

STUDENTS LEARNING TECHNIQUES FOR MODERN CHINESE ACQUISITION

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study details the results of a questionnaire on Modern Chinese as foreign language learning and the techniques created and used by university students at a university in Spain for foreign language learning. The primary reason to begin researching on this subject was that students seemed to have developed little to nonindependent techniques to learn and train language abilities related to Modern Chinese language. Modern Chinese language and Spanish are two typologically very different languages: Chinese characters are related both to sound and meaning, it exists an important visual aspect related to characters while Spanish is an alphabetical language; Modern Chinese is a tonal language while Spanish is not; Spanish and Modern Chinese syntax differ quite a lot, for Modern Chinese language speakers knowing where a word is placed inside a sentence is fundamental to deliver proper communication; Spanish is an inflectional language while Modern Chinese is not, etc. For an efficient language learning process students need to understand and internalize these differences and to apply or create the appropriate language learning techniques. The secondary reason for this study is that student's engagement in classroom activities both online and face-to-face was almost totally missing and they seemed to show a great loss of motivation.

The described teaching and learning situation might have deprived students of learning autonomy thus pushing them to be strongly dependent on the teacher guidance and the materials offered to move forward on the language learning path. The relationship between autonomy and

motivation has been studied by many (Benson, 2007; Deci et al., 1991; Dickinson, 1995; Girelli et al., 2018; Holec, 1981; Spratt et al., 2002) and thus relating the lack of proper learning techniques to efficient language acquisition results and the subsequent motivation. The results observed here have been applied to Modern Chinese pedagogy which will be briefly presented together with the results of classroom observation.

1.1. STUDENTS DIVERSE LEARNING STYLES

Each person learns has its own way of learning and studying which is partially based on its cognitive style. The cognitive style is “an individual’s typical or habitual mode of problem solving, thinking, perceiving and remembering” (Allport, 1937 as cited in Cassidy, 2004, p.420). This is a fundamental part of the individuals’ learning styles, which is:

[...]Individual differences in learning based on the learner's preference for employing different phases of the learning cycle. Because of our hereditary equipment, our particular life experiences, and the demands of our present environment, we develop a preferred way of choosing among the four learning modes. (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 195)

According to Hartley (1998, p. 149) learning strategies are “strategies that students adopt when studying. Different strategies can be selected by learners to deal with different tasks”. Students as individuals have very different learning styles and preferences and they can choose different techniques to deal with different kind of tasks. As Cassidy (2004) explained: “whilst educators in all fields are becoming increasingly aware of the critical importance of understanding how individuals learn, it is equally important that any attempts to integrate learning style into educational programmes are made from an informed position”. Thus we consider here extremely important to understand learners’ strategies and issues for Modern Chinese acquisition as a mean to create appropriate learning activities, increase students’ motivation, offer new learning techniques and improve the language teaching and learning experience for Modern Chinese as a second language. Learners’ different cognitive styles and learning strategies are also taken into consideration in educational legislation, both on a European level (*Council*

Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning Text with EEA Relevance., n.d.) and on a national level (Orden ECD/65/2015, de 21 de Enero, Por La Que Se Describen Las Relaciones Entre Las Competencias, Los Contenidos y Los Criterios de Evaluación de La Educación Primaria, La Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y El Bachillerato, 2015). Terms and concepts of “learning to learn” (*aprender a aprender*) and “attention to diversity” (*atención a la diversidad*) are very common in Spain, both in legislation and daily teachers’ practice, hence considered fundamental in foreign language education at all levels. On the other hand, face-to-face classes, online classes and hybrid classes follow different rules and take different steps; as many teachers realized during the last two years, it takes quite a lot of more effort and time (Gao, 2020), especially if there is the need of students’ active participation as during instrumental language courses. Therefore, it is sometimes challenging to provide activities that match all the learning styles and preferences present among the students.

1.2. LEARNERS STRATEGIES FOR MODERN CHINESE ACQUISITION

Language Learning Strategies (LLS) is a very broad field which started with two papers Stern (1975) and Rubin (1975) and has grown a lot during the last decades (Thomas et al., 2021). When learning Modern Chinese, or any other language, it might also be helpful to know and understand quite deeply the students’ native language, not only because of the native language influence in foreign language acquisition but also because a Japanese students will probably not find learning Chinese characters a challenging matter, a Vietnamese native speaker will presumably find Modern Chinese tones quite easy to master, while a French native speaker might find these two aspect of Modern Chinese very demanding. This is another aspect that might also influence students’ choice of learning strategies and that’s probably why learners’ techniques might appear slightly different from language to language and should be further researched and shared with the students. Research results on pedagogy, cognitive styles, and learner’s brain should be more often pass on to applied pedagogy and reach students; these are

some of the secondary aims of this study. Being aware of the cognitive styles and learning strategies of students, as well as other spoken languages, the students' native language and language conceptions with the aim to create and provide more effective learning opportunities and activities might be very beneficial for instructors of Modern Chinese as a second language.

Chinese learning and teaching has become quite popular in Spain and other countries during the last ten to twenty years. There has been a surge on pedagogical materials creation and Chinese as foreign language teachers' courses and materials, even though few of these teaching and learning materials take into consideration students' actual needs and issues. This field can be considered on the rise and that needs to be studied with a broader and deeper view to take a step forward. There are a few studies that observe Spanish speaking students common mistakes (Liu, 2019), learning materials (Zhao, 2016), learning strategies (Reinaltt Higa & Miranda Mori, 2019), and learning concepts (Sánchez, 2020). While the literature for Modern Chinese language learning strategies in other languages is much bigger, especially in English¹⁴; the research on this topic in the Spanish speaking countries has not yet drawn much attention (Reinaltt Higa & Miranda Mori, 2019).

1.3 ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AND AUTONOMY

Motivation and demotivation are probably some of the most researched issues on education (Baumeister, 2016; Deci et al., 1991; Dickinson, 1995; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Huitt, 2011; Lamb et al., 2019), as it is considered one of the pillars of effective learning. Motivation is defined by Baumeister as following:

Motivation is wanting. It is a condition of an organism that includes a subjective sense (not necessarily conscious) of desiring some change in self and/or environment. Presumably this includes some predisposition to act in ways that will facilitate that change. (2016, pp. 1–2)

Self-Determination Theory divides motivation in internal and external motivation: intrinsic or internal motivation is doing something for the

¹⁴ For a complete review read Jiang & Cohen (2012).

sake of it, because we find pleasure in doing it and in the results we get out of it; while extrinsic or external motivation is instrumental, we do something because we receive something in exchange, a certificate for example (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Both of this kind of motivation are considered self-determined in contrast to “automated behaviors that require less involvement of the higher cerebral functions” (Deci & Ryan, 1980, p. 34). Self-determined behaviors are consciously chosen “based on one's expectations about outcomes” (Deci & Ryan, 1980, p. 35). For some, academic results and performance are also to be related to students dropping out of university (Bean, 1985) and they can be seen as a part of the motivation to keep going as forms of self-motivation are associated with better academic outcomes at all levels of education (Girelli et al., 2018). So it is viable to say that the better the results the better the motivation and results, as explained by Girelli et al. (2018), can be both credits or grades. Learners’ loss or lack of motivation “concern various negative influences that cancel out existing motivation” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 138) and they have been serious issues during the last two years for external reasons mainly driven by COVID-19 pandemic (Zaccoletti et al., 2020), but not exclusively, and the shift to online and hybrid learning. Motivation is not a simple concept; many consider it multidimensional and it includes various aspects of one’s life, not only goals or academic performance (Murphy & Alexander, 2000), but it is not to be discarded that one of the factors causing demotivation is the feeling of being powerless when facing an obstacle, not having appropriate tools, knowing effective strategies to deal with an issue or where to look for them. In this case, the issue is language learning and specifically Modern Chinese without techniques that fit the students’ needs and the language specificities. On the other hand, some mention internalization as process that, as described by Schafer (1968), transforms “regulation by external contingencies into regulation by internal processes” (Deci et al., 1991, p. 328). This is probably the last step many educators wish students to reach. It’s clear to all individuals involved in the education process that not all learners have a strong internal motivation or maybe they have it just related to one subject (for math but not for history), but with the right steps teachers can ease this process.

Holec defines autonomy with the following words: “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ where ‘to take charge of one’s learning is to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3). In some cases autonomy is said to be the result of motivation and in some other motivation follows autonomy (Spratt et al., 2002). Studies like Soenens & Vansteenkiste (2005) and Grolnick et al. (1991) have associated individual motivation and academic performance (Girelli et al., 2018). Autonomy and motivation are strictly related to each other and the increase in one of them might influence the positive growth of the other. Learners’ autonomy implies the possibility of students taking part in their own learning process, which is one of the final aims of the application of this study. On account of this, we have created a list of autonomous learning strategies and activities to give to students with the aim to help them study Modern Chinese more independently, both from the instructor and the classroom materials.

1.4 STUDENTS’ ACTIVE ROLE IN LEARNING

Thanks to more than a hundred years of pedagogy, psychology and neuroscience research and advancement, the role of the student in the classroom has gone from ‘passive receiver’ to ‘active player’. Bonwell & Eison (1991, p. 2), talking about active learning, say “[it] involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing”. Active learning methodology have been influenced by constructivism that lay its basis on the fact that each individual learns differently; according to these theories, students are asked to be the central characters of the learning process, the professor is thus considered a guide and a motivator (Caro Spinel & Reyes Ortiz, 2003). Using this methodology can help the student understand its own individual learning peculiarities and needs, tending to the students’ specific cognitive and learning style.

2. RESEARCH AIMS

2.1 PRIMARY AIM

- Observe, describe and list students learning techniques at a university level for Modern Chinese language.

2.2 SECONDARY AIMS DERIVED FROM THE APPLICATION OF THE PRIMARY AIM

- Create a list of learning techniques that students might find useful and share it with all the students.
- Use the questionnaire's results to improve pedagogy and create activities to ease students' understanding of a typologically different language.

3. METHOD

The methodology used in this paper is questionnaires that students filled at the beginning of each course and the discussion of the results.

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The students that took part in this research are the students that have been studying Modern Chinese during 1, 2 and 3 years. Beginners were not asked to take part in this questionnaire as long as they have not had the time and expertise to develop any kind of independent learning technique and this would spoil the results. The majority of the test takers are Spanish native speakers (89.7%) while a small amount (11.3%) of students are natives of other languages (Chinese, English, Dutch, Hungarian, Italian/Russian bilingual, Spanish/English bilingual and Italian). The majority of students have been studying Chinese during 2 years (35.3%), a 26.5% have been studying during more than 3 years, the same amount for 1 year and the smallest group (11.8%) studied for less than 3 years.

3.2 INSTRUMENT AND PROCEDURE

The data was recollected through the questionnaire, which was influenced by studies like “Australian Students' Perceptions of the Challenges and Strategies for Learning Chinese Characters in Emergency Online Teaching” (Gao, 2020), which was specific for online character learning and training strategies, while the questionnaire in the present study had more general aims. The questionnaire was created and administered online with Google Forms. It has been adapted to match the local university requirements and research interests. Questions were almost all open and students could describe what they do when studying and attending to classes. The answers have been recollected and processed to get to the results presented here.

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Observing the results of the questionnaire we can observe that a part of the students that filled it indeed did not develop many personal techniques to keep learning out of the classroom and probably were not aware of all the specificities of Modern Chinese and its differences and/or similarities with Spanish that needed to be addressed during autonomous study. The results can also be seen as an opportunity to improve teaching practice and adapt it to the students' needs.

4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

When learning Modern Chinese, what's harder for you? (You can choose more than one option)

TABLE 1. *Hardest aspects of Modern Chinese learning according to students*

Item	Answers
Listening comprehension of long texts	75%
Words fail me to say what I think	66.2%
Tones	52.9%

Pronounce sounds or letters like ZH/CH/SH	44.1%
Learn characters by heart to write them	44.1%
Listening comprehension of dialogues	42.6%
Listening comprehension of short texts	39.7%
The order of the words in a Chinese phrase is very confusing to me	33.8%
Grammar	26.5%
Learn characters by heart to recognize them	22.1%
Memorize character strokes	17.6%
Listening comprehension of individual phrases	17.6%
Recognize and differentiate the characters that together with other characters form words of more than one character	13.2%

Fuente: elaboración propia

Of the 68 participants, 4 left the following opinions:

- I don't think I have enough vocabulary or grammar knowledge to be able to express myself well, and also sometimes Spanish influences my choice of sentence order.
- Apply some words that I do not know to contexts in which you require a specific use.
- Build a coherent writing without outside help (eg. Online dictionaries).
- Have a complete conversation with someone.

Contrary to what expected, the hardest aspect of learning Modern Chinese for this group of students is related to listening, production, speaking and pronunciation, learning characters comes in only fourth. When taking this kind of tests, one has to take into consideration also the learning situation, including pedagogy styles and methodology, the importance given to language skills during the class, etc. For example, (1) if students are rarely stimulated to read long texts or (2) if students'

formal writing skills have never been trained they might find these aspects challenging as it is something new and never trained before.

Observing the results of Table 1, we can infer that students need more exposure to listening and speaking materials and activities, more vocabulary to express their thoughts and closer look at Chinese syntax. All of these needs were taken into consideration producing corresponding changes to pedagogy resulting in students' improved language fluency, increased independent production of sentences and thoughts, bigger variety of views expressed that differ from those offered by the teaching materials, active participation to class activities and higher quantity of questions asked to the teacher, which can be considered a higher curiosity towards the subject matter studied.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What do you do during classes when new characters or words are explained?

TABLE 2. *In-class strategies for new words and characters*

Item	Answers
Take notes (pinyin)	57%
Look for Spanish translation	23%
Look for context	8%
Revise after class	6%
Listen to the class	2%
Try to recognize them during the class	2%
Observe	1%
Use an app.	1%

Fuente: elaboración propia

These results show how students seem to lack or to be unaware of the strategies that can be used during classroom language learning, except

for note taking and searching for meaning. Even though instructors describe the loss of note taking habit among their students who frequently ask for professors' notes or slides, almost all of the students that took part in this research claim to take notes during classes. Taking notes by hand has shown to be very effective for conceptualization and memory (Chikamatsu, 2003; Longcamp et al., 2008; Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014; Shibata & Omura, 2018; Smoker et al., 2009; Yamamoto, 2008) and writing Chinese characters by hand seem to be positive for learning too, as well as being the most common techniques used for characters memorization. It can be concluded that students are mainly dependent on the instructors' guidance during classes and thus have not developed specially designed techniques for this situation or are not yet capable of seize their own needs. The results here listed were considered as a lack of an active role of the learners who feels like a passive receiver of knowledge. To improve this aspect, according to contemporary pedagogy, students were motivated to take an active role in their own learning, applying the following strategies: active and cooperative learning, problem solving, case observation, deduction, student to student tutoring, learning techniques sharing, guided brainstorming, Group Reading Activities (GRA), role playing, case study, etc. Students were also encouraged to ask many questions and were required to create content summaries to share with the class.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What do you do to increase your understanding of the new words / characters when you study them for the first time?

TABLE 3. *Strategies for new words and characters*

Item	Answers
Write them / repeat them by writing	47%
Use context / write them in sentences or dialogues	16%
Observe strokes / radicals / components	11%
Read a text / dialogues / sentence with this word	9%

Associate them to what I already know	4%
Relate them with meaning	3%
Read them or pronounce them aloud	3%
Use other learning materials	2%
Analyze them	2%
Nothing	2%
Listen to them	1%

Fuente: elaboración propia

These results can be explained as follows: (1) a great amount of students rely on rote learning for new words, with results similar to Gao (2020) and Yin (2003); (2) students perceive characters as one dimensional or (3) they mainly give importance to their visual appearance, probably influenced by alphabetical languages' concepts of 'written script' and 'words', and probably because this is what takes away most of their studying time at home; (4) students do not perceive characters and words as the one part of the other, one single concept or something related (one character can be one word like in: *xue* (学) 'to study' or part of one like in: *xuesheng* (学生) 'student(s)'), so do not strongly need to look for them in a context (sentence, dialogue or text) because they perceive only the visual difficulty as something challenging to study and do not take into consideration other aspects; (5) students do not feel the need to train other aspects of the words leaving this training to the guidance of the instructor; (6) a small amount of students perceive a character and/or word as the same concept try to relate them to their meaning and sound.

According to the results observed in table 3, instructors can create activities to pass this concept to students: just as other languages, Chinese words have different layers which are: sound, meaning and visual form (script); they are all related to each other and could be studied as a single unit; the concept of word and character and their relation in Chinese. Once students grasped this concept, they can be offered strategies like

memory game applied to study, flashcards, etc. Some examples can be found in the list in the conclusions.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4

Do you analyze your characters in any way in order to learn them? If yes, what do you do to "analyze" them?

TABLE 4. *Strategies for new characters analysis*

Item	Answers
I don't do anything	30%
I decompose them in radicals and components	27%
I associate them with other things I already know	21%
I try to relate the meaning to the visual form	11%
I look for the meaning of each component of the character	5%
Use mnemonic techniques	4%
I use the strokes	1%

Fuente: elaboración propia

One student wrote: “I have read somewhere that there are ways to identify them more quickly by radicals, but I don't know how to do it”. Coinciding with Gao (2020) who wrote: “explicit character knowledge can lay a solid foundation for students to discover rules for learning a wealth of other characters and benefit the expansion of characters and vocabulary in their future study”, understanding the inner structure of characters might ease students’ learning challenges, but as observed from the results, some students (1) do not perceive the Chinese script as part of an organized system, thus learning each character anew and/or (2) if they do, they do not find it useful for their learning practice.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 5

What specific methods for learning sounds (of words) have you used to learn the pronunciation of the new Chinese characters that you have to study?

TABLE 5. *Strategies for sound training*

Item	Answers
Use other materials (books, videos, app, HSK materials, tv series, music, etc.)	28%
Repeat it aloud	20%
None	19%
Listen to the sound	16%
Listen to the professor during the class and use the class materials	13%
I associate them with other things I already know	1%
Write pinyin	1%
Read and write	1%

Fuente: elaboración propia

The results observed in Table 5, can be explained with the need of more listening materials and speaking/pronunciation situations, activities and materials. Again, many students (17) do not be aware of or use any strategy to train their listening and/or speaking/pronunciation skills, but more importantly, when revising the answers, it was quite clear how students usually do not relate listening to a sound to producing it, the “listen and repeat” expression was not widely used. Again, as observed above, this aspect can be analyzed as the students’ necessity to be motivated to take a more active role in their own learning process. Except for some students, we can see how these skills are left mainly to the guidance of the professor during classroom activities.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 WRITTEN ROTE LEARNING

A Chinese character is composed by different aspects which are all fundamental for an efficient learning, these are: a visual aspect composed by strokes and their order and directionality which form components and radicals; a meaning, a function and a sound which includes the tone. Using only writing or rote learning Chinese characters techniques might not be fully effective for learning purposes, as this method leaves out the ‘invisible’ part of the words (sound and meaning). Students also need to be able to recognize characters, write them from scratch with just a vocal input (sound), use them in context (sentence, dialogue, text, etc.), hear their pronunciation and be able to relate the sound to the corresponding script. But, as observed here, the students surveyed tend to take into consideration mainly the aspect they consider the hardest, which is the written or visual aspect of Chinese characters, leaving the other aspects untrained. There is thus the need to offer and/or create activities and strategies that might help students understand and train Chinese characters considering all the mentioned aspects. On the other hand, it could also be fruitful to give the students techniques, activities and occasions to understand and train skills like the following ones: character recognition, character production (from scratch), relating visual form and sound and relating visual form, sound and meaning.

5.2 CONTEXT

As described in table 2 and 3, just a few students use context to further understand the use and meaning of the words they are studying or to help with the study, even though giving context is a good way that might help them understand the use and meaning of that word. In addition to this, Modern Chinese is a language which presents various levels of ambiguity (Ciruela Álferez, 2010); in Modern Chinese, words do not have necessarily just one function. As explained by Querol (2013), in Modern Chinese words category overlapping is quite common, the same form (script) can be, for example a verb or substantive: (1) *gongzuo* (工作) can be ‘to work’ or ‘the work’, (2) *suo* (锁) can be ‘to

lock’ or ‘the lock’ both without any visible or audible difference to the speaker. Context and syntax is fundamental for Chinese speakers and students. Offering students materials with many examples, texts, dialogues, etc. might help them to grasp better these differences without a grammatical explanation. On the other hand, explaining the use of a corpus and giving them some exercises to understand how to use it might foster their autonomy in the search for context when studying new words.

5.3 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Chinese characters are composed by radicals and components, which are created with stokes. Radicals and components are limited, just like letters, there is a definite quantity. Characters have specific internal structures. Even though it is not strictly necessary to comprehend it fully, understanding the system might help students make more associations and create specific mnemonic techniques. Without a structured knowledge every individual could have to learn the new word as if it was totally new with no relation to what previously studied. As observed in table 4, students don’t usually do this, many of them (22) don’t do anything to analyze the visual form of the word they are going to study. Instructors can look for or/and produce activities to pass the following concepts to students and work on them: characters have an internal structure; they are part of an organized system; they all follow certain rules to be formed; characters have been traditionally divided into 6 categories which might be useful for understanding and memorization; concepts of radicals and components; differences between *duitizi* (独体字) ‘independent characters’ and *hetizi* (合体字) ‘composed characters’, where the composition of the former ones can create the second ones as in the famous examples of *mu* (木) ‘wood (the material)’, *lin* (林) ‘wood (the place with many trees)’ and *sen* (森) ‘forest’.

5.4 LISTEN AND REPEAT

In Table 1, of the first 4 hardest thing students mentioned 3 of them are related to listening comprehension and sound production. In Table 4, we can observe how many students (17) don’t do anything about sounds

and don't really know how to train that aspect of the language in autonomy out of the classroom. Some students repeat what they read or listen to the class and do nothing further to train the listening and speaking skills. This, according to the present study, is a matter that should definitely be addressed.

5.5 AUTONOMY AND ACTIVE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Results show that a portion of the students appear to rely on the instructors' guidance for many aspects of their training and language learning; and for all the previous reasons, pedagogy has been adapted as follows.

5.5 PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION OF RESULTS

5.5.1 Learning Technique List

Students were given a list like the following one to use at their own discretion. They were advised that each individual has its own way of learning and training, and they should look for what fits them best. The list is roughly divided into two big categories, even though it is highly improbable that a language skill can be trained without involving at least one of the others.

Sound

1. Try to associate tones to intonations of Spanish.
2. Listen to some audio material and repeat it while recording what you say, then listen to it and try to recognize if you pronounced it correctly. Do the same with your classmates.
3. Listen to audio material even if at the beginning you don't understand it all. Try to do it without visual support, just to become comfortable with the sounds.
4. Listen to the word and try to write the character only in your mind. You can correct yourself all the times you need until you get it right.

5. Listen and repeat while watching the word / sentence you are studying.
6. Listen and repeat the word / sentence you are studying visualizing the character(s) in your mind.
7. Listen to words / sentences and try to write down only the character(s), without the pinyin.
8. Listen to a dialogue and try to visualize the characters that are being pronounced.
9. Listen to a dialogue, story, or any kind of audio material without visual support, and then do it again with visual support. Try to remember the words you didn't understand the first time to revise them later.
10. Have a brief phone conversation in Chinese; it can be with a friend or a classmate.
11. Listen to music, watch movies, series, etc. with subtitles and then without subtitles.
12. Listen to a word, write down the character (without pinyin) and its meaning.
13. Read a word out loud and say its meaning.
14. Create your own sentences using the words you are studying.
15. Script
16. Try to write the words you are studying with your mind.
17. Use flashcards trying to relate all the three aspects of a Chinese word: visual form, sound and meaning.
18. Play memory with Chinese characters instead of images.
19. Create your own mnemonic techniques.
20. Analyze, decompose and try to understand the visual form of the word you are studying. Remember that this is only one of

the three aspects of that unity; don't forget to relate it to sound and meaning.

21. Watch calligraphers' videos.
22. Create your own words lists.
23. Look for those words used in context.
24. Use language corpora for more examples.
25. Create thematic vocabulary lists: 学、学习、学生、学校、学者、大学、小学...
26. Create vocabulary lists according to the words' functions like adjectives, verbs, adverbs, etc.
27. Create your own crossword puzzles.
28. Use a corpus to find new sentences of the words you are studying.

And last for not least: Modern Chinese is a language to be used, get out and use it!

5.5.2 Pedagogy

Handwriting was strongly encouraged; during each class the purpose of exercises was clearly explained together with the way how our brain works (working memory, short-term memory, long-term memory, etc.), students were offered a lot of examples for each case and were given a lot of chances to observe words in a context, they were instructed of how to train the memory and the brain, they were given many occasions to actively use the language with the creation of a lot of dialogues and oral communication situations, students were offered a list of learning strategies similar to the one in this paper, the professor asked the students to share their characters learning and training techniques with their classmates during class, language has also been treated as the object of study during class not only as a mean to communicate, students were offered a big quantity of extra materials to train their language

skills autonomously; all this adding up to what previously already mentioned about methodology and active learning. All the previously mentioned teaching strategies and adjusted requirements relieved some of the students' issues with Modern Chinese learning and the students' active participation and motivation grew exponentially.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, knowing what strategies students use and assist them with techniques and activities on how to suitably train and learn Modern Chinese could be productive in order to offer a more effective learning experience. One of the key competences that are promoted in the teaching of languages throughout the European Union is that of 'learning to learn'. For this purpose, the ability of students to reflect on their own learning process has been promoted, also, but not only, by making the language an object of study. On the other hand, on many occasions students complained about their inability to find adequate materials to solve their doubts autonomously or for not knowing where to look for these resources. Therefore, they should offered activities that allow them to learn about instruments that may also be useful in the future and a methodology that is applicable to other non-language related studies. This is intended to give more importance not to what the student learns but to the path that is traveled towards the final goal. For this, the need to have a positive, responsible and active disposition towards learning is undeniable, since the student himself is the one who takes charge of it.

The qualitative results of this study have been used to write a Modern Chinese learning techniques list that has been shared with the students with good results. Given the limitation of time and ability to reach a broader audience, this study can be considered very limited and is not able to produce definitive results.

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