

自然拼读教学法对汉语儿童英语词汇认读的有效性研究

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自然拼读教学法对汉语儿童英语词汇

认读的有效性研究

An Effectiveness Study of Phonics Instruction on Chinese-speaking Children's English Word Recognition

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Chinese-speaking children's word recognition ability under phonics instruction. There are some reasons for choosing this issue. First, as learning English is becoming the wave of future, there is an urgent need for Chinese children to begin English learning at an early age. Second, word recognition ability is considered to be the foundation of good reading comprehension while many children encounter great difficulty in spelling, reading and memorizing English words. Finding an effective method to facilitate children's word recognition ability thus improves their reading ability is crucial. Third, phonics that was originated in American reading instruction has been popular in China. It is regarded as the fastest and most effective way to help children in English reading.

There are two main questions to the present study. First, to what extent will phonics instruction influence children's word recognition? Second, what is the difference of word recognition ability between children with Pinyin knowledge and non-Pinyin knowledge?

To address these questions, 54 participants are recruited, 27 of which have Pinyin knowledge while the other half have not. All the participants receive phonics training for 10 months. Pre-test, on-training-test and post-test are administered to both Pinyin and Non-Pinyin experienced children to measure improvements in alphabet identification, word reading and phonological awareness which are closely related to English word reading ability.

Based on the evidence gathered, all the research questions mentioned above can be answered affirmatively. Significant improvements for both Pinyin and Non-Pinyin experienced children on all the subtests of English word reading ability show that phonics instruction promotes the development of alphabet identification, word reading and phonological awareness in Chinese-speaking child ESL learners. Results also find that Pinyin

and English are significantly correlated. The cross-language transfer does exist between Pinyin and English learning.

Theoretically, the current study provides evidence for the trainability of English word reading ability in Chinese-speaking child ESL learners and also for the transfer of Pinyin and English. Practically, this study confirms the view that phonics instruction is an effective way to facilitate word reading ability and it should be included in the curriculum at least offers an alternative for Chinese-speaking child ESL education.

Key Words: phonics instruction; Chinese-speaking child ESL learners; Pinyin and Non-Pinyin experienced; English word reading ability; phonological awareness; transfer.

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摘要

本文旨在探究自然拼读教学法对于提高汉语儿童英语词汇认读能力的有效性。进行此项研究的原因主要有三个：一、学习英语逐渐成为未来社会发展的大趋势、大潮流，汉语儿童在早期就进行英语学习成为一种迫切需要，因此对他们英语学习的研究也更加重要。二、许多儿童在英语词汇的拼写、阅读和记忆上都面临较大困难，而词汇认读又被视为良好阅读能力的基础，因此探寻一种有效的途径来促进儿童词汇认读能力的提高进而提升阅读能力就显得十分重要。三、起源于美国并在欧美盛行的自然拼读教学法被认为是最快且最有效的帮助儿童提高英语词汇认读及阅读能力的方法。但是在中国它还是一个比较新颖的教学方法，较少研究触及到其与英语词汇认读之间的关系。

本研究主要围绕两个问题。一、自然拼读法在多大程度上将影响儿童的词汇认读？二、在自然拼读教学法的干预下，有拼音基础和无拼音基础的儿童在词汇认读方面会有何不同？

为了考查这些问题，本研究选取了54名被试者。其中27名是已经开始接受拼音教学的学龄儿童，而另外27名则是未接受过字母知识系统训练的学龄前儿童。所有的受试者都将接受为期10个月的自然拼读法教学的训练。他们分别在训练前、训练中和训练后接受字母认知、单词拼读和语音意识这三个和词汇认读紧密相关的不同维度的测试，测试结果将体现自然拼读法对于提高整体英语词汇认读能力的有效性。

独立样本t检验和一元方差分析的数据分析结果表明无论以英语作为第二外语的汉语儿童有无拼音基础，自然拼读教学法都极大地提高了他们的字母认知、单词拼读和语音意识的能力；同时，拼音知识对英语学习能产生积极的影响，在二者间存在着跨语言的正迁移。

本文为汉语儿童英语词汇认读的可训练性及拼音知识对英语学习的迁移作用提供了依据。从实践方面看，本文也进一步证实了自然拼读法对词汇认读能力的提高是有效的，为汉语儿童的英语教育提供一种新的教学方法，探索一条新路。

关键词：自然拼读教学法；以英语为第二外语的汉语儿童；有拼音基础和无拼音基础；英语词汇认读能力；语音意识；迁移

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Chapter One Introduction

1. Background of Research

For a very long time, reading is considered to be an indispensable part in language acquisition. Reading ability largely determines one's language proficiency while the development of good reading comprehension depends on fluent word recognition skill (Adams, 1990). As British linguist Wilkins described, "without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed" (1972). As is known to all, English is an alphabetic language, which means there is a natural connection between spelling system and graphic representation. It would be a perfect thing if each spelling could correspond with a unique sound, but unfortunately, English is not that case. Some letters can represent different sounds while others are shared by the same sound, especially for some vowels. Take letter "e" for example, it is not difficult to find different sounds in "me", "met", "make" and "trumpet". As for spelling, the sound /e/ can be found in a list of words, such as "pet", "bread", "many", etc. Besides, there are lots of irregularities between English letters and sounds and the inconsistency leaves to language teaching a great problem. How to explore an effective way to improve word recognition skill is a great challenge.

As for Chinese children, learning English is becoming the wave of future, especially in cities. Most of them begin English learning at an early age. Although parents and teachers in China have adopted various methods to teach vocabulary, such as translation method, situational method, direct method (王珏, 2013), etc. many young beginners encounter great difficulty in establishing letter-sound correspondence, which in turn affects their word recognition and reading. Those traditional English vocabulary-teaching methods usually lay more emphasis on meanings and usages of words than letter-sound correspondence; thus, less phonological skill is taught to children. Some researchers have already found that the deficit in word recognition and spelling ability is the main reason of the future dyslexia. Elveld

(2005) pointed out that a primary key to reading and spelling ability is phonological awareness. A student's level of phonological awareness at the end of kindergarten is one of the strongest predictors of future reading success (Adams et al, 1998). Therefore, to the very great degree, the development of phonological awareness can influence children's word recognition and spelling ability, even reading ability.

Over the past decades, researches have conducted many researches into the reading acquisition enquiry leading to greater knowledge of the reading acquisition process (Eshiet, 2012). A major outcome of those studies is that phonological processing is the main determinant in the development of reading skills in the early stages of learning to read in an alphabetic orthography (Cunningham, 2009). Owing to the superiority of answering for children's phonological awareness and cognitive characteristics, phonics instruction has become the mainstream in teaching English vocabulary in Western countries. With phonics instruction, children are taught phonics rules and patterns, which can help them understand the relationship between letter sounds and their correspondences, and then blend the sounds of letters together to produce approximate pronunciation of unknown words. Since phonics instruction has always been regarded as an effective method in native vocabulary teaching, many Chinese researchers try to implement phonics in second language vocabulary teaching for children. Most of them have already made contributions to the relationship between phonological awareness and phonics instruction or the relationship between phonics instruction and reading ability psychologically (丁朝蓬 等, 1998) and practically (罗立胜 等, 2002; 胡春洞, 2004). These researches have all made agreements on the following issues: (1) Comparing with adult learners, children depend a lot more on speech sounds; (2) Under the instruction of phonics, children can easily set up a connection between sounds of English letters and their symbols, which is beneficial when building up vocabulary; (3) The good command of phonics instruction helps children develop phonological awareness as well as knowledge of lexicology and morphology and thus later children will recognize words quickly and correctly. The present thesis will be different and new. It intends to discover two issues: (1) To what extent will phonics instruction influence children's word recognition; (2)

What is the difference of word recognition between children with Pinyin knowledge and non-Pinyin knowledge? Trying to find the answer, this study will analyze the effectiveness of phonics instruction on Chinese children's word recognition ability.

2. Purposes and Significance of the Present Study

Based on the previous research on phonics instruction and its application to English acquisition, the present paper attempts to study the correlation between phonics instruction and early Chinese children's word recognition, aiming at achieving purposes as follows:

Firstly, the present thesis makes an attempt at finding out to what extent phonics instruction will influence children's phonological awareness and word recognition ability through a one-year follow-up teaching experiment.

Secondly, it intends to find whether the transfer of children's Pinyin level can have a positive impact on second language acquisition.

The present thesis is not to create a brand new perspective, but it still has some significance. First, theoretically, this study could be viewed as an extended effort to the previous findings. As for the correlation between the effect of phonics instruction and Chinese children's language acquisition, many researches are concentrating on reading ability and phonological awareness; few of them focus on word recognition that is the foundation of future fluent reading. The result of this research would integrate the whole theory. In addition, this thesis would give special attention to the question of whether the transfer of children's Pinyin ability can have a positive impact on English word recognition. Pedagogically, this study demonstrates phonics instruction in Chinese children's English teaching, which is of great help for those who are interested in this new model.

3. Structure of the Thesis

The present thesis consists of five chapters. In Chapter One the author introduces the

background information, purposes and significance of the thesis and finally presents the structure of the thesis. Chapter Two reviews the relevant researches concerning phonics instruction. It introduces the definition of phonics instruction, presents the researches on phonics both abroad and at home, and provides two different approaches to phonics instruction, and it also elaborates the researches of phonological awareness and language transfer as well as the relationship between the effect of Pinyin on phonological awareness and word recognition. Chapter Three is the research methodology. It puts forward research questions, participants, materials and procedures as well as data collection. In the fourth chapter the author analyzes the result of the previous research questions according to the data obtained from the statistics analysis. In the final chapter, both the major findings of the research and the limitations of the thesis and implications for further study are illuminated.

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Chapter Two Literature Review

This chapter will review the relevant theories and researches concerning phonics instruction and phonological awareness as well as language transfer. First of all, it introduces the definition of phonics instruction that springs up in China, and then dwells on the researches of phonics instruction both abroad and at home. Second, it elaborates the researches of phonological awareness and language transfer. Next, it analyzes the relationship between the effect of Pinyin on phonological awareness and early Chinese children English word recognition. These efforts on the whole form the theoretical basis of the present thesis.

2.1 Definition of Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction is a method that focuses on learning the relationship between letters and their sounds and how to implement the knowledge while reading and spelling. Researchers have made different definitions of phonics: Adams (1990:50) mentioned that “phonics refers to a system of teaching reading that builds on the alphabetic principle, a system of which a central component is the teaching of correspondence between letters or groups of letters and their pronunciations.” “Phonics instruction is of no value unless it fulfills some specific conditions. First, it must teach skills necessary for decoding words... Second, the skill should be the one that students do not already know... Finally, the skills being taught should be related to reading tasks in which students are currently engaged or will soon be engaged”(Gunning, 1992:29). Phonics is a method of reading instruction that breaks language down into its simplest components. Children learn the sounds of individual letters first, then the sounds of letters in combination and in simple words. Simple reading exercises with a controlled vocabulary reinforce the process (Stephen, 2000). Phonics instruction is the combination of empirical approach, functional approach and humanistic approach whose

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