

Abstract

The main focus of this study was on Chinese invented spelling of kindergarten and primary school children. The term “Chinese spelling” in this study was defined as arranging different stroke-patterns to form components of compound characters that are orthographic, structural and positional redundancy to convey both meaning and pronunciation. It is interesting that children without any formal instructions on spellings can create their own spelling in a logical and unconventional way systematically. The present study investigated the development of Chinese children’s invented spelling and the relationship between children’s invented spelling, dictation and word reading. Twenty Kindergarten 3 (the third year of kindergarten education), 20 Grade 1 and 20 Grade 3 Chinese children were recruited in Hong Kong. Tests included Chinese invented spelling, Chinese word reading, Chinese dictation, radical recognition, Chinese phonetics reading, Chinese pseudocharacter reading and Chinese orthographic awareness. The results showed that older children with more reading and writing experiences developed more lexical knowledge and did better in invented Chinese compound characters. A developmental model of Chinese invented spelling was proposed. Moreover, the statistical significant relationship among Chinese invented spelling, Chinese word reading and Chinese dictation were found. These suggested the importance of studying Chinese invented spelling as it was the first step to later conventional spelling and reading. Furthermore, the knowledge of semantic radicals was found as a contributing factor to Chinese invented spelling.