

The University of Hong Kong Department of Psychology

Departmental Seminar

Morphological Blending as a predictor of word reading for young Chinese readers

Date: August 23, 2011 (Tuesday)
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Venue: Room 624, Knowles Building, HKU
Speaker: Mr. David Kwan
PhD Candidate
Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong

A large number of Chinese words are disyllabic compounds formed by concatenation of two characters, and recently many researchers have proven the importance of lexical compounding to the development of word reading ability. There is often an implicit assumption that for compounding, a reader knows the character before adding them up to words. However pedagogically young readers in Hong Kong learn Chinese through text reading. Character sound and meaning are seldom individually highlighted but more in context of words. This brings my speculation that word formation is a morphological blending process, where morphological decomposition (knowing characters from words) is required before lexical compounding (building words from known characters). In this seminar, I shall investigate into the significance of morphological blending through:

1. A corpus study of primary grade Chinese textbooks to check morpheme boundedness, and a simple simulation task using the corpus data to see if morphological blending matches with growth of word reading ability;
2. An error analysis of a Chinese character reading test and a lexical decision experiment to establish the importance of morphological decomposition;
3. A longitudinal study with young Chinese readers to see if morphological blending predicts word reading ability;
4. Comparison between dyslexic readers and controls to see if morphological blending contributes to reading failure.