Read On: Training Modules for Literacy in Chinese

Chinese Language Teachers Association - College of the Holy Cross
July 23-August 2, 2012
Overview

Master teachers of Chinese (5yrs+ experience)

K-16 collaboration in 4 teams: K-5, 6-8, 9-12, 13+

10-day residential program, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA
Goals

- Identify best practices in Chinese character instruction
- Incorporate character learning within Standards-based thematic units
- Design model units for 4 grade levels for classroom teachers and teacher-trainers in CFL
Schedule

Expert Consultants


7/25. Dr. Danuta Bukatko. “Child development and setting age-appropriate learning tasks and goals”


7/29. Dr. Helen Shen. “Literacy in Chinese: Theory and Practice” (2 hour video conference)
Project Development

7/27-7/30

Breakout sessions by grade-level to work on training modules

And

Group discussions to share progress and to discuss development issues
Sharing, Feedback, and Assessment

7/31-8/1

Presentation of work in progress by each age group to whole group and evaluation of work in whole group discussion.

Alternating with

Continued work on modules

8/2

Reflection, Program evaluation, Setting timetable for completion of units.
The Challenge of Learning Characters

There are so many of them: Educated readers of Chinese know 5,000 – 8,000 or more characters.

Characters are very time consuming to learn.

Frustration with learning Chinese characters is the major reason why CFL students stop studying Chinese.
The Challenge of Learning Characters

● Statement from a workshop participant:

“The compelling issue is that CFL students gradually lose their motivation or their momentum diminishes through time when reading and writing Chinese becomes so overwhelming for them.”
The Challenge of Learning Characters

- Statement from a workshop participant:

“Since becoming a Chinese teacher in 1995, teaching students to write Chinese characters has been the great challenges. .... With the 120 intensive instructional hours, 6 hours daily, it was hard to believe how quickly students picked up the new vocabulary and sentences. But when it came to the assessment of character writing and recognition, my student struggled.”
The issues with teaching characters

• There are no ‘best practices’ for character instruction.

• Even in standards-based programs, character instruction typically stands outside of a standards-based approach.

• Some programs avoid the problem of characters by not teaching them at all. This becomes an articulation problem when students transition to programs which teach characters.
Post-program statement from one participant

• “I find it a critical need to learn and work with others to determine, develop, and experiment with effective strategies so as to enhance learners’ skills in word recognition and reading comprehension in Chinese while at the same time still focusing on the proficiency-oriented curriculum.”
Character Facts

Characters represent a meaning and are linked to a pronunciation.

湖

river  hú
The parts of a character recur in different combinations in other characters.

How many different recurring parts can you find in these characters?

诈 炸 作 做 故 古
数学子了 难 谁
推打厅 想 相 息
A small number of characters (fewer than 20%) are ‘pictographs’ whose form is based on the form of the object that they represent:

山 水 日 月 木
mountain water sun moon tree

Or ‘ideographs’ whose form is an abstract representation of a concept:

上 下 好
above below good (woman+child)
Most characters (more than 80%) are **compound characters** containing a **radical** (a part of the character that categorizes it by meaning for organization in a traditional dictionary) and one or more additional parts.

湖 = 水（氵）＋胡

lake = water + 胡
The ‘other’ part of the character is sometimes a phonetic, representing the pronunciation of the character.

- 36% of the phonetics give clear information about the character.

  湖 Hú = 水 (水 water) + 胡 (Hú)

- 48% of the phonetics give partial information about pronunciation:

  问 wèn= 口 (口 mouth) + 门 (mén)

- In about 16% of characters, the part of the character that is not the radical provides no phonetic information at all.

  路 lù= 足 (foot) + 各 (gè)
Whether a part of a character is a radical, a phonetic, or a non-phonetic element, it is a recurring part with a set configuration of strokes, not a random set of strokes.

That is, characters are composed of recurring parts. These recurring parts are known as 件 ぶじょん.
Research on Character Literacy

L1 learners. Successful readers:

1. Distinguish between well-formed and impossible characters based on (a) the location of repeating parts in the character, and (b) the well-formedness of those repeating parts.

2. Use the meaning of the radical to identify the meaning of the character, or to distinguish between two characters with similar phonetics but different radicals.
3. Use Phonetic cues. They can identify the phonetic and use it to identify and recall the pronunciation of characters.

青qīng (green) 请qǐng (invite) 静jìng (still, calm) 清qīng (clear, clean)

4. Encode characters in memory in terms of stroke order.
Successful CFL readers

Research tells us that successful CFL readers:

1. Identify the radical of characters and associate it with the meaning of the character where possible.

2. Identify the phonetic element of characters and associate it with the pronunciation of the character where possible.

3. Learn characters better when they already know the word in spoken form.
Research shows that:

Rote memorization is not an effective strategy for long-term character retention.

Elaborative processing ("deep processing") in which learners are directed to focus on details of the character, is a much more successful strategy for long-term character retention.

(Shen 2004)
Best Practices in CFL character instruction

1. Direct students to notice radicals and their location within characters, and to associate the meaning of radicals with the characters in which they occur.

2. Direct students to notice phonetic elements within characters and to use them to remember and recall characters.

3. Direct students to notice the other recurring parts of characters.

4. Direct students to follow standard stroke order in writing characters.
Implementing Best Practices in Chinese Character Instruction
Character acquisition is the foundation for Chinese literacy development and should be an integral part of a Standards-based curriculum for K-16.
Essential questions

- What are the strategies for teaching characters effectively?
- How can you design age-appropriate materials for character acquisition based on cognitive development?
- What are the best practices that integrate character learning in a Standards-based unit?
Best Practices

- Design a Standards-based unit
- K-5, 6-8, 9-12, 13-16
- Objectives
  - Standards
  - Teaching of characters
- Assessment: formative, summative
- Learning materials, activities, assignments
Pre-conditions for each unit

• This is the unit in which the first set of Chinese characters is introduced.
• Students are familiar with Chinese pronunciation, pinyin and tones.
• Speaking proficiency: Novice-mid
• The students are non-heritage students
• Introduce 10 characters (not 1-10)
Choice of characters

- Students learn to read and write characters for words that they already know in their spoken form.
- The characters are high frequency.
- The set of characters involves recurring parts.
Unit Plans

- ES: McDonald in China
  大，中，小，有，美，要，吃，喝

- MS: My Class Schedule
  我，有，上，中，下，天，文，星，是，你

- HS: Dining in a Chinese Restaurant
  好，吃，喝，茶，菜，饭，饿，我，渴，湯

- Colleges: Attending a Party
  人，认，识，请，叫，吃，过，这，茶，菜
Unit Plans

- **MS: My Class Schedule**
  我, 有, 上, 中, 下, 天, 文, 星, 是, 你

- **独体字: 我, 文, 天, 上, 下, 中**
- **合体字: 有, 星, 是 (上下), 你 (左右)**

- **象形文字: 我, 文, 天**
- **部首: 你 (人), 有 (月), 星是 (日)**

- **HS: Dining in a Chinese Restaurant**
  好, 吃, 喝, 茶, 菜, 飯, 餓, 我, 渴, 湯

- **部首: 女, 口, 水, 十**

- **相同部件: 餓, 我, 喝, 渴, 茶, 菜**

- **组短句: 好吃, 好喝, 好茶, 我餓le**
MS: My Class Schedule

- Be able to describe one’s class schedule, including the time period and class subjects
- Summative assessment: Create and present one’s ideal class schedule
- Discover the strokes of characters
- Identify the radicals characters
- Use the characters in context
## Discovering the strokes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>上 (shàng) up</th>
<th>Work with your partner to figure out how many strokes it takes to write this character? Write the number below.</th>
<th>What are the lines/strokes that are put together to form the character? Draw the lines, one at a time in sequence, below.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>中 (zhōng) middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下 (xià) down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify the radicals

Circle the radical (the meaning part) of the following characters and write the English meaning for each of the radicals.

期 qī ‘time period’
住 zhù ‘to live’
休 xiū ‘rest’
明 míng ‘bright’
早 zǎo ‘early’
晶 jīng ‘sparkling’
时 shí ‘time’
胧 lóng ‘dim moonlight’
做 zuò ‘to do’
他 tā ‘he’
Use in context

Read the following questions. Then, choose 3 questions to ask two students. Write their responses in complete sentences based on the interviews.

• 你 星qi’èr 有 shénme kè?
• 你 jīn天 jǐ diàn 下kè?
• 你星qi jǐ 有中文kè？
• 你 jīn天有tǐyùkè ma？
• 你 xǐhuan中文kè ma？
Dining in a Chinese Restaurant

- Be able to order food and drinks at a Chinese restaurant; comment on food and drinks that you like and dislike.

- Summative assessment:
  - Write a blog describing your dining experience in a local restaurant.
  - Poster advertising project.
Dining in a Chinese Restaurant

- Add radicals
- Attention to stroke order
- Create phrases
- Characters in context
- Reading paragraphs
Add radicals
Stroke order

Fill in the space of a specific stroke according to the instructions underneath each word. Then, draw an arrow next to the blacked-out stroke indicating direction of that stroke. Example is provided in question 1.
### Create phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>吃</td>
<td>喝</td>
<td>渴</td>
<td>汤</td>
<td>菜</td>
<td>茶</td>
<td>饭</td>
<td>饿</td>
<td>我</td>
<td>好</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinyin</td>
<td>chī</td>
<td>hē</td>
<td>kě</td>
<td>tāng</td>
<td>cài</td>
<td>chá</td>
<td>fàn</td>
<td>è</td>
<td>wǒ</td>
<td>hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>to drink</td>
<td>thirsty</td>
<td>soup</td>
<td>dish</td>
<td>tea</td>
<td>meal</td>
<td>hungry</td>
<td>I, me</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Character combinations:** See how many meaningful combinations you can make with characters above.

   **Example:**

   (food is) delicious

   好 吃
Characters in context

- Tā měitiān (吃,喝,茶,菜) hànbǎobāo.

A: Tā zài zuò shénme?

B: Tā zài (吃,喝,茶,菜,飯,餓)。
Zuótiān 我 gēn 我 māma yìqǐ 吃 wǔ 饭。 我 māma xǐhuān 吃 rìběn 菜。我 men qù rìběn 饭 guǎn 吃饭。 我 好饿, yě 好渴。我 men 喝 hóng 茶, 吃 mǐfàn, hái 喝 *yú 鱼 汤。 Rìběn 菜 hěn 好吃, yú 汤 yě hěn 好喝。

(*yú 'fish')