

Comparing first language processes in Chinese and Australian undergraduates

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The present study compared certain semantic and verbal fluency processes in Chinese and Australian first language speakers. Sixty Chinese and 60 Australian undergraduates participated in semantic decision, semantic fluency, letter fluency, reading and spelling tasks administered in their first language. Results showed that semantic decision and semantic fluency correlated significantly with reading and spelling in Chinese. However, only semantic decision correlated significantly with reading in English. In particular, semantic decision significantly predicted reading and spelling in both languages. Consistent with previous studies, letter fluency seemed to be less relevant to later stages of reading acquisition. The relative contribution of the semantic and verbal fluency processes in each language is discussed in terms of the age of the participants, and also in terms of the orthography of Chinese and English. Educational implications in first language learning are discussed.