



Error Analysis of Students in Chinese Language Education Program in Writing Hànzì Characters

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Abstract

One of the essential skills that students in the Chinese Language Education program need to master is the ability to write hànzì characters, as Mandarin writing has unique characteristics different from the Indonesian language. This poses the greatest challenge in writing and presents a distinct challenge for the future development of Chinese. The aim of this research is to identify the types of errors in writing hànzì strokes and the factors influencing these errors. The method used is descriptive qualitative. The data consists of 16 student writings collected through observation, documentation, and interviews. This research categorizes students' writing errors into four groups and identifies internal and external factors influencing these errors.

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INTRODUCTION

In learning a foreign language, especially Chinese language, students are required to master four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. According to Kridalaksana (2005:3), language is a system of sound signs agreed upon for use by members of a specific community to collaborate, communicate, and identify themselves. In Chinese, learning is not solely focused on linguistic aspects but also on speaking and writing proficiency. This aligns with Tarigan's view (2015:1) emphasizing the importance for language learners to master reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

Among these four skills, the focus is placed on writing proficiency. Writing in Chinese differs significantly from writing alphabetic or Latin-based languages. Chinese has its own writing rules known as hànzi. Hànzi is one of the oldest scripts, used since the Han dynasty until today. It has evolved and changed independently of other scripts (Suparto, 2002:5). Throughout its development, Hanzi has undergone many changes, from complex to simplified forms used today.

Based on observation, it is found that many errors occur in Hanzi writing. This is due to the varied backgrounds of students in the class, where some have previously studied hànzi while others have not. Most hànzi characters are new material for Chinese learners. Writing skills are not acquired instantly but require consistent practice and training (Tarigan, 1990:4). This forms the basis for the author's research to further investigate the types of hànzi writing errors and the underlying factors causing them.

In learning 汉字 (hànzi), there are two important aspects that foreign language learners must understand: 笔画 (bǐhuà) and 笔顺 (bǐshùn). 笔画 (bǐhuà) refers to the smallest strokes in Chinese characters, while 笔顺 (bǐshùn) refers to the stroke order in Chinese characters. The concepts of 笔画 (bǐhuà) and 笔顺 (bǐshùn) can significantly help Mandarin learners write 汉字 (hànzi) correctly. This concept is deemed crucial because each 笔画 (bǐhuà) stroke is related to the other strokes. Therefore, this initial concept forms the foundation for writing 汉字 characters. Errors made by Chinese learners will greatly affect the mastery of other hànzi materials. 汉字 characters can represent form, sound, and meaning.

For example:

口 : form

Kǒu : sound

Mouth : meaning

From the above example, one stroke will form a shape, meaning, and sound, and usually, stroke form errors occur when the 汉字 writing is incorrect. If there is one extra stroke, it forms the hanzi

日 (rì), which means "sun," and if there are two extra strokes, it forms the hanzi 目 (mù), which means "eye." The purpose of this research is to identify the types of errors that occur when writing 汉字 and the factors causing these writing errors. Based on this, errors should be avoided as early as possible to prevent the same ongoing mistakes.

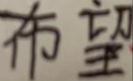
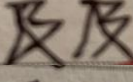
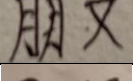
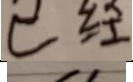
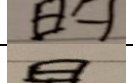
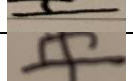
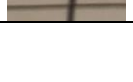
METHODS

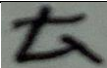
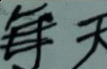
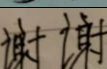
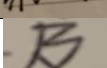
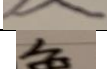
The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research is a research approach that aims to describe phenomena that occur and are examined in more depth and detail (Sugiyono, 2016). This is in line with Lustyanti's (2023) opinion, which states that the qualitative method is used to understand the meaning behind the apparent data. In this study, the author administered a written test to students of the Chinese Language Education Program at Semarang State University from the 2019-2022 cohorts, selected randomly, with each cohort consisting of 4 students, resulting in a total of 16 written test data. The data obtained were then documented and analyzed by the author. To strengthen the research results, the author also conducted interview sessions to identify the factors influencing the writing errors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected, the author has categorized each piece of data according to the errors in writing 汉字 characters. From the various errors found, the author divides the errors into four sections: errors due to missing strokes, errors due to extra strokes, errors in stroke placement, and errors in choosing the correct character. Below are the data results of character writing errors made by students of the Chinese Language Education Program at Semarang State University for the 2019-2022 cohorts.

Table 1. Shortcomings in Hanzi Stroke Writing

No.	Karakter asli	Tulisan responden
1	希望	
2	奶奶	
3	朋友	
4	已经	
5	的	
6	里	
7	年	

8	去	
9	每天	
10	谢谢	
11	级	
12	像	

Based on the results obtained from the respondents' data, the author identified 12 characters that were incorrect due to errors in the stroke writing of 汉字 (hànzì). For instance, in the character 希望, which means 'hope,' the respondents wrote 希 as 布, which means 'cloth,' and in the character 望, which includes the stroke 月 meaning 'moon,' the respondents wrote 刀, which means 'knife' or 'sword.'

In the second data set, for the character 奶奶, meaning 'grandmother,' the respondents did not write the radical 女, resulting in the formation of the strokes 及及, which means 'in a hurry.' Subsequently, for the character 朋友, meaning 'friend,' the respondents wrote 友 as 又, which means 'again.' Although they have the same pronunciation 'you,' they have different tones, namely 友 (yǒu) and 又 (yòu).

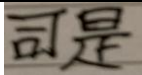

In the next data set, for the character 已经, meaning 'already,' the respondents wrote the stroke 己 as 已, which means 'oneself.' Although they appear similar at a glance, the incorrect stroke alters the meaning of the character. Additionally, for the character 去, meaning 'go,' the respondents did not write the strokes 横 and 竖, rendering the character meaningless.

Furthermore, for the character 谢谢, meaning 'thank you,' the respondents failed to write the stroke 横 three times as required, writing it only twice, thus failing to form the correct meaning. For the character 级, meaning 'level,' the respondents only wrote 及 without the radical 纟, changing the meaning of the character despite having the same tone, which is jí.

Lastly, for the character 像, meaning 'like,' the respondents only wrote 象, which means 'elephant.' The respondents did not write the radical 亻, resulting in a stroke that has a different meaning.

From this, it can be concluded that even minor errors in writing the strokes of 汉字 can have fatal consequences, as they can change the meaning or render the character meaningless. Some of these errors are also due to incorrect stroke 笔画 or the omission of radicals in the stroke components.

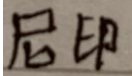

Table 2. Advantages in Hanzi Stroke Writing

No.	Karakter asli	Tulisan responden
1.	可是	
2.	今年	

Based on the data obtained, the respondents also made errors by adding unnecessary strokes, although only two instances of such errors were found, namely in the characters 可是 and 今年.



In the character 可是, within the stroke 可, the respondents added an extra 笔画 横 stroke, which resulted in an incorrect meaning. Furthermore, in the character 今年, within the stroke 今, the respondents added a 笔画 购 stroke. Additionally, instead of writing the 笔画 点 stroke, the respondents wrote the 笔画 横 stroke. This incorrect addition of strokes caused the characters to lose their correct meanings.

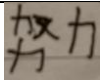
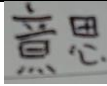
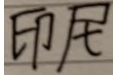
Table 3. Errors in Stroke Placement

No.	Karakter asli	Tulisan responden
1.	印尼	
2.	太	

Based on the data above, the respondents made errors in the placement of 汉字 strokes and 笔画. In writing the character 印尼, meaning 'Indonesia,' the respondents did not write it correctly, resulting in the characters being reversed to 尼印, which do not have any meaning. In writing the character 太, meaning 'very,' the respondents incorrectly placed the 笔画, resulting in the character 犬, which means 'dog.'

Table 4. Errors in Selecting the Correct Character

No.	Karakter asli	Tulisan responden
1.	花	
2.	认识	

3.	努力	
4.	意思	
6.	印尼	

The data indicates the presence of errors in the table due to inconsistencies in the writing of Chinese characters. For instance, characters such as 花 (huā), which should mean "flower", are incorrectly written as 华 (huá), which denotes "beauty/magnificence". Similarly, the character 认识 (rènshi), meaning "to know" or "to recognize", is erroneously transcribed as 认让.

Moreover, in the case of the character 努力 (nǔlì), the stroke 女, which should be included in 努, is omitted, resulting in the sole depiction of 力. Errors are also observed in characters such as 意思 (yìsi), where the radical 心, expected to be used, is replaced by 廾.

Lastly, in the character 尼, the stroke 匕, which is intended, is replaced by 七. These inaccuracies may stem from a lack of understanding or oversight in recognizing and writing the correct characters. Hence, greater attention is required when writing Chinese characters to ensure their proper usage and representation.

These errors may be attributed to a lack of understanding or oversight in recognizing and accurately writing the characters. Therefore, greater attention is required when writing Chinese characters to ensure their proper usage and representation.

The factors influencing errors in 汉字 writing were derived from interviews with respondents. From these interviews, several factors affecting writing errors were identified. These factors were categorized into two parts: internal and external factors.

Internally, they include the complexity of 汉字 characters and the respondents' understanding of their origins. Regarding 汉字 characters, respondents mentioned difficulties such as complex strokes, confusing stroke orders, the complexity of characters themselves, a large number of characters, and similarities between characters, all of which could lead to writing errors. Regarding understanding the origins of 汉字, respondents indicated a lack of understanding of 汉字 characters, difficulty comprehending complex characters, and limited understanding restricted to simple pictographs as contributing to writing errors.

Externally, factors were influenced by learning style, 汉字 writing execution, and motivation. Concerning learning style, respondents mentioned factors such as initial learning experiences, difficulty in memorization, infrequent study habits, mood or emotional state, and consistency in studying as affecting writing errors. In terms of 汉字 writing execution, respondents highlighted aspects like incomplete character writing, lack of focus, rushing, lack of confidence in potential errors, and writing characters out of correct sequence. Additionally, in terms of motivation, respondents noted misconceptions or misunderstandings that could affect 汉字 writing errors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data above, it is concluded that errors in 汉字 writing are not solely dependent on the duration of an individual's learning, but are also influenced by other factors. These errors can stem from deficiencies, excesses, misplacements, and improper selection of strokes. Additionally, the causes of errors encompass both internal and external factors. Internal factors are associated with 汉字 itself, whereas external factors include influences from learning styles, execution of 汉字 writing, and motivation.

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