

Knowledge about character and word structure predicts Chinese reading in children

Abstract

Twenty-eight fourth grade children and twenty-nine adults in Hong Kong were administered measures of creative naming and pronunciation, Chinese and English word recognition, Chinese and English reading comprehension, Chinese and English reading aloud, memory span and IQ. The findings showed that adults had understood the underlying structure of Chinese concrete nouns while fourth graders had not. Both groups understood the formal and functional characteristics of written Chinese characters. After controlling for IQ and memory span, knowledge in formal and functional constraints of Chinese characters strongly predicted the children's reading aloud performance in both Chinese and English but not reading comprehension performance. However, the predictive effect was not significant among adults.