

Hanzi Write it Right *

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Abstract

Learning a logograph writing system like Mandarin requires a completely different set of metalinguistic knowledge compared to learning English and Malay which share the same writing system, alphabetical writing system. Mandarin writing system does not allow deconstruction of letters to form different syllabus or phonemes like as in English and Malay. In Mandarin, a simple change of a stroke in a word might change the word and its meaning entirely. Thus, learning to write Mandarin correctly could be the toughest task in Mandarin learning especially non-native learners. To ease this problem, Hanzi Write It Right provides a simple, fun and self-directed learning digital platform to allow learners to practice Mandarin stroke writing. Feedbacks given in the app enable learners to make complicated strokes writing learning to become an easy and more comprehensive experience. Apart from enhancing their accuracy in stroke writing, it also increases their vocabulary knowledge which is crucial in Mandarin learning.

Keywords: *Mandarin, stroke writing, stroke order, Hanzi, non-native learners*

INTRODUCTION

The interest of people in learning Mandarin language has increased since the blooming of China's economy and its modernization. This has led to the growing interest of learning Mandarin as foreign language among the non-native Chinese learners. Thus, almost all public universities in Malaysia offered Mandarin language courses. However, the learning process of the learners might not be as easy as what we typically assumed especially for non-native learners.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Unlike English and Malay alphabetical writing system, learning Mandarin requires a completely different meta-linguistic knowledge. Mandarin writing system does not allow deconstruction of letters to form different syllabus or phonemes like in English and Malay languages. In Mandarin, a simple change of a stroke in a word might change the word and its meaning entirely. Thus, learning to write Mandarin correctly could be the toughest task in Mandarin learning. Its logograph writing system would usually turn down most aspiring learners as they are frustrated with learning of stroke writing and its writing sequence or writing orders. As a result, many of them are demotivated to continue learning Mandarin as a whole.

OBJECTIVE

This mobile app provides a simple and fun self-directed learning digital platform to allow learners to practice and achieve accuracy in Mandarin stroke writing.

NOVELTY

This is an improved version of digital platform compared to most of the existing applications available in Google Play Store and App Store. Unlike the others, this app allows interactive stroke writing practices by giving feedback for each stroke written by the learners. The learners are able to know whether they have written the stroke in the right order or in the right direction. These two elements are equally important in the training and practice of stroke writing to achieve accuracy in its written form. Apart from that, the app is also equipped with the knowledge that learners need to acquire to enhance their vocabulary knowledge such as vocabulary learning, contextual language expressions, sample of sentences and quizzes. Understand what is being taught is the thumb rule of language learning especially for third and foreign language learning. This app fulfilled this criterion by considering and catering the learners' background and prior language skills. Thus, the content of the app is well explained in three languages - English, Malay and Mandarin with given examples to demonstrate the use of the language in context. Pictures would be a complementary to add on to or enhance learners' understanding. In sum, it has also catered the learners' learning styles as to motivate them to further enhance their skills in stroke writing.

USEFULNESS

The added advantages of the app is to enable the learners to identify their stroke writing mistakes via the feedbacks given. It also helps them to recognize the sequence of stroke writing via the practices and sentences structures provided. On top of that, learners can get a clearer picture of the use of vocabulary in various contexts from the examples of sentences and pictures given. Learners should be able to understand well as the learning materials are all well explained with 3 languages, English, Malay and Mandarin. As such these would be enough to facilitate the learning of stroke and vocabulary learning in the language.



Interactive stroke writing practices



Vocabulary learning

COMMERCIALIZATION POTENTIAL OR IMPACT TOWARDS SOCIO ECONOMY / HUMINITY

This application is designed mainly for children, college or university students or anyone from non-Chinese background or a beginner learner. It has the potential to be a tool or teaching aid for local, international schools, universities or any institutions that offer Mandarin language course for their students. This app could also be useful for professionals who manage international Chinese customers or even individuals who are interested to learn Mandarin.

CONCLUSIONS

Hanzi Write It Right would make most of the language learning successful in various learning settings as it encompasses the basic learning principles that focus on the learning of stroke writing in Mandarin. It can be used as a self-learning tool as well as an alternative teaching tool to perfect the learners' accuracy in stroke writing.