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DEPLOYING WEB TYPOGRAPHY TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE CHARACTERS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Students in Hong Kong begin learning traditional Chinese characters in childhood. The glyphs of these characters are “special” as some of them are not being used in mainland China or in Taiwan. Students continue learning these “special” glyphs of characters into their late primary school level. However, we are living in a world stacked with various standard forms of Chinese characters, whether in printed materials or web resources, especially in the digital age. The variants of standard forms being displayed in digital devices may cause confusion to students. As shown in our students’ in-class exercises, the majority of them are likely to lose the knowledge to the standard glyphs of the characters taught in their childhood after they enter university. The outcomes from their exercises creates in us a dilemma. Should they be adopted to passively depend on the fonts the operation system provided or should we strive to sustain Hong Kong’s standard glyphs of characters in this digital age? If the answer is yes, then comes the question of how. In this study, we will review how the digital environment affects the learning of traditional Chinese characters in Hong Kong. We will also discuss the possibility of maintaining the individuality of this local standard in the long run. Finally, we will showcase how the deployment of web typography technology can help us to solve this issue in our classes.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Characters, Web Typography, Glyphs, Fonts, Digital Environment, Technology.
