novel is in accordance to cognitive theory. Table 1 depicts the some ideas that can be implemented.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is considered to use quantitative methods of non-randomized sampling method and quasi-experiment. In achieving the research objectives, the research methodology employed in this research include the following stages. These are shown in table 1 below.

TABLE 1: RESEARCH PROCEDURE

No.	Research procedures
1	Introduce a noble and new method in introducing Chinese fantasy novels for reading among non-native students : a. Selecting some suitable Chinese fantasy novels for this research;  b. Putting them into readable reading materials or modules for the Mandarin classes – adding annotations for comprehension;  The learning materials or the tool for this study can

be accessed at: <http://i-learn.uitm.edu.my/main/default-frame.php>. The evaluation procedure of the tool was reported in [14]



- c. Selecting students from UiTM Jengka (University Technology MARA Pahang Branch) as the research subjects for this study – using non-randomized sampling method and quasi-experiment method.

	Chinese fantasy novels among the non-native students; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Using randomized method to select coin words,</li> <li>b. designing test on students on the cognitive comprehension of these coin words;</li> </ul>
4	Suggest ways of using Chinese fantasy novels for supplementary reading among non-native students. <p>Complete a comprehensive report with new knowledge or theory for this study;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Suggest possible ways in incorporating the use of Chinese fantasy novels for reading among non-native learners.</li> </ul>

Students are directed in their study of the new words for six weeks. For each lesson, students are taught different set of new words. Students may give their feedback of use during the instructional period.

Data gathered were analyzed using SPSS 21. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used.

IV. RESULTS

These were the results of respondents during the diploma semester. There were 114 (54.5%) of respondents taking Mandarin level 1 and 96 (45.5%) of respondents taking Mandarin level 2.

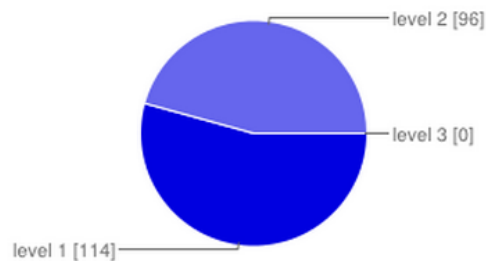


FIGURE 1: NUMBERS OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO LEVELS OF MANDARIN TAKEN

The respondents were from level 1 and level 2. The students of different levels of Mandarin learning might have differing perceptions on the keenness and helpfulness of the use of new word learning materials to support their Mandarin learning. Students of level 1 were keener to learn new word (mean = 3.93) compared to students of level 2 (mean = 3.81). It was also found that students of level 1 were more agreeable (mean = 4.01) that learning new word in Chinese fantasy novel can help them to learn Chinese better compared to students from level 2 (mean = 3.90).

TABLE 2: GROUP STATISTICS

	Level of Mandarin taken	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Helpfulness	1	108	4.01	.588	.057
	2	91	3.90	.790	.083
Keenness	1	108	3.93	.622	.060
	2	91	3.81	.906	.095

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- Get responses from the students on the usage of Chinese fantasy novel for reading among non-native students;
  - a. The population is all non-native students of UiTM in Malaysia. Students from UiTM Jengka as the research subjects or samples for this study of reading Chinese fantasy novels within two semesters;
  - b. Using a questionnaire to collect responses from the respondents on the usage of Chinese fantasy novels for reading among non-native students.

Questionnaire can be accessed at: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1MqNMWDqk3swM4voVKedED\\_jETBnkTWwEt9Rwczv6X8Q/viewform?formkey=dFFleFVXdk1IbnNqQlk4MXJVbnRTMIE6MA#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1MqNMWDqk3swM4voVKedED_jETBnkTWwEt9Rwczv6X8Q/viewform?formkey=dFFleFVXdk1IbnNqQlk4MXJVbnRTMIE6MA#gid=0)



3

Examining the cognitive comprehension of coin words in the

By running t-test, it was found that for both helpfulness ( $t = 1.106$ , sig. value =  $.0270 < 0.05$ ) and keenness ( $t = 1.036$ , sig. value =  $.0302 < 0.05$ ), they were significant. These showed that students of level 1 were keener to learn new word in Chinese fantasy novel and agreed that by learning new words in Chinese fantasy novel can assist them to learn Chinese better.

TABLE 3: T-TEST FOR EQUALITY OF MEANS

		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Helpfulness	Equal variances assumed	1.106	197	.0270	.108	.098
	Equal variances not assumed	1.036	197	.0302	.113	.109

Students of level 2 were agreeable that the Chinese new words learning materials helped them to understand more about Chinese culture (mean = 4.02) compared to level 1 students (mean = 4.02). It was found significant ( $t = -2.042$ , sig. value =  $.042 < .05$ ).

TABLE 4: GROUP STATISTICS

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
understand more about Chinese culture	1	108	3.86	.538	.052
	2	91	4.05	.794	.083

TABLE 5: T-TEST FOR EQUALITY OF MEANS

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
understand more about Chinese culture	Equal variances assumed	-2.042	197	.042

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the questionnaires showed that students were affirmative on the use of new word learning materials in the Chinese fantasy novel to support their Chinese learning. It is agreeable with the view of Hu [10, 11] that various Chinese learning materials can be utilized to support Chinese vocabulary acquisition and expansion.

Furthermore, the findings showed that students of level 1 were keener to learn new words in Chinese fantasy novel. Hence the use of new words in Chinese fantasy novel can be introduced in level 1. The result of this study also revealed that students of level 1 found that learning new word in Chinese fantasy novel was more helpful compared to level 2 students. Hence instructors have to find ways to improve the

instruction process in order to make the learning materials more attractive and appealing to the level 2 students.

Another interesting finding is the cultural aspect of this study. As shown in the findings above, the students were fascinated mostly on the cultural gains they have by accessing the learning materials. It appears that the use of the learning materials grows along with cultural knowledge. This finding is, nonetheless, agreeable with Zhang & Li [7]. It should be noted that effective vocabulary strategies should involve not just the cognitive aspects of new words learned, while at the same things, add in supplementary knowledge.

In addition to the use of Chinese learning materials on new words in fantasy novel, clearly there have been other constraints on the present study. For one, this approach cannot cater for sentence formations for daily expression, and thus certain information might be missing. For another, it is notoriously difficult to obtain large quantities of qualitative learner data, and the learner writing investigated in this paper is not included. We cannot know for sure if there is any learner which might be able to use the new words learned cognitively in sentences making that lead to daily genuine language use, and at the same time assist them to write good Chinese essays.

The current study examined the new word cognitive of Chinese fantasy novel to support the learning of Chinese as a foreign language. The findings showed positive results. Hence, the use of new word in Chinese fantasy novel can be recommended as a mean to make Chinese learning more interesting as well as to expand the amounts of Chinese vocabulary among the learners. The findings also revealed that in the learning of new word, students were able to learn about Chinese culture. Hence, it is recommended that these learning materials are used as supplementary learning materials for culture learning [13].

Although the results of these experiments are largely positive, they raise a number of issues which point the way for future research. Firstly, this study focuses on the context of university education, understandably as they can all be classed as action research, with the students of the researchers forming the subjects of the experiment, as in this article. There is thus a need for studies involving other sectors of education, possibly in the form of learning materials database which can be shared by other learners of Chinese in primary, secondary and tertiary that prepared by the teacher rather than direct access. Secondly, for these students to get augmented advantages in the use of new word in Chinese fantasy novel to support their Chinese learning, a variety of activities have to be utilized on top of the learning materials. The activities suggested include: write a few sentences in their own words using the new words they have learned, maintain their personal list of new or difficult vocabulary words, write a one-paragraph reaction to the facts and opinions based on the new words they have learned, orally sharing their personal reflections about the new terms they have learned, and etc.

All of these activities are designed and can be utilized as to encourage the students to manipulate the information and vocabulary gleaned from the learning materials. Focusing on meaning and doing something with the new words learned

cognitively will certainly help reinforce vocabulary acquisition. Learner tracking is another area for the betterment of this study. We need to look more closely, as a step toward the use of students to the improvements of their learning outcomes. The IP (Internet protocol) numbers of learners' most often used computers and begin to track the learning tracking can assist us to understand the relationships between the active use of learning materials and the support of the learning gains.

Better testing is another aspect that we can do for the betterment of the study. There appears to be no suitable standard instrument available for assessing gains in additional vocabulary acquisition. We plan to test changes in levels of partial vocabulary knowledge; measures that are sensitive to incremental growth may register acquisition at the level and pace of learners' self-study. Since the research finding was affirmative that in the learning of new word in Chinese fantasy novel, students were able to learn Chinese culture as well. However the learning materials are not comprehensive. Hence for the improvement of the learning materials as to render more comprehensive of Chinese culture, it is recommended that additional and systematic development and enriching of learning materials can be done. These include the introduction and presentation of Chinese weapons, Chinese traditional building, Chinese traditional costume, and etc.

The present study employed only UiTM (Pahang) students as respondents. For further study, respondents from other branch campuses as well as students from other universities who learn Mandarin as a foreign language should be employed as respondents as to further validate the effectiveness on the use of new word in Chinese fantasy novel for Mandarin vocabulary instruction. The expansion of Chinese vocabulary is very vital in order to assist students to communicate well in Chinese. Hence study of new word cognitive is very important. It is strongly anticipated that further study can be done in engaging additional instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, wen-based instruction as in ensuring the new word learning materials are used in more constructive and beneficial manners. Another limitation of this research is on the contents of the learning materials. They were not very comprehensive. Hence for further study, the enrichment of the learning materials can be done.

An area for improvement includes syntax. This is typically important for ensuring that students are able to make sentences correctly for daily use. In sum, in tackling the limitations of the study, the students are able to use these sets of learning materials for vocabulary learning along with other resources. The resources included concordance, dictionary, hypertext, and a database with interactive self-quizzes, and etc. This study however provides progressive insight and opens up new doors for further research in the field.

Series of research findings were positive that new words of fantasy novel can be recommended in vocabulary expansion for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language [13, 14, 15, 16, 17]. Hence, with sensible arrangement, instructors may enrich their Mandarin classes for extra curriculum activity, extended learning, and etc.

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