

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ASSOCIATIVE LEARNING ABILITY TO WORD READING IN CHINESE KINDERGARTENERS

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Abstract

Equipping a child with a level of reading proficiency adequate enough to meet the demands of formal education is a long-running endeavour. The ability to form associations between print, sound and meaning is fundamental to word reading. An important skill that supports lexical mappings is known as the associative learning ability (e.g., Hulme et al., 2007). Research evidence has indicated that associative learning ability predicts children's word reading proficiency (e.g., Warmington & Hulme, 2012). However, the extent to which associative learning contributes to the learning of a script with ambiguous print-sound mappings, such as Chinese, remains unclear.

To fill in this research gap, the present study investigated the contribution of associative learning to word reading in Chinese beginning readers. Sixty-one Chinese kindergarteners were individually administered tasks of associative learning, phonological memory and Chinese word reading. This study resorted to pseudo words to control for learners' possible pre-experimental experience with the word stimuli. Results showed that associative learning significantly correlated with Chinese word reading, indicating that children with better associative learning ability have better Chinese word reading skills. Hierarchical regression analysis showed that associative learning significantly predicted Chinese word reading after the effect of phonological memory was controlled for. Findings of this study suggest that activities that enhance associative learning skills could be integrated into beginning language instructions to facilitate children's learning of Chinese words.

Keywords: Associative Learning, Word Reading & Chinese Children.

References

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