

Abstract

This study investigated the development of children's radical knowledge and the relationship between children's radical knowledge in reading Chinese. Twenty Grade 1, 20 Grade 3 and 20 Grade 5 native Chinese children were recruited from one representative primary school in Hong Kong. Five tests: Implicit knowledge of radical position, Explicit knowledge of radical position, Knowledge of radical function, Specific category of radical and Character meaning assessment, were given to the children in order to examine the developmental pattern for children's knowledge of radical. Chinese sentence comprehension test and Chinese word reading test were conducted to measure children's Chinese comprehension ability and Chinese word reading ability respectively. The results showed that children at higher grades have developed the radical knowledge better than those at lower grades did. Also, among different kinds of radical knowledge, children have acquired the knowledge of specific category of radical first, then the position of radical, followed by the function of radical. Moreover, the results indicated that radical knowledge was correlated with both Chinese comprehension ability and Chinese word reading ability. Therefore, radical knowledge is important for children to read Chinese.