

# Using fun and effective ways to improve a dyslexic student's word recognition skills in Chinese

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Word recognition is one of the most important aspects of learning Chinese language, as it is the foundation to reading and writing. As a Chinese educational therapist, I have always been exploring more effective ways to impart word recognition techniques to my students. Building on the OG (Orton-Gillingham) Principles of Teaching, I hope to stimulate my students' learning through multi-sensory teaching methods, develop their interest in the language and in learning, and help them increase the number of words they recognise as quickly as possible, so as to enable them to then successfully master reading and writing. Below I would like to share with you some methods I have tried and refined in my classroom to improve my students' word recognition skills, and welcome your feedback and suggestions.

## Learn through drawing

When teaching a new Chinese character, one can allow students to visually observe the character's structure. As every character comprises different segments, or components, students can unleash their imagination and consider the shape that the character resembles, or why the character could be put together in this particular manner. Through their bold imagination, students would be able to better remember the character. (Refer to Figure 1). In this way, it not only adds a fun element to Chinese literacy education, but it also allowed the characters to be etched in the students' minds, thus improving their retention of the characters.

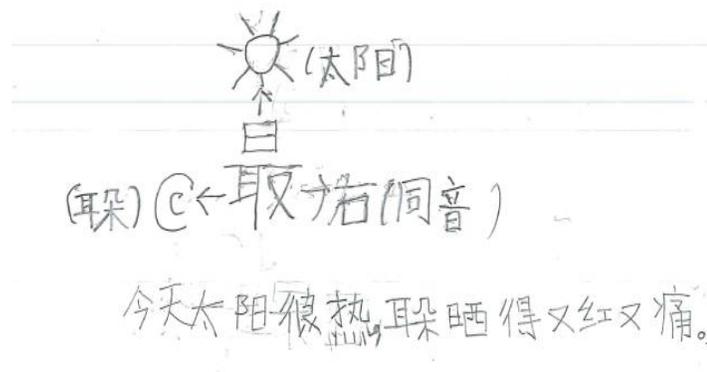


Figure 1: A Student's Drawing of a Character Completed in Class

### Guess the strokes

During lessons, I had tried a teaching method which I termed ‘Guessing the Strokes’. As students with dyslexia would often be unfamiliar with the order of strokes, they would often ‘draw’ the word out when writing, and would have no concept of the order of strokes. The ‘Guessing the Strokes’ activity allows students to remember the formation of the word by recollecting the order of strokes, thus making Chinese literacy education more fun and interesting. (Refer to Figure 2) In an actual classroom setting, the majority of the students do not particularly enjoy writing. This activity of ‘Guessing the Strokes’ captures the students’ attention, by having them participate in filling in the blue squares and by building a sense of anticipation as the teacher reveals the correct answer. This sparks their enthusiasm in learning and has proven to be very effective in the classroom.

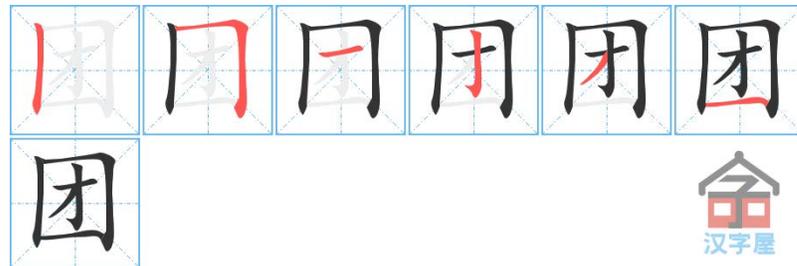


Figure 2: “Guessing the Strokes” Activity in Chinese Literacy Education

### Write on the board

Writing is a critical component of Chinese literacy education. Aside from having students complete word recognition worksheets and activities, it remains a challenge for all Chinese educational therapists to make writing more interesting. Some methods we have tried include using fingers to write on the table, and writing in a sandbox. In my own teaching, I have found that students are more interested in going to the front of the class and writing on the whiteboard, just like the teachers. Hence, I specifically designed a writing segment in my lesson plan, which the teacher can then modify or adapt, such as by having students copy the characters or write them from memory. This kind of writing activity will give every student a chance to go to the whiteboard and try to correctly write out the character they had just learnt in class that day, making writing less boring for them. (Refer to Figure 3a and 3b)



Figure 3a: Copying the Word

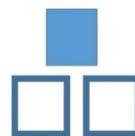


Figure 3b: Writing from Memory

### Read associated words

Within the reading component of literacy education, we have found that students cannot really remember the meaning of the character just by looking at the character alone, so following the usual practice in our industry, we use associated words to help students remember the meaning of the character. Other than this, to strengthen students' memory of the character, I will use relevant pictures to provide visual stimulation and guidance, to help students learn the associated words and phrases, and through that, help them recognise and remember the character. (Refer to Figure 4)



Figure 4: Picture – Word/Phrase – Character

Students with dyslexia have difficulties in areas like phonetic awareness, word memory and word processing speed (Hu Yongchong, 2002), so they need to alleviate their learning difficulties by learning adaptation strategies. There is no fixed way to teaching, but many common points and principles in effective teaching methods. I believe that through the exploration and exchange of experiences amongst my peers in the sector, students with dyslexia will be able to receive appropriate guidance to help them overcome future problems that they may face in learning, emotions or behavior, and support them in their personal development.

### Personal Recommendation of Reading References:

Hu Yongchong - " Literacy Education for Students with Dyslexia " *Pintung Special Education Volume 3* (2002) [胡永崇 - "學習障礙學生之識字教學." 屏師特殊教育第3期 (2002)]

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