Abstract

Paired associate learning (PAL) was found to be a critical cognitive skill of associating stimuli from prints when reading. It was found that grade two bilingual children in Hong Kong could use visual-verbal and visual-semantic PAL skills differentially when reading Chinese and English (Chow, 2014). However, Hong Kong children's language abilities could be very diverse. The identification tasks used could be inadequate when reflecting children's ability to read and spell. Moreover, the role of morphological awareness was not accounted for in the previous study.

The present study is aimed at filling the research gap and extending the use the paradigm by Chow (2014) to further investigate the significance of verbal and semantic PAL skills in predicting children's word reading and also spelling abilities. Motor PAL tasks (i.e. writing of the novel symbols) in addition to the identification tasks were used to look at the contribution of PAL in children's English and Chinse literacy abilities. Morphological awareness's contribution towards literacy variables was also studied.

The results showed that motor PAL had significant correlation with all literacy variables but the identification PAL score did not. Verbal-motor and semantic-motor PAL were found to have differential correlations with both the word reading and dictation scores. Morphological awareness was also found to be the more significant predictor of children's Chinese word reading abilities. Although motor PAL did not have significant predictive power on the literacy variables, the correlation pattern and motor PAL tasks could be used for future research.