

Total number of students (both tests)	16
Age	11-12
Gender	6 boys; 10 girls

PRE-TEST							
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3a	Item 3b	Item 3	Item 4	Total
Student code	Transcribe /15	Translate /20	Writing (words/phrases) /25	Writing (phrases/sentences) /25	Total	Gap fill /15	/100
1	1.5	7	1.5	2	3.5	0	12
2	1	3	0	3	3	0	7
3	6	3	0	3	3	0	12
4	10	10	0	8	8	3	31
5	8	15	0	10	10	6	39
6	4	4	4.5	8	13	0	21
7	2.5	0	1	1	2	0	4.5
8	5	2	0	4	4	0	11
9	0.5	1.5	0	0	0	0	2
10	5	0	4	0	4	0	9
11	4	8	1	2	3	0	15
12	2	5	1	13	14	0	21
13	9	13	4	15	19	0	41
14	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
15	1	2	2.5	2	4.5	0	7.5
16	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
	4.0	4.6	1.2	4.4	5.7	0.6	14.8

POST-TEST							
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3a	Item 3b	Item 3	Item 4	Total
Student code	Transcribe /15	Translate /20	Writing (words/phrases) /25	Writing (phrases/sentences) /25	Total	Gap fill /15	/100
1	3	13	0	14	14	0	30
2	7	10	11	0	11	0	28
3	12	5	12	0	12	0	29
4	14	17	24	17	41	14	86
5	13	17	9	0	9	2	41
6	13	17	19	14	13	0	43
7	10	8	4	12	16	0	34
8	10	4	9.5	10	19.5	5	38.5
9	8	8	0	5	5	0	21
10	10	11	4	14	18	2	41
11	15	7	1	0	1	0	23
12	2	2.5	4	4	8	0	12.5
13	15	20	23	24	47	15	97
14	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
15	5	2	5	10	15	0	22
16	2	4	6	0	6	0	12
	8.9	9.1	8.2	7.8	14.7	2.4	35.1

Analysis

The average total mark of the post-test has more than doubled compared to the pre-test. Each student performed increasingly better in the post-test, improving their score in most of the items. Item 1 saw a big increase in the average score, as students could link this task to the similarities of a sentence dictation activity, therefore improving their confidence in transcribing pinyin into Chinese characters. A huge increase in the average score can be seen in Item 3 in particular, where students had to describe a picture in single words or phrases. They felt much at ease with this as they weren't limited to what they had to write and could include as many phrases that they had practiced as they could. It is notable for Item 3a, describing a picture in single words, that the majority of students chose to write more phrases or sentences rather than single characters. This can be seen as an improvement on character writing in chunks as the students were feeling more inclined to write longer phrases and sentences as opposed to single words. However, the gap-fill task did not see as big of an increase in scores as the other tasks and the students found this task generally challenging. The reason for this could be that a gap-fill task does not just simply assess the ability to write characters, but also to read and think critically, therefore more focus and practice is required for these types of skills. The students didn't receive as much practice in this type of activity therefore this was reflected in the scores.

Summary

This research focused on improving students' writing by teaching characters in chunks and phrases as opposed to single characters and being able to use the learnt phrases to make up own sentences with the sentence structures acquired. To support this, activities such as dictations with phrases/sentences, describe the picture, transcribing pinyin phrases into Chinese characters and group/pair activities of creating long sentences with component characters were among the some used. Students also practiced their own writing skills by copying out longer phrases rather than single characters, which helped them to not only learn characters quicker but also to understand how sentence structures work and how they can be adapted.

The students on a whole adapted really well to sentence dictations as it enabled them to learn and adapt example sentence structures into their own writing. Although it took longer for them to write each sentence at the beginning of the intervention, they soon found it more rewarding and effective

to write longer phrases as opposed to single characters. The students found their ability to write sentences improved with each dictation. This then allowed the students to use these learned sentences in class activities where they had to describe a picture. A method that worked well for the students, particularly less confident ones, was to allow them to work together in groups and create a combination of sentences to describe a picture that was in front of them. This was engaging and motivating, allowing the students to then have the confidence to write own sentences by themselves. I often noticed that the students were eager to use the sentences they had practiced and adapt them into their own creative picture writing. This reflects on the students' writing in the post-test in Item 3b, where writing longer sentences was required. The students used longer sentences along with the sentence structures that they had practiced in class. Although some students wrote a longer paragraph with more detailed connectives, other students wrote less flowing stand-alone sentences. Nonetheless their confidence to write longer phrases had increased positively.

Translation into Chinese characters also saw a significant improvement for the students, particularly seen by the improvement in scores in Item 2. The students were much more confident to translate sentences as this was an area that they felt they struggled with before the intervention. The majority of the students followed the correct sentence structures even if they had forgotten how to write a specific character.

It is notable to mention that some of the weaker performances in the pre-test were among the male students (student codes 1,8,9,11,14,16). Although these students' performance increased in the post-test, nonetheless they struggled with writing single words to describe a picture (Item 3a) more so than the female students in the class. This could link to their learning styles and their cognitive and creative skills however the main reason could be that they prefer to write longer sentences that give them more freedom to express themselves as they adapted to the chunking activities very well. Looking at the male students' pre-test scores allowed me to reflect on how these students in particular learn to write characters and how their writing can be improved. Taking this in mind I adapted different activities and found that by reflecting back on the intervention that the male students were motivated to write longer when group or pair writing activities were involved. This isn't a coincidence as boys have always been known to be more engaged when there's a competitive edge to an activity. On the other hand, the female

students appeared to be comparatively more eager to complete dictations and transcribing pinyin tasks.