

# A Summary of Research on Teaching Chinese Character Writing to Foreigners in Recent Ten Years

Ran liu

School of Grammar and Law, Yanjing Institute of Technology, Langfang, Heibei 065201, China

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**Abstract:** Writing is a difficult point in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. According to the research results of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in recent ten years, the research content is divided into three aspects: the application of Chinese character ontology research in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the research of writing teaching method and the analysis of writing errors. It is found that the research on Chinese character writing teaching as a foreign language is developing in the direction of scientization and practicability.

## 1. Introduction

Correct and beautiful Chinese characters are often pleasing to the eyes of reviewers. The unique square Chinese characters with a history of more than 2000 years are the pride of Chinese culture and the trouble of foreign students in China. How to make students write correct and appropriate Chinese characters is a subject that has been discussed and studied by the academic community. This paper analyzes the research results of Chinese character writing teaching as a foreign language in recent ten years, and summarizes them into three aspects: the application of Chinese character ontology research in Chinese character teaching as a foreign language, the research of Chinese character writing teaching method and the research of writing errors.

## 2. Research on Chinese Character Ontology

The teaching of Chinese character writing should be based on the shape of Chinese characters. The lagging change of Chinese character teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language depends on the in-depth development of Chinese character research for the purpose of teaching and the rational application of existing research results<sup>[1]</sup>. Stroke, stroke order and components are the basic components of Chinese character font. Scholars also study the relationship between Chinese character ontology and Chinese character writing teaching as a foreign language from these three aspects.

### 2.1 Stroke Research and Teaching of Chinese Character Writing as a Foreign Language

Stroke is the smallest connecting unit of Chinese character font and the starting point of writing Chinese characters. However, in the process of writing, there are great differences in the actual use of strokes. Some strokes are not seen in primary Chinese characters at all, some strokes only have case significance, and some strokes do not have the function of distinguishing significance. Therefore, merging and simplifying Chinese strokes and improving the rationality of teaching are the first steps.

Wang Hanwei<sup>[2]</sup> takes “grade division” 3000 characters as the scope and analyzes 32 kinds of character strokes, 25 kinds of teaching strokes and 19 kinds of basic strokes in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Among them, 19 basic strokes are the focus of Chinese character teaching as a foreign language. They are the basis of shape and generation context in the full sense, and the comprehensive value is as high as 97.4%. Catch the 19, or something with half the effort.

Su Yinxia<sup>[3]</sup> also proposed the simplification of the Chinese character stroke system. On the premise of not causing the re recognition of strokes, the Chinese character stroke system can be reduced from the current 32 to 24, and the 24 strokes can be sorted based on the principle of

reflecting the internal law of strokes and renamed 18 composite strokes. Huang Jincheng<sup>[4]</sup> reset the Chinese character strokes to 3 categories and 9 kinds, also known as “nine strokes”, namely linear strokes - “horizontal”, “vertical”, “oblique”, “curved”, pointed strokes - “left diagonal”, “lift”, “hook” and “right diagonal”, dot (water drop) strokes - “dot”. The “nine strokes” emphasize the teaching of implicit rules of strokes, which helps to cultivate students’ sense of characters. Liu Shihong<sup>[5]</sup> described the stroke system from the perspective of teaching Chinese as a foreign language and sorted out a total of 30 strokes in the *Stroke System Table of Teaching Chinese as A Foreign Language*, including “horizontal, vertical, left diagonal, right diagonal, horizontal folding, vertical folding, lift, point and hook” 14 basic strokes and 16 compound strokes.

In recent years, scholars have made great progress in the discussion of Chinese character strokes as a foreign language, but there are still some deficiencies. Some scholars pointed out that Wang Hanwei’s stroke system is not comprehensive and lacks the stroke of “乙”. Huang Jincheng’s stroke theory of is not practical and concise enough, and so on. Generally speaking, no matter the type or quantity of strokes, they should be as concise as possible, less rather than more, so as to reduce the burden of students’ learning and memory.

## **2.2 Research on Stroke Order and Teaching of Chinese Character Writing as a Foreign Language**

The connection of strokes needs to follow certain stroke order rules. Writing Chinese characters according to stroke order rules can not only speed up the writing speed, but also help learners remember Chinese characters. The standardization of stroke order should be emphasized in the teaching of Chinese characters as a foreign language.

Sheng Jiyan<sup>[6]</sup> divided the content of Chinese character stroke order specification into stroke direction specification, pen folding specification and sequence specification. Whether the pen direction specification has the most significant impact on finished Chinese characters, followed by pen folding. Therefore, in teaching, we should pay attention to the writing specification of pen direction and consider the hierarchical standardization of stroke order, so as to give play to the function of standardization and improve the writing level of Chinese characters. Because the formation of pen orientation is affected by the physiological mechanism of the human writing organ “hand”, it will show commonness in different characters. For students in non Chinese character culture circle, pen orientation writing conforms to common physiological and cognitive habits and is easy to learn. The general practice of pen orientation learning is to let students memorize rules (Huang Jincheng)<sup>[7]</sup>.

Stroke order writing is a dynamic process. Whether it conforms to the standard has no significant impact on the recognition of finished Chinese characters. Some scholars suggest that the diversity of stroke order can be retained for Chinese characters with multiple writing sequences. Shi Zhengyu<sup>[8]</sup> pointed out that on the basis of not violating the centripetal writing principle and the time-saving principle of the nearest straight line between two points, we should correct the mistakes of more strokes and less strokes, or systematic errors, tolerate those crooked and not beautiful writing, and remind students in subsequent teaching to guide students to gradually write beautiful Chinese characters. China’s current stroke order specification only stipulates the stroke order principle and the specific stroke order of Chinese characters, but does not specify the stroke order rules. Therefore, Huang Jincheng<sup>[7]</sup> proposed that generative stroke order rules can be developed and used for overseas Chinese character teaching. The so-called generative stroke order is a stroke order rule that can be seen before writing and can guide according to the shape characteristics of Chinese characters. Generative stroke order rules can be used by foreign students in China to learn Chinese characters at the introductory stage.

## **2.3 Component Research and Teaching of Chinese Character Writing as a Foreign Language**

In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, there are three options for teaching Chinese characters: stroke teaching, component teaching and direct teaching of whole characters. For most Chinese characters, it is obviously too difficult to teach the whole character directly without analysis. The

stroke teaching is too trivial. Therefore, many scholars put forward the idea of using components to teach Chinese characters.

As for the number of components in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, Zhang Wangxi<sup>[9]</sup> proposed the teaching of 118 basic components earlier. Kong Xiangqing<sup>[10]</sup> unified the 56 conflicting words in the *List of Commonly Used Character Forming Components* and the *List of Modern Commonly Used Single Characters*, and came to the conclusion that 23 characters are regarded as combined characters, 20 characters are divided into two components, and 3 characters are divided into three components. The result of this processing is to add 4 non character forming components and reduce 23 character forming components.

How to apply Chinese character component theory to teaching Chinese as a foreign language is the main research content in recent years. The component is the configuration unit of Chinese characters. Li Yunfu<sup>[11]</sup> called it “root”, and one or more root forms the whole character. The components of Chinese characters have various functions, various motivational modes, and pay attention to azimuth correlation. Different positions of the same components will form words with completely different motivational correlation, especially the interference of isomorphic components. The teaching of the motivation of Chinese character formation can help foreign students understand the way of Chinese character formation, distinguish similar characters and write correct Chinese characters. Wang Jiang<sup>[12]</sup> gave three suggestions on the teaching of Chinese character components: use the splitting and combination of multimedia demonstration components to guide students to use the combination of components for standardized writing of Chinese characters, pay attention to the mark components, sound symbols and shape symbols in Chinese characters, and explain the motivation of Chinese characters, pay attention to distinguish the differences between Chinese characters and foreign students’ mother tongue to avoid negative transfer, simplify complex Chinese characters and improve the standardization of Chinese character writing through teaching methods.

From the perspective of shape, Chinese characters are composed of strokes, components and whole characters. Stroke order is a dynamic display of the writing process of Chinese characters. Students need to go through three levels: stroke, stroke order and component, and can write correct Chinese characters according to the word formation. In practical teaching, the research results of Chinese character ontology run through all stages of Chinese character teaching. Especially for primary foreign students, mastering the writing unit and structural motivation of Chinese characters is the key for students to first understand Chinese characters, and it is also the foundation for students to write Chinese characters.

### 3. Research on Teaching Method

“Difficult to recognize; difficult to write; complex relationship between form, sound and meaning; large number of words; difficult to check”<sup>[8]</sup> are the main reasons why Chinese characters are difficult to teach and learn. Especially for students in non Chinese cultural circles, Chinese characters are like pictures, hardly know how to write them. Therefore, it is particularly important to adopt reasonable teaching methods to alleviate students’ fear of difficulties and improve teaching efficiency.

On the question of when to carry out writing teaching and the proportion of writing teaching in teaching, Jiang Xin<sup>[13]</sup> proposed the teaching mode of “separation of recognition and writing, more recognition and less writing” earlier. Yan Yan<sup>[14]</sup> held different opinions on this. Through the experiment on the influence of different teaching methods on the acquisition of Chinese characters, it showed that the performance of the “recognition and writing synchronization” teaching group was significantly better than that of the “more recognition and less writing” group. Therefore, it is suggested that the strategies of “decentralized literacy, oral use” and “centralized literacy and pen writing” should be adopted in the primary Chinese stage, which is more conducive to the mastery of Chinese characters.

So, what methods should teachers use to implement Chinese character teaching? Geng Hongwei<sup>[15]</sup> put forward that “characters are inseparable from words, and practical combination” to cultivate students’ sense of characters. “establish writing files, step by step” to build students’

confidence, “diverse activities and graded evaluation” to improve students’ interest in writing. In addition, with the implementation of modern educational technologies such as multimedia and Internet into the classroom, teachers can use multimedia technology to teach cumbersome characters and mobilize students’ multiple senses. Students can also read the network resources and relevant network sites designated by teachers, actively learn stroke order and conduct relevant tests, so as to improve the efficiency of Chinese character learning. Wang Jiang <sup>[12]</sup> put forward key teaching measures from the perspective of standardized writing, taking into account part and whole, paying attention to gradientness and systematicness, strengthening the standardized writing of Chinese characters, distinguishing national culture and student level, and further standardizing students’ Chinese character writing level through selective, gradient and differentiated teaching. The teaching of Chinese character writing is also inseparable from the teaching of Chinese cultural knowledge. Li Yantong <sup>[16]</sup> proposed to skillfully combine the two, use a variety of teaching means, give play to the leading role of teachers, use students’ interest in Chinese character culture to teach writing, master Chinese character writing skills and improve teaching effect.

In teaching, teachers can reasonably select teaching contents according to the configuration characteristics of Chinese characters and students’ cognitive law, preset teaching objectives, guide students to master the configuration elements and physical characteristics of Chinese characters, and enable students to gradually write correct and beautiful Chinese characters.

#### **4. Research on Writing Errors**

Writing errors to some extent reflect the students’ cognitive process of Chinese characters from irrational to rational. “The repetition and similarity of writing elements, structural units and methods” <sup>[8]</sup> is the key factor leading to students’ writing wrong Chinese characters. The reason why foreign students can’t write Chinese characters well is not only related to the complexity of Chinese characters, but also related to the fact that computer input precedes handwriting, and students’ learning attitude and the avoidance strategy of wrong characters (Yang Fang) <sup>[17]</sup>. Students’ mother tongue has an impact on Chinese character writing. Zhu Huaping <sup>[18]</sup> found that “Korean letters have limited positive transfer effect on Korean students’ Chinese character writing” in his error analysis of Korean students. For students in non Chinese character culture circle, the writing order of Chinese phonetic alphabet characters from left to right is easy to loosen the structure of combined characters written by students. Making rational use of the migration function of mother tongue characters can seek advantages and avoid disadvantages. Zhang Ruipeng <sup>[19]</sup> concluded that the context of writing will affect students’ writing, and cause the phenomenon of Chinese character homomorphism and heteromorphism, and innovated the perspective of error analysis.

The errors made by foreign students in writing Chinese characters can be divided into stroke errors and component errors. Among them, stroke errors include stroke deformation, stroke loss and stroke position error. Component errors include component replacement, component damage, component deformation and displacement (Xiao Xiqiang) <sup>[20]</sup>. Other errors, such as shape error, direction error, handwriting relationship error (Guo Shenglin) <sup>[21]</sup>, homophonic and near form character confusion, complex and simple error, structural dislocation, etc. are based on static Chinese character analysis. Zhang Jun <sup>[22]</sup> focused on the dynamic writing of Chinese characters. The digital ink technology is used to supervise the direction, stroke order and even the sequence of components in the writing process of foreign students. A total of ten errors are determined in the time and space dimensions, adding “dynamic” content to the “static” writing, enriching and perfecting the error type system.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Through the investigation of the research on Chinese character writing teaching in recent ten years, it is found that the research content reflects the following development trend:

First, it is scientific. For example, Huang Jincheng resets the Chinese character strokes - “nine strokes” for overseas students, and advocates the development and use of generative stroke order

rules for foreign students to learn Chinese characters at the entry stage. The specially formulated Chinese character writing system is more suitable for the learning characteristics of overseas students and more scientific. Second, it is practical. The purpose of the research on Chinese character writing for foreign students is to improve students' Chinese character writing skills, overcome the "difficulty" of Chinese character writing, and put forward practical teaching countermeasures. In the literature consulted by the author, almost all the materials can put forward specific teaching methods according to their own theories, and some documents focus on teaching methods and achieve certain results. It can be seen that applying theory to practice and obtaining practical methods have become the current consensus.

Although more scholars have realized the importance of Chinese character writing teaching and achieved gratifying results, on the whole, the research on writing teaching accounts for only a small part. Therefore, it is still the work of experts and even later scholars to pay attention to the teaching of Chinese character writing as a foreign language, put forward systematic and effective teaching theories, publish monographs and textbooks.

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