

必先利其器：漢字教育的字典和電腦發展

## **Advancement in dictionary and computer usage for the teaching of Han characters**

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### **Abstract**

Learning how to write is a necessary integral part of language learning. Students who know how to write correctly also will have a more solid and deeper lexical understanding. We have previously reported that the Chinese Alphabet teaching method can provide an audiovisual memory to the fine grained detailed structure of Han orthography, consolidating memory better and overcoming the necessity of rote copying and memorizing which makes the learning of Han character difficult. Students using this method have increased confidence, ability, and interest in learning. We now describe the use of computer and dictionary in this method.

Although others have also utilized the computer to teach students how to input Han characters, input by means of phonetic spelling or codes do not enhance the student's ability to acquire fine grained details of orthography, and therefore do not help with learning to recognize or writing of such characters. Because the same character has different pronunciation in different regions, such phonetic based method is also unsuitable for inputting cross regional characters. In the Han alphabet system however typing is similar to writing and therefore can be used to input all Han Characters. The system provides instant feedback for the student to learn and correct mistakes. Furthermore, it promotes morphological awareness and is suitable for inputting all Han characters irrespective of region of origin. By writing with the computer rather than the pen first, we find that second language learners will overcome their fear of the Han script, and also write better when they eventually use a pen.

Dictionary usage is another important tool in language education. Previous indexing systems of Han characters however are difficult to use, and have numerous problems. Our experience suggests a better an indexing system should be based on the strokes alphabets, so that indexing is same as writing. This can deal with changes in pronunciation or font, and make the use of dictionary or file indexing much more efficient and faster.