

Chinese as a second language, Conference insights

**7TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING OF
CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, AND
11TH INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

The 7th International Conference on Teaching and Learning of Chinese as a Second Language, combined with the 11th International Forum on Chinese Language Education, recently brought together educators, researchers, and experts from around the world to discuss crucial topics in the field of Chinese language education. With over 140 presentations, the conference provided a diverse and comprehensive platform for knowledge exchange. In this article, we will share our experiences as part of the Chinese team, highlighting the topics we explored, the questions we received, and the reflections we gathered.

The Chinese Team had the privilege to present two significant research studies:

1. The impact of Orton Gillingham Approach on students with dyslexia in the Chinese Secondary 3 Trial Programme. Presented by Ong Yun Mei and Liu Hai Feng

This study explored how the Orton Gillingham Approach, traditionally used for teaching English, could be adapted to support students with dyslexia in Chinese language learning.

2. Orthographic awareness and its relationship to Chinese word reading and spelling in young bilingual readers with dyslexia in Singapore. Presented by Catherine Ni and Loo Chien Ling

This research delved into the intricate relationship between orthographic awareness and reading and spelling abilities in young bilingual readers with dyslexia.



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SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH CHINESE


During our presentations and discussions, we received thought-provoking questions from educators and participants. Some of these questions included the typical challenges faced by learners with dyslexia and how educators can help them in the classroom. There was a noticeable increase in awareness about dyslexia among educators. Many emphasized the difficulty of executing these strategies within the constraints of a typical classroom setting. We shared some of the strategies we use in our classroom such as breaking down different components in a character and explicit teaching methods using visual cues to help learners with dyslexia to better retain information. We also encouraged educators to incorporate the Orton Gillingham teaching principles into the classroom as it benefits all learners with specific challenges.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING CHINESE

We also attended presentations by other educators and it was a fruitful experience. One of the topics that was frequently shared was the role of technology in the classroom. In today's fast-evolving educational landscape, technology has become an indispensable tool, transforming the way students learn and teachers instruct. One critical aspect of this transformation is online reading, which exposes students to diverse sources of text. Students must learn how to effectively extract information from various websites, documents, and digital platforms. They also have to cross verify information across different texts to ensure accuracy. It also includes elements such as pictures, tables, figures, video clips, and sound. Students must develop the ability to integrate information from these diverse sources into their comprehension.


There is a noticeable trend of primary and secondary syllabi incorporating more elements of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for students. This shift is exemplified by initiatives like the Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) and the transition of exams to electronic formats. Educators should keep an eye out for ICT tools that can enhance the learning experience. These tools can be incorporated into the curriculum or shared with parents to create a collaborative learning environment.

DIFFERENTIATION IN INSTRUCTION



Another topic that was of interest to us was on embracing differentiation and tailoring learning for diverse needs. This approach aims to create an inclusive and engaging environment that caters to different needs. One of the fundamental aspects of differentiation is the mode of reading. Students may have varying preferences when it comes to the format of their learning materials. Some may thrive with physical books, while others may prefer e-books or audio-books. By offering these choices, educators can empower students to select the mode that best suits their learning style. Differentiation also involves flexible groupings based on students' readiness levels. Before embarking on a lesson, a pre-assessment can help identify where each student stands in





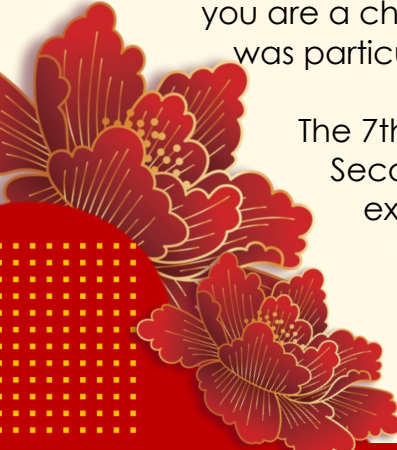
terms of understanding the topic. This information allows educators to group students accordingly, ensuring that they receive instruction tailored to their specific needs. In addition to differentiating the mode of reading, educators can give students a choice in how they present their understanding. Instead of limiting students to a single mode of presentation, such as writing, educators can encourage them to explore various options, including drawing, filmmaking, songs, or even creating comics. This fosters creativity and allows students to leverage their strengths.

PROFILING AND ASSESSMENT

As we reflect on these principles, we recognise their relevance not only in traditional school settings but also in environments like the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS). In DAS classrooms, we encounter students with diverse profiles and learning needs. In DAS classrooms, similar to traditional schools, students come with unique learning profiles. Educators can explore flexible groupings that ensure every student's individual needs are met. By carefully assessing students' abilities and readiness through our in-house profiling test, Educational Therapists can tailor instruction to maximize their growth and potential. Embracing differentiation also means considering different modes of tasks and outputs. Instead of adhering to a one-size-fits-all approach, we can design assignments that allow students to demonstrate their understanding in a way that aligns with their strengths and interests. This approach not only enhances engagement but also fosters a sense of ownership over their learning.

The Conference also included a forum on Chinese language learning with the theme of "My learning, My work, My experience." The speakers came from various backgrounds and shared their respective Chinese learning journeys and the impact on their careers. Through their talks, we learned that in today's fast-paced Singaporean society, the importance of Chinese language is becoming increasingly prominent. People are gradually realizing that mastering the Chinese language not only enhances their language skills but also brings convenience to their daily lives and work.

Additionally, one of the speakers made a deep impression on the participants. The speaker obtained his Chinese O-Level certificate in his thirties, which once again affirmed that there is no age limit for language learning. With determination, whether you are a child, a student or a working professional, it is never too late to learn. This was particularly inspiring for educators involved in Chinese language teaching.



The 7th International Conference on Teaching and Learning of Chinese as a Second Language provided a rich and enlightening forum for the exchange of knowledge, insights, and experiences. As Chinese language educational therapists, it is heartening to witness an increase in awareness of dyslexia in Chinese language, with a stronger emphasis to move towards more inclusive teaching practices.

