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## **The Study of Applying the Six Methods in Forming Chinese Characters (六书) for the Teaching of Chinese as the Third Language at UiTM Terengganu**

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### **Abstract**

Learning Chinese characters is essential in learning Chinese language, especially in learning Chinese as a foreign language or the third language. However, it is often observed that Chinese characters learning is deemed to be the weakness for non-native Chinese learners. Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书) is the most basic and unsophisticated method to study Chinese characters since ancient times. After analyzing the structures of Chinese characters and explaining the rationales of the structures of these Chinese characters, these non-native students were able to learn the Chinese culture which were carried in these Chinese characters. It will certainly enhance the joy of learning in the learning process. By applying the Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书) in interpreting and elaborating the explanation on these Chinese characters, the non-native students can have a better and deeper understanding of Chinese cultures. These non-Chinese students who were from different nationalities and races can apprehend and appreciate Chinese culture more. This also can contribute to the building of national unity in Malaysia.

Keywords : Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书), teaching Chinese as a foreign language or third language (对外汉语), Chinese characters instruction

### **Introduction**

There were many benefits and applications on the use of the knowledge of the study of characters or philology language instruction for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language (Zhang, 2013, pp.316). The issue is on how to heighten the knowledge and understanding of these knowledges in philology.

### **THE USEFULNESS OF SIX METHODS OF FORMING CHINESE CHARACTERS (六书)**

The Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书) is the most basic and unsophisticated method to study Chinese characters since ancient times. The names of Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书) adhered to *Shuowen Jiezi* (《说文解字》), the dictionary during East Han dynasty (202 BC–9 AD) (Xu, 1978, pp.314b).

After analyzing the structures of Chinese characters and explaining the rationales of the structures of these Chinese characters, non-native students were able to learn the Chinese culture which were carried in these Chinese characters. Hence, the practicality and the usefulness of using knowledge of Chinese etymology is unquestionable and undoubtedly suitable (Wei, 2018, pp.169).




### APPLYING THE SIX METHODS OF FORMING CHINESE CHARACTERS (六书): USING THE EXAMPLE OF UiTM

The Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书) were commonly defined by the current scholars and researchers as pictogram (象形), ideogram (指事), combined ideogram (会意), ideogram plus phonetic (形声), transfer character (转注) and loan character (假借). Learning Chinese characters with animated etymology is hence beneficial to these non-native learners of Chinese (Huang, 2014, pp.65).

#### A. Pictogram (象形)

Pictogram are the Chinese character derived from a picture. It is sometimes called hieroglyph.




**Table 1: Pictogram in textbooks of UiTM**

Mandarin level	Chinese characters	Pinyin and meaning	Transcripts on the bones (甲骨文)	Transcripts on the bronze (金文)	Lesser seal character (小篆), adopted c. 213 BC during the Qin Dynasty for the purpose of standardizing the script	Representing
Level 1	“人”	rén, human				Representing the side view of human being.

#### B. Ideogram (指事)

The ideogram is one of the Six Methods of forming Chinese characters (六书). These Chinese characters indicate idea by putting symbols.




**Table 2: Ideogram in textbooks of UiTM**

Mandarin level	Chinese characters	Pinyin and meaning	Transcripts on the bones (甲骨文)	Transcripts on the bronze (金文)	Lesser seal character (小篆), adopted c. 213 BC during the Qin Dynasty for the purpose of standardizing the script	Representing
Level 1	“上”	shàng, up				The symbol above horizontal line representing up.

#### C. Combined ideogram (会意)

These combined ideograms are associative compounds.

**Table 3: Combined ideogram in textbooks of UiTM**

Mandarin level	Chinese characters	Pinyin and meaning	Transcripts on the bones (甲骨文)	Transcripts on the bronze (金文)	Lesser seal character (小篆), adopted c. 213 BC during the Qin Dynasty for the purpose of standardizing the script	Representing
Level 1	“好”	hǎo, good				The combination of the elements of “女”(nǚ, female) 字 and

						“子”(zi, male) representing the meaning of good (好, hao).
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#### D. Ideogram plus phonetic (形声)

These ideogram plus phonetic characters are also called picto-phonetic characters, with one element indicating meaning and the other indicating sound.

**Table 4: Ideogram plus phonetic characters in the textbooks of UiTM**

Mandarin level	Chinese characters	Pinyin and meaning	Representing
Level 1	“爸”	bà, father	The sound part is “巴” (bā) and the meaning part is father (父, fu).

#### E. transfer character (转注)

The transfer characters are mutually explanatory or synonymous characters.




**Table 5: Transfer characters in the textbooks of UiTM**

Mandarin level	Chinese characters	Pinyin and meaning	Representing
Level 1	“老” and “考”	lǎo and kǎo, old	Both the shapes of the characters, the semantics of the characters and the sound of the characters are similar and transferable, which representing the meaning of old age.

#### F. Loan character (假借)

The loan characters are phonetic loan characters; characters adopted to represent homophones.

**Table 6: Loan characters in the textbooks of UiTM**

Mandarin level	Chinese characters	Pinyin and meaning	Transcripts on the bones (甲骨文)	Transcripts on the bronze (金文)	Lesser seal character (小篆), adopted c. 213 BC during the Qin Dynasty for the purpose of standardizing the script	Representing
Level 1	“我”	wǒ, I				“我” was a kind of weapon which was loaned to represent the meaning of I.

### THE TEACHING METHODS OF SIX METHODS IN FORMING CHINESE CHARACTERS (六书)

When teaching pictogram (象形) characters, ideogram (指事) characters and combined ideogram (会意) characters, instructors can use pictures or animations to explain the meaning of the words, because these words are closely related to pictures. During teaching ideogram plus phonetic (形声) characters, instructors can divide this kind of characters into ideogram part (意符) and phonetic part (声符). Majority of ideogram parts (意符) are section headers, while the phonetic part (声符) are mostly

character component(偏旁). The instructors can use the term of synonyms to explain the meaning of transfer characters (转注). When teaching loan characters (假借), instructors can explain the original meaning first and then elaborate the extended meaning of the characters.

#### THE EFFECTIVENESS APPLYING THE SIX METHODS IN FORMING CHINESE CHARACTERS (六书) FOR THE TEACHING OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

It is practical and pragmatic to apply the theory of Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书) for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, as it eases non-native students to learn and absorb Chinese characters. First, the interpretation of the rationale of Chinese characters had been developed and matured in the pre-Qin period. In the theory of Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书), there has been a profound understanding of the structure of Chinese characters, and a rich and accurate analysis for the formation of Chinese characters in *Shuowen Jiezi* (《说文解字》). The theory of Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书) is scientific and systematic, Xu Shen put forward the theory of the Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书) in *Shuowen Jiezi* (《说文解字》) and gave a comprehensive and authoritative explanation of the theory. The structure of Chinese characters has formed a complete scientific system since Lesser seal character (小篆) developed (Zhang, 2013, pp.317).

Besides, the interpretation of Chinese characters by the theory of Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书) is not only funny and interesting, but also easy to understand and remember. Lastly, the theory of Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书) teaching method is very interesting for students.

#### Conclusion

The objective and purpose of this study is to discuss and explore a better learning method for non-native learners or students to learn and understand the structure of Chinese characters and to memorize Chinese characters easier. The Six Methods in forming Chinese characters (六书)'s theory is to divide Chinese characters into six categories, so that learners or students can learn the Chinese characters according to different types of characters, so that they can learn Chinese characters easier and understand the structure of Chinese characters better and deeper.

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