

# EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF POEM SKETCH FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTION IN CHINESE LANGUAGE FOR NON-NATIVE LEARNERS OR CHINESE LANGUAGE

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## Abstract

This study investigated the effects of students' participation in poem sketch on Chinese language acquisition. The study was conducted on the students of the first level of Chinese beginner course at UiTM (Terengganu) in Malaysia. To accomplish the purpose of the study, the researchers chose a sample of 29 subjects who were participating in a Chinese poem sketch competition. The subjects were required to fill up the online questionnaire on their acquisition during their participation. The result indicated that there was a positive perception among the learners. It was concluded that the subjects who participated in Chinese poem sketch, viewed that this activity is another avenue to further improving their Chinese language.

## Keywords:

Chinese instructions, poem sketch, teaching Chinese as a foreign language

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Learning Chinese language has been considered as a difficult task for non-native learners of Chinese language. Many experts of language teaching methodology agree that poem is another alternative to learning Chinese language. University-level language learning involves higher, more demanding skills and tasks such as reading a novel, analyzing a poem, listening to lectures, or writing a research paper. Learning strategies do help to meet the demands of students by rendering them activity such as poem sketch.

In short, poem sketch is an interesting activity. Students have to comprehend the meanings of the poem with supplementary learning material before performing a sketch.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Poetry can lead to a desirable creative expression in the foreign language and usually provokes a strong response from the readers that motivate them to read further (Llach, 2007). The use of poem sketch stimulates the creativity among the learners of Chinese as a foreign language, thus intrigue their interest in learning the language.

Poem Engaged activities not only create a challenging environment where the students try to put their mettle in the best way possible, but also call for a great deal of attention on the part of the teacher who becomes a facilitator, blending in himself/herself the "intuitive response of a practicing literary critic and the analytical tools of a practical linguist" (Dutta, 2001). The initial role of the instructors is to expose the students to a variety of poems to assist them to enjoy its appeal and appreciate them.

Duff and Maley (2007) argue that though poetry has not been regarded as a 'proper' material for foreign language learning, the rhythm that plays in our ears since childhood continues to echo deep in our hearts. Therefore Chinese poetry has the potential to enrich the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.

The selection of poem is vital to offer ways of making Chinese language a means of personal expression, creativity and development. "A good choice would be any text that encourages or invites interaction with the world of ideas, a text that 'affirms, confirms, and expands the indispensable human capacity to read the real world.'" (Ainy, 2008). Hence, the instructors have to ensure that the choice of poems provides an effective and collaborative means of language learning that meet the fundamental standards of students. The cultural barriers that hinder the understanding of Chinese poetry have to be eliminated.

In order to make instruction effective, the learners needs to be "motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged" (Tomlinson, 2008; Abraham, 2010). Poem provides a rich medium which many of the experiences for literacy and language can be obtained and gives ample opportunities for learners to develop their interpretative power - an important asset to language learning. It also provides a rich source for both teachers and students to share their experiences that can stimulate further discussion. The same holds true for instruction in Chinese language. The use of poem sketch with the element of fascination can captivate students' attention in the learning process.

The objective of performing poetry is to enhance understanding of the poem (O'Connor, 2004). Poem sketch for this reason enables the instructors to know if the students can actually comprehend the poems introduced by their instructors in their Chinese learning classroom.

In sum, learning Chinese through poem sketch is an effective and interesting way that can be applied in any TCFL (Teaching Chinese as a foreign language) classroom and make the lessons more fascinating to the language learners. In order to find out the effectiveness of the use of poem sketch in Chinese instructions, the following research questions seem pertinent to be addressed: "Does the use of poem sketch have any significant effect on Chinese instructions among these non-native learners?"

### 3.0 METHOD

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 29 students. They were all non-native speakers of Chinese language and were taking Chinese language courses at UiTM in Malaysia.

#### 3.2 Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study. The first instrument was poems with English translations. Students were given 1 week for practice. Sample of poems used were attached in Appendix.

The second instrument was an online questionnaire (Figure 1) which can be accessed at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dE9ZaFdHNkNacUI1MzBwSXIZbWJtb2c6MA>, and administered to gather the perceptions of the students after participating in poem sketch activity.

The screenshot shows a Google Forms questionnaire titled "Poem sketch". The purpose is to get the respondent's view on the use of poem sketch for Chinese learning. The form is divided into three sections: Information, Questionnaire, and a table for responses.

**Poem sketch**  
Purpose: This questionnaire is to get your view on the use of poem sketch for Chinese learning. Thank you.  
\*Required

**Information**

Your Mandarin group: \*

Gender \*  
 Male  
 Female

Chinese course you are taking: \*  
 BMD101  
 BMD151

**Questionnaire**

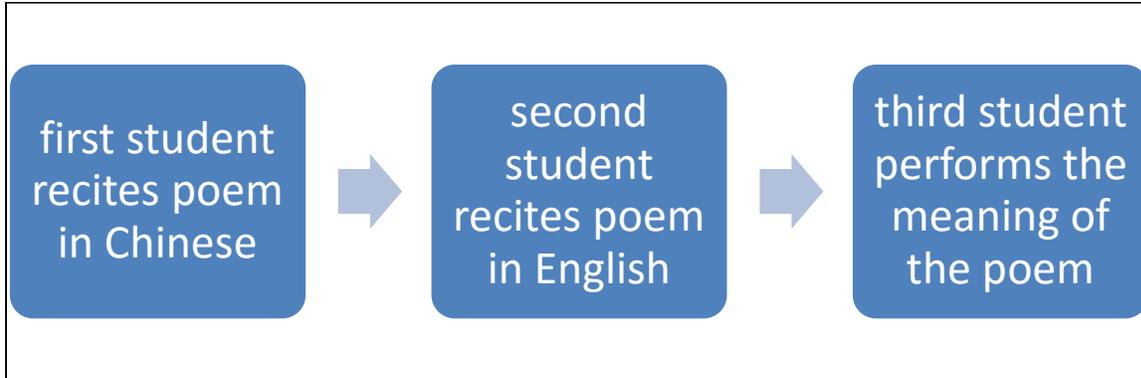
Your perceptions of this module. \*

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1) I am interested in learning Chinese through the use of poem sketch.	<input type="radio"/>				
2) Using poem sketch will motivate me to learn Chinese more.	<input type="radio"/>				

Figure 1 Online questionnaire

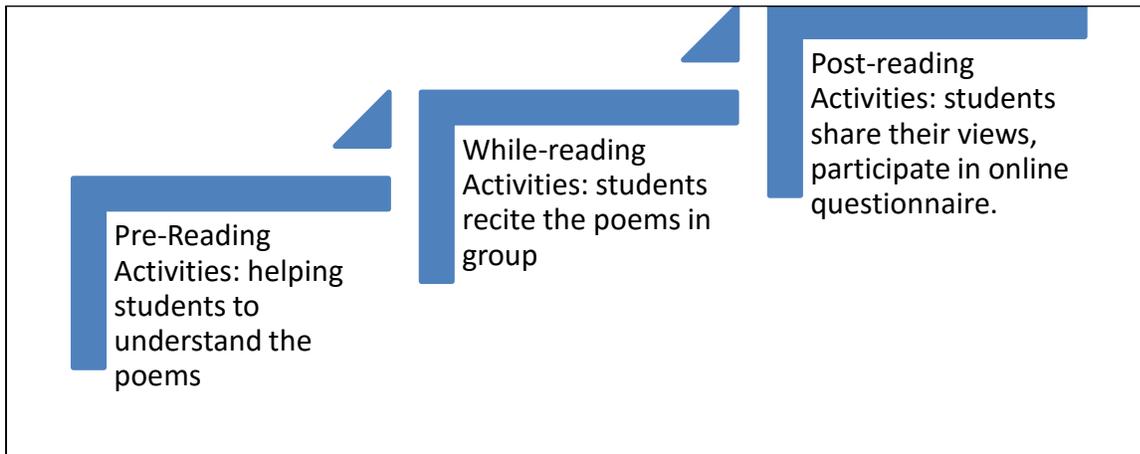
### 3.3 Procedure

Students were required to participate in a Chinese poem sketch activity. There were three students in a group. Roles of the students in each group were shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 Roles of the students in each group**

There were several steps in the poem sketch activity. These were shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3 Activities in the poem sketch**

After the activity, they were asked to participate in answering the online questionnaire at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dE9ZaFdHNkNacUI1MzBwSXIZbWJtb2c6MA>.

## 4.0 RESULTS

Table 1 shows the perceptions of the students on the use of poem sketch to facilitate their Chinese learning. As a whole, the results were positive (total mean=4.5310). As the scale used ranging from 1(strongly agree) to 5(strongly agree), 10 items developed in rendering. Student's perceptions of poems sketch scored and above for their mean value with less than 1 of standard deviation.

**Table 1 Students' perceptions of poem sketch**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The choice of poems is suitable for my level of Chinese learning	29	3	5	4.52	.634
Poem sketch can motivate me to learn Chinese more enthusiastically	29	4	5	4.59	.501
Poem can be used as a suitable material for Chinese learning.	29	3	5	4.52	.634
I feel comfortable to learn Chinese through poem sketch.	29	3	5	4.52	.634
Poem sketch can help me to enjoy learning.	29	4	5	4.59	.501
I must understand the poem before I can do the sketch.	29	3	5	4.45	.632
Instructor should use poem sketch in the Chinese classroom.	29	3	5	4.45	.632
I am interested in learning Chinese through the use of poem sketch.	29	4	5	4.59	.501
Using poem sketch will motivate me to learn Chinese more.	29	4	5	4.59	.501
This poem sketch activity is suitable to be used for Chinese learning.	29	3	5	4.52	.634
Total mean	29	3.40	5.00	4.5310	.5613
Valid N (listwise)	29				

The samples were taught by two different lecturers. Table 2 shows the perceptions of students from the two lecturers. It shows that students from instructor 1 (mean = 4.6235) were having more positive perception than students from instructor 2 (mean = 4.4000). However, by running T-test (Table 3), the difference in perception is not significant ( $t=1.058$ ,  $DF=27$ ,  $sig. value=.299 > .05$ ). It means that we cannot claim that the instructors may cause any interference on the effect of the use of poem sketch for this study.

**Table 2 Group Statistics**

	lecturer	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mean	1.00	9	4.6235	.47897	.11617
	2.00	20	4.4000	.66058	.19069

**Table 3 T-test – Comparing two groups of students from two instructors**

<b>T</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
1.058	27	.299	.22353

## **5.0 DISCUSSION**

The main concern of this study was to test the assumption whether poem sketch can bring about any positive perceptions of non-native learners of Chinese language on Chinese instructions. The current investigation has provided support for the hidden value of poem as an effective teaching tool, and the use of poem sketch as a clear evidence through the positive perceptions found among the students. The research finding agreed to Chang (2012) and Qi (2012). Poem sketch should be engaged in classroom as one of the Chinese instruction learning strategies.

The study used merely sketch approach. There are other learning strategies that can be utilized along with the use of poem. These include using paintings to show students' understanding of the poem, expressing an imaginary awareness of experience by poets through rhythmic sound, fill in the blanks, and so forth. Poem sketch can change the atmosphere of the class and add excitement to the learning environment. Learners participating in poem sketch enjoy the language learning process. Poem sketch thus have the advantage of creating active participatory learning experience.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

Whatever strategies a teacher adopts in a class, the aim is to aid the students in gaining full understanding of the text of the poems used and to be linguistically and conceptually prepared to study the interpretation and evaluation. By using the strategies discussed above, students learn how to make their own interpretation through sketch.

The finding of this study shows that poem sketch provides a valuable technique in language learning for students of Chinese instruction and hence can be used to facilitate the process of language learning. Hence, poem sketch can be used as a suitable teaching tool for teachers. In conclusion, poem sketch should be engaged as pedagogical games in enforcing the effectiveness of teaching of Chinese instructions.

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## Appendix

### Chinese Poem

1. << Yè Sī >> Lǐ Bái

Chuáng qián míng yuè guāng  
Yí shì dì shàng shuāng  
Jǔ tóu wàng míng yuè

Dì tóu sī gù xiāng

<< In The Quiet Night >>

So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed....  
Could there have been a frost already?  
Lifting myself to look, I found that it was  
moonlight  
Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home

2. << Chūn xiǎo >> Mèng Hàorán

Chūn mián bù jué xiǎo  
Chù chù wén tí niǎo  
Yè lái fēng yǔ shēng  
Huā luò zhī duō shao

<< A Spring Morning >>

I awake light-hearted this morning of spring  
Everywhere around me the singing of birds...  
But now I remember the night, the storm,  
And I wonder how many blossoms were broken

3. << Xiāng Sī >> Wáng Wéi

Hóng dòu shēng nán guó  
Chūn lái fā jǐ zhī  
Yuàn jūn duō cǎi xié  
Cǐ wù zuì xiāng sī

<< One -Hearted >>

When those red berries come in spring time,  
Flushing on your southland branches  
Take home an armful, for my sake  
As a symbol of our love