

ABSTRACT

Although students in Hong Kong begin to learn English since kindergarten, their phonemic awareness has been found to be very limited in previous research. Since there is a wealth of literature showing that phonemic awareness is very important to successful English reading and spelling, and yet the opacity of the written English does not promote the development of phonemic awareness, the present study attempts to examine if learning Hanyu-Pinyin, a transparent transcription system, can enhance phonemic awareness in Hong Kong students, and hence their English reading and spelling. Since past phonological awareness transfer studies focus only on transfer between a first and a foreign language and vice versa, the present study represents a novel attempt to examine phonological awareness transfer between two foreign languages. By contrasting Mandarin-learning children who learn Pinyin with those who do not, the present study provides a valuable opportunity to examine orthographic effect independent of oral language effect. Results showed that Pinyin training effectively enhanced Hong Kong students' phonemic awareness across languages, over and above the effect of oral language. Analyses also showed direct phonological awareness transfer between two foreign languages. Moreover, Pinyin training also enhanced students' English pseudoword reading and nonword spelling performance, though its effect on English real word reading was not found. I also found that phonological awareness did not fully explain the unique effect caused by Pinyin training, and I suggest that the print related element of phonological skills brought about by the Pinyin training can account for this gap. Finally, theoretical and pedagogical implications of the results are discussed.

漢語拼音學習對語音意識發展和英語學習的影響

摘要

香港的學生雖然從小接觸英語，但研究發現他們在音素層面的語音意識發展相當有限。由於大量文獻指出音素層面的語音意識對英語閱讀和拼寫有莫大幫助，但英文本身字母與音素間的關係比較複雜，不利刺激音素意識的發展，本研究嘗試探討學習漢語拼音，一種比較簡單的字母書寫系統，能否提高香港學生的音素意識，從而間接提升他們在英語學習上的能力。此外，以往在語音意識遷移上的研究只集中在第一與第二語言間的遷移，本研究則探討語音意識在兩個第二語言間遷移的可能性，故此，本研究在探討語音意識遷移的問題上開拓出一個新的層次。而透過與沒有學習拼音的香港普通話學生作比較，本研究也提供了一個分開文字和口語各自對語音意識發展的影響的獨特機會。結果發現，拼音訓練不但能有效提高香港學生的普通話音素意識，更能間接提高他們在廣東話和英語上的音素意識。分析更顯示，音素意識在兩個第二語言間的直接遷移是可能的。另外，拼音訓練亦能提升學生拼讀跟拼寫英文假字的能力，但在英文真字閱讀上未見有即時影響。此外，本研究發現音素意識並未能完全解釋拼音組與非拼音組在拼讀跟拼寫英文假字上表現的差異，相信其餘的原因跟拼音學習對文字技巧的提升有關。最後，本文對這些研究結果對理論及教學的意義作一些討論。