ENHANCING NON-NATIVE STUDENTS' MANDARIN LITERACY IN SARAWAK PRIMARY SCHOOL USING THE LIUSHU APPROACH

SIK RUOH YIH

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CENTRE FOR THE PROMOTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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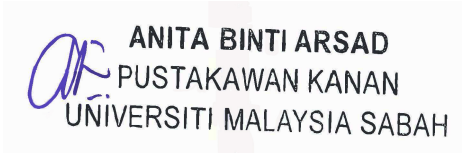

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I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own, except for quotations, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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Sik Ruoh Yih
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ABSTRACT

The Chinese language is rapidly becoming a popular second language to learn today. Since 2011, the Chinese language has been offered as an elective subject in Malaysian national primary schools under the Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR). The purpose of this research was to look into the effectiveness of the *Liushu* teaching approach for teaching *Hanzi* (Chinese characters), which is considered difficult for non-native Chinese learners, and to discover if pupils could master the form, sound, and meaning of *Hanzi*. Furthermore, this research investigated whether the *Liushu* teaching approach could promote an enjoyable self-learning environment among pupils and Chinese culture among the non-native learners. An experimental research was conducted to test the hypothesis formulated in this research. Five national primary schools in Sarawak that offer Chinese as an elective subject were chosen as the primary research sites. Six teachers had volunteered to participate in this research. The non-native pupils from Year-3 classes were selected as the research sample. Pre-test and post-test were used in the control and treatment groups to collect the relevant data. The T-test was used to analyse the data in order to compare the means of the control and treatment groups for the pre-test and post-test. Interviews with the teacher participants were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the *Liushu* teaching approach and determine whether the *Liushu* teaching approach could promote an enjoyable self-learning environment for pupils and help promote Chinese culture among non-native learners. Questionnaires were distributed to teachers who taught Chinese as a second language in the selected national primary schools and also to parents of the participants of the present study. The questionnaire collected factual data to support and validate the statistical data and findings that emerged in the study. To ensure that the targeted data is accurate and relevant, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this research. After the experimental research was conducted, the mean differences between the control and treatment groups for the pre-test and post-test were compared. After 9 weeks of treatment, the treatment group that used the *Liushu* teaching approach in literacy *Hanzi* recognition learning had a greater mean difference than the mean difference of the control group. The findings of the research show that after introducing the *Liushu* teaching approach to pupils in learning *Hanzi*, there is an increase in the number of *Hanzi* pupils who can recognise the form, sound, and meaning of *Hanzi*. Furthermore, the teachers' interviews, observations and questionnaire responses show that the *Liushu* teaching approach can foster an enjoyable self-learning environment among pupils and promote the Chinese culture among non-native learners. The findings of this study thus have contributed to the existing literature by providing new knowledge to researchers who are interested in carrying out research related to the area of teaching Chinese as a second language.

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ABSTRAK

PENGGUNAAN PENDEKATAN LIUSHU DALAM MENINGKATKAN PENGUASAAN KEMAHIRAN LITERASI BAHASA MANDARIN MURID YANG BUKAN PENUTUR JATI DI SEKOLAH RENDAH NEGERI SARAWAK

Bahasa Cina telah menjadi bahasa kedua yang semakin popular untuk dipelajari dan dikuasai pada hari ini. Sejak tahun 2011, Bahasa Cina telah ditawarkan sebagai mata pelajaran elektif di sekolah-sekolah Kebangsaan Malaysia berdasarkan Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR). Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengkaji keberkesanan pendekatan pengajaran Liushu dalam mengajar Hanzi (aksara Cina), yang dianggap sukar bagi pelajar yang belajar Bahasa Cina sebagai bahasa kedua di samping mengetahui sama ada murid dapat menguasai Hanzi dari segi bentuk, bunyi dan makna. Tambahan pula, penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengetahui sama ada pendekatan pengajaran Liushu dapat menggalakkan pembelajaran kendiri serta memperkenalkan budaya bangsa Cina di kalangan pelajar yang berlainan bangsa. Kajian eksperimental telah dijalankan untuk menguji hipotesis penyelidikan ini. Lima buah Sekolah Kebangsaan di Sarawak yang menawarkan Bahasa Cina sebagai mata pelajaran elektif telah dipilih sebagai tapak kajian. Enam orang guru telah menyertai penyelidikan ini secara sukarela. Murid yang bukan penutur jati dalam kelas Tahun 3 dijadikan sebagai sampel kajian. Ujian pra dan ujian pos diadakan bagi kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan rawatan untuk mengumpul data yang berkaitan. Ujian-T digunakan untuk menganalisis data bagi membandingkan skor min kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan rawatan dalam kedua-dua ujian tersebut. Temubual bersama guru yang terlibat dalam kajian ini juga telah dijalankan untuk menilai keberkesanan pendekatan pengajaran Liushu serta menentukan sama ada pendekatan pengajaran Liushu dapat mewujudkan suasana yang kondusif dalam pembelajaran kendiri murid serta memperkenalkan budaya bangsa Cina di kalangan pelajar yang berlainan bangsa. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada para guru yang mengajar Bahasa Cina sebagai bahasa kedua di Sekolah Kebangsaan dan juga kepada ibu bapa pelajar yang anak-anak mereka mempelajari Bahasa Cina di sekolah yang terlibat dalam kajian eksperimental untuk mengumpul data fakta bagi menyokong dan mengesahkan data statistik dan penyataan. Bagi memastikan data yang disasarkan adalah tepat dan relevan, kedua-dua kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif telah digunakan dalam penyelidikan ini. Selepas kajian eksperimental dijalankan, perbezaan skor min antara kumpulan kawalan dan rawatan bagi ujian pra dan ujian pos telah dibandingkan. Selepas 9 minggu, kumpulan rawatan yang menggunakan pendekatan pengajaran Liushu dalam pembelajaran literasi pengecaman Hanzi mempunyai perbezaan skor min yang lebih besar berbanding dengan perbezaan skor min kumpulan kawalan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa selepas memperkenalkan pendekatan pengajaran Liushu dalam pembelajaran Hanzi, terdapat peningkatan dalam proses pembelajaran Hanzi murid-murid. Tambahan pula, hasil daripada temubual dengan guru, pemerhatian dan maklum balas soal selidik menunjukkan bahawa pendekatan pengajaran Liushu membawa impak positif dalam memupuk persekitaran pembelajaran kendiri yang menyeronokkan di kalangan murid. Hal tersebut juga dapat meningkatkan pengetahuan tentang budaya bangsa Cina dalam kalangan murid yang bukan penutur natif. Dapatan kajian ini juga dapat menyumbang kepada literatur yang sedia ada dengan memberikan pengetahuan baharu kepada pengkaji yang berminat untuk menjalankan penyelidikan berkaitan dengan bidang pengajaran Bahasa Cina sebagai bahasa kedua di sekolah kebangsaan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCSK	-	Chinese language as a second language in national primary schools *Bahasa Cina Sekolah Kebangsaan*
BPK	-	Curriculum Development Department *Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum*
CFL	-	Chinese as Foreign Language
CSL	-	Chinese as a Second Language
DSKP	-	Curriculum and Assessment Standard Documents: *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran*
EU	-	European Union
GC	-	Google Classroom
GM	-	Google Meet
GUMC	-	Georgetown University Medical Center
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
KPM	-	Ministry of Education *Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia*
KPLI	-	Postgraduate Teaching Training Courses *Kursus Perguruan Lepasan Ijazah*
KSSR	-	Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum: *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah*
KSSR (Semakan 2017)	-	Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum Revised 2017: *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah KSSR (Semakan 2017)*
L2	-	Second Language
LMS	-	Learning Management System
POL	-	Pupils' Own Language
PSM	-	Propensity Score Matching
PTR	-	Pupil Teacher Ratio
RDD	-	Regression Discontinuity Design

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RTE	-	Right To Education
SJKC	-	National-type schools (Chinese) *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)*
SJKT	-	National-type schools (Tamil) *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)*
SK	-	National primary schools *Sekolah Kebangsaan*
SK C	-	*Sekolah Kebangsaan* St. Columba
SK G	-	*Sekolah Kebangsaan* Green Road
SK J(1)	-	*Sekolah Kebangsaan Jalan Ong Tiang Swee* (Control Group)
SK J(2)	-	*Sekolah Kebangsaan Jalan Ong Tiang Swee* (Treatment Group)
SK S	-	*Sekolah Kebangsaan Satria Jaya*
SK W	-	*Sekolah Kebangsaan Wira Jaya*
SLA	-	Second Language Acquisition
SLL	-	Second Language Learning
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TCFL	-	Teaching Chinese as Foreign Language
TCSL	-	Teaching Chinese as a Second Language
TL	-	Target Language
UAE	-	United Arab Emirates
UDISE	-	Unified District Information System for Education
UK	-	United Kingdom

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Chinese Language is known as *Hanyu* or *Zhongwen* (Zhang & Shin, 2020, p.99). Chinese language is the official language of China and is one of the six official languages of the United Nations (Ba Zhongwen liewei lianheguo gongzuo yuwen zhiyi, 1973). Chinese language is the world's most widely used first language and the second-largest language globally after English language (Eberhard, David, Gary, & Charles, 2022). After China announced its strategy as the "Silk Road Economic Belt" which is more commonly known as "One Belt One Road" in Year 2013, the Chinese language increased in popularity as a second language to be learned on the international stage because of its economic value (Xu, 2019). In 2020, China was the only country in the world to show positive economic growth according to the latest economic outlook released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on 13 October 2020 (Reuters, 2020). China is now heading to be the largest financial market globally, which will push the Chinese language to a higher position of importance on the global stage. Many countries worldwide have amended their language policy to include learning Chinese as a second language in their education system (Huang, 2019). In 2019, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Education intended to offer Chinese language classes in 200 local public primary and secondary schools. Russia has also included Chinese language as one of the subjects of the college entrance examination in the year 2019. In European Union (EU) countries such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, Chinese language has also been included in the local education system. In 2017, there are 67 countries and regions around the world that has incorporated Chinese language teaching into the national education system (*Dama zuowei dier yuyan jiaoxue Hanyure shibu kedang*, 2019).

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Malaysians of Chinese descent make up the second-largest ethnic group in Malaysia at about 22.4% of the Malaysian population (Mohd Uzir Mahidin, 2021). Most of these Chinese speak *Huayu*. Malaysia has the most comprehensive Chinese education system throughout the South East Asian region, after China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. In Malaysia, Chinese language is taught in kindergarten, primary schools, secondary schools as well as in universities (Qian, 2017; Cui, 2015; Hong, 2009). Chinese language is offered as a first language and also as a second language in the Malaysian education system (Wang & Wu, 2022). The growth of the Chinese language in Malaysia depends on the action taken by the government on how to improve Chinese language education.

1.2 Background

The national primary school education system is under the category of government education institutions divided into two streams, namely national and national-type schools (vernacular schools). National primary schools which are known as *Sekolah Kebangsaan* (SK) use the Malay language as the medium of instruction. There are two types of national-type schools, one is the national-type school (Chinese) mostly known as *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)* (SJKC), which uses Chinese language as the medium of instruction, and the national-type school (Tamil) which is known as *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)* (SJKT) with *Tamil* language used as the medium of instruction.

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1.2.1 Relation to Government Policy： Chinese Language

Malaya started offering Chinese language classes in various national primary schools before the year 1957 and continued to offer it after gaining independence. These classes were known as Pupils' Own Language (POL). They were only offered to Chinese pupils, and a minimum of 15 Chinese pupils were required to begin a POL class starting from Year 3 and above (Yusof, 2016). The Malaysian government has retained the teaching of Chinese language as an optional subject in national primary schools across Malaysia since 1996 for all pupils in the national primary schools regardless of their ethnicity (Matnor Daim, 1997). In 2007, Chinese language as an

additional language was introduced to 150 national primary schools throughout Malaysia (Ahamad Sipon, 2006) under the third strategic thrust of the National Education Blueprint (2006-2010) which aims to empower national schools. Under this National Education Blueprint (2006-2010), one of the strategies is to enhance the status of the teaching profession (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2006). Qualified applicants are recruited and trained in the Institute of Teacher Education under this program to teach Chinese language in national primary schools as a second language. From 2011 onwards, Chinese language has been offered as an elective subject under the Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR) and is allocated 90 minutes for learning per school week to the pupils' schedule (Alimuddin Mohd. Dom, 2010). Chinese language is taught in national primary schools as a second language under the National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

KSSR aspires to develop pupils with 21st century skills, which will help them become more competitive in the global workforce later in life. A significant benefit of learning 21st century skills is that pupils can develop as better communicators so they can convey their thoughts, ideas, and information both orally and in written form. This shows how essential communicative competence is and how language mastery can be a great asset for the pupils (Curriculum Development Department, 2015). As China is in rapid development, Chinese language naturally becomes more relevant as a globally used language, and for Malaysia, being a multiracial country, learning Chinese as a second language is also fast gaining popularity.

1.2.2 Chinese Language: *Huayu* or *Hanyu*

According to Tian (1994), the term *Huayu* was coined during the independence movements of regions such as Singapore and Malaysia to replace the term *Guoyu* for the Chinese language, which meant 'National language'. He further opined that *Huayu* is a Northern Chinese dialect unrelated to Fujian and Guangdong's provincial dialects. Instead, *Huayu* is defined as "the collective term for *Hanyu* overseas". Zhou (2001), on the other hand, believed that *Huayu* refers to the universal language shared by all Chinese people that excludes Chinese dialects. Guo (2004) defined *Huayu* as the standard modern *Hanyu* and *Putonghua.*

In Singapore and Malaysia*, Hanyu* is known as *Huayu* (Spoken and Written Chinese Languages, 2015, p.133), and they seem to appear to be synonymous terms, but they are not interchangeable. *Huayu* uniquely connotes a language that belongs to the Chinese people. Indeed, except in Mainland China, known as *Hanyu*, the Chinese language is referred to as *Huayu* elsewhere by Chinese diaspora (Zhuang, 2005).

The Malaysian Chinese language education is divided into two educational systems. Materials used in teaching Chinese as a first language are referred to as *Huawen*, while materials used in teaching Chinese as a second language are referred to as *Huayu* (Wang & Wu, 2022). Meanwhile, the Chinese language subject that is offered in national primary schools in Malaysia is known as *Bahasa Cina Sekolah Kebangsaan* (BCSK) *Guoxiao Huayu* *国小华语*.

1.2.3 Chinese Characters: *Hanzi*

Chinese characters or *Hanzi* are used to record *Hanyu.* It is the earliest form of written language, dating back about 5000 years (Chua, Tan, & Lin, 2015). *Hanyu* and *Hanzi* come hand in hand but *Hanzi* is widely recognised as the most difficult part of learning Chinese language (Ko, 2012; Chua, Tan, & Lin, 2015; Xiao, 2022). *Hanzi* is a combination of form, sound, and meaning. Mastering *Hanzi* can only be achieved when one recognises *Hanzi,* pronounces them correctly, and identifies the exact meaning.

Hanzi is also known as the square character and is recognised as one of the world's most ancient scripts (Spoken and Written Chinese Languages, 2015, p.140). However, there are differing views on when and where it originated. Almost all records in ancient books attribute the creation of characters to *仓颉 (Cang Jie)*. *Cang Jie* was the *Huang* emperor's official historian. He created characters by getting inspiration from observing animal movements. Characters cannot be developed and implemented by a small group of people, as people who reorganise characters cannot be said to have created characters as well. It is only possible to say that the characters are formed alongside the people of common daily society at the time being. Only through collaboration in the characters, common recognition, simplification,

finalisation, and the combination of words in the language will they be qualified as characters (Hu, 2014, p.4).

Modern *Hanzi* have evolved from *甲骨文 (Jia Guwen)*, *金文 (Jinwen)*, *篆书 (Zhuanshu)* and *隶书 (Lishu)*. The earliest existing *Hanzi* is the *Jia Guwen* of the *Yinshang* dynasty around 1300 B.C., and then the *Jinwen* developed from the *Jia Guwen*. As the Western *Zhou* Dynasty, it evolved into *Zhuanshu.* In this period, *Zhuanshu* has initially established a component system of *Hanzi*. *Zhuanshu* was generally divided into *大篆(Dazhuan) or 籀文(Zhouwen)* and *小篆 (Xiaozhuan)*. The *Dazhuan* was written before the Pre-*Qin* Dynasty*.* With the establishment of the *Qin* Dynasty, *Xiaozhuan* replaced the writings of all the other Vassal states. The transformation from *Xiaozhuan* to *Lishu* was an obvious transition of *Hanzi* from ancient characters to modern characters. It is the largest and most distinguished evolution in the history of *Hanzi*. During the late *Han* Dynasty, the *Lishu* was changed into *楷书 (Kaishu)*. *Kaishu* sprouted in the late Western *Han* Dynasty, became popular in the *Wei, Jin,* southern and northern Dynasties, matured in the *Sui and Tang* Dynasties, and is in use until today. Since then, no new characters have been created to replace regular *Hanzi*, but only different writing fonts. Another evolution in *Hanzi* was the promotion of simplified characters in the late *Qing* Dynasty (Yap, 2013b). Scholars and the Chinese government put a lot of effort into simplifying Chinese characters in the twentieth century. Nowadays, the international community has widely accepted simplified Chinese characters as China's official script (Spoken and Written Chinese Languages, 2015, p.148). The *Hanzi* we use today in Malaysia are simplified Chinese characters*.*

1.2.4 The Importance of *Hanzi* Learning in Lower Grades of Primary Schools

Hanzi are one-of-a-kind records of ancient Chinese culture. Literacy is the focal point of Chinese language learning in the lower grades of primary school and the foundation of Chinese language education (Zhou, 2014). Literacy is not the goal of primary school education, instead, it is used to help children develop their language skills. Literacy is the foundation of reading, writing, oral communication, and

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