

The Effect of Chinese Learning on Creativity Development

Can it Translate to Product/Marketing Creativity

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine whether studying Chinese as a foreign language affects the development of the learner's creativity. Previous research has evaluated how learning English as a foreign language has enhanced the thought processes of individuals. However, no research was found analyzing the cognitive influence of learning a foreign language when English is the first language of the individuals.

The Chinese language has no alphabet but instead uses more than 50,000 characters that look like pictures or symbols of natural themes or objects, thereby making creativity important in learning Chinese. This study seeks to find if the creativity valuable in writing Chinese carries over into other cognitive development.

Participants in the study will be individuals for whom Chinese is not a first language. Some subjects will have learned or be in the process of learning Chinese at Taiwanese sponsored schools in the United States. The control group will be composed of individuals who are not knowledgeable about the Chinese language. Participants will self-administer the modified Torrance Test of Creative Thinking. The research design evaluates differences and similarities in creativity between the groups.

There will be three primary aims of the proposal research:

Explore a conceptual model that reflects the effect of Chinese learning on creativity development.

Correlate Chinese learners' grasp of Chinese characters with both general creativity and product/marketing creativity.

Explore the ability to transfer the creativity development from Chinese learning to marketing strategies.

The emphasis of the study will be based on three research questions:

How would a model of creativity building in the Chinese learning environment be operationally defined?

Can a set of self-reporting instruments for assessing different dimensions of product creativity be effectively established?

What is the relationship between Chinese learning and creativity development?

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers, and Practitioners

Existing research on how learning a foreign language enhances creativity focused on learning English as a second language. As China becomes a dominant economic force, it is time to study if learning Chinese, which is inherently creative with more than 50,000 characters, enhances creativity.

Creativity and cross-cultural understanding are imperative for businesses to achieve a competitive advantage in the global market. Consumers are simultaneously more demanding and difficult to reach through the clutter of marketing messages. It takes continuously evolving creative approaches to make corporate messages stand out when only dealing with U.S. markets. The challenge increases when competitors from other countries enter the U.S. with fresh ideas from their homelands or when American companies seek to market abroad.

Given China's expanding economic reach, it makes sense to look at the country's culture and language and determine whether learning Chinese can improve creativity in a manner that benefits American companies. Creativity that will strengthen U.S. businesses nationally and internationally.

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