

(Chinese version)

英語背景的華裔學習者在學習漢語時所面對的挑戰與策略

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對於英語背景的學習者而言，漢語可以算是一種特別難學的語言。其原因包括：中文的四聲很難掌握；中文的語法在不少方面與英文的語法不同；中文和英文的同源詞不多；還有社會和文化的差異及中文書寫系統的複雜性。因為要學幾千個漢字，漢字又有繁簡兩種不同的字體，再加上有不少漢字有一個以上的讀音，口語與書面語又存在著很大的不同，詞與詞之間沒有明顯的區分以及異體字，中文的各種不同書體和格式諸如此類有關漢字的問題，所以學生花在中文學習上的時間和精力要比學其他語言多得多。

為了克服以上各種困難，我們建議採取一些策略和教學方法，例如：中文教學應以學生為中心，我們不但要教給學生一定的內容，而且還要教給他們學習中文的方法；教師在初級階段不宜給學生介紹過多的詞彙，以免影響其對語言學習方法和基礎語法的掌握；個別和集體練習發音和句型對學生都有幫助，但交流的練習最為重要；在開始閱讀訓練前，聽說兩方面一定要先打好基礎；在整個初級階段，教師應只教授學生在口語部分已接觸過的與詞彙相關的漢字；上課應把閱讀的重點放在對課文理解的討論上，而不是大聲朗讀課文；學生應有機會閱讀用各種字體、格式印刷的課文，但讀用拼音寫成的課文我們認為不能算真正的閱讀中文；每節課教授的漢字要適量，按每個字在現代漢語中出現的頻率，同時一定要給學生介紹這些字的構成部分。

(English translation)

**ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CHINESE-AMERICAN LEARNERS OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE BACKGROUND WHEN LEARNING CHINESE AND
SOME STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH THEM**

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For learners of English language background, Chinese is considered a particularly challenging language. At the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service Institute, where the speaker directed Chinese language training programs for eleven years, experience has shown that it takes about four times as long to train native English speakers to a level where they can function professionally in Chinese as it takes in French, German, or Spanish. The reasons for this include the tones, the relative paucity of cognates, sociolinguistic and cultural differences, the substantial differences between colloquial and written register, and—most of all—the complexity of the Chinese writing system.

After discussing the challenges of learning Chinese, we take up a number of strategies for dealing with them, including: teach learners learning strategies, helping them become independent language learners; put the learners, not the teacher, at the center of the enterprise; put the emphasis on practice and use; employ Chinese as much as possible; strike for an appropriate balance among large-group, small-group, and individual activities; stress the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) but also take into account the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, presentational).

Additional strategies for speaking are: in spoken language instruction, focus on speech, not written representations thereof; help learners acquire good pronunciation habits and accurate control of basic grammar patterns; employ drill, memorization, and performance as enabling mechanisms for attaining the goal of communicative competence; make appropriate use of new technologies to bring culture into the classroom and enable learners and teachers to make more efficient use of their time by moving certain kinds of language learning (such as grammar study and drill) out of the classroom to be done by students in self-study mode on the computer; and teach the highest-frequency, most useful aspects of the language first.

Regarding the teaching of written Chinese, the following strategies are recommended: teach oral and written skills from separate but related materials, taking into account that non-native learners can learn spoken words faster than they can learn the characters used to write those words; to decrease the learning load, don't teach characters until after the words that they are used to represent have been learned for speaking and listening; be sensitive to the constituent components of characters; watch out for and contrast groups of similar-looking characters; engage in both intensive and extensive reading.

Due to recent systematizations and simplifications in the Chinese language, advances in language pedagogy (better teaching methods, textbooks, and dictionaries), new emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy and self-managed learning, a technological revolution in language teaching that promises increased efficiency in the use of learner and instructor time, and the fact that cultures seem to be moving ever closer together, Chinese today is considerably easier to learn than it used to be. If good use is made of the language learning and teaching strategies discussed here—and if the learners are strongly motivated and hard-working, then there is no reason why they should not succeed at learning Chinese well.