Maternal Mediation of Writing in Young Children: A Comparison

between Hong Kong and Beijing

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Abstract

This dissertation consisted of three studies investigating the nature of maternal mediation of writing among kindergarten and first grade children and their mothers across the two prominent Chinese societies of Hong Kong and Beijing and further examined the associations of maternal mediation of writing with cognitive /metalinguistic abilities and literacy skills in Chinese cross-culturally. In Study 1, two scales of literate mediation and print mediation based on mother-child writing interactions were created and refined. These scales, developed following work on Hebrew by Aram and Levin (2001; 2004), were modified and tested among 67 Hong Kong mother-child dyads from three grade levels -- second year kindergarten, third year kindergarten, and first grade. The results showed that mothers' use of lower-level memorization strategies tended to be negatively associated with their children's reading skills, whereas mothers' higher level analytic scaffolding strategies were positively correlated with reading skills, even with age, grade level, nonverbal reasoning, and maternal education statistically controlled.

In Study 2, I further refined these scales and created an additional measure of commentary mediation, reflecting, in part, socio-emotional-regulation aspects of the writing interaction process. Across both Hong Kong and Beijing, these three measures of literate mediation, print mediation, and commentary mediation, were examined in relation to cognitive/metalinguistic awareness skills and Chinese reading and writing skills in three groups of children and their mothers. These groups included 63 Hong Kong third year kindergartners, 43 Beijing third year kindergartners, and 49 Beijing

first graders. Results of Study 2 showed that mothers of kindergarten children tended to use lower level mediation strategies, such as stroke and component segmentation, and allowed less autonomy during the joint writing process. In contrast, mothers of first graders tended to use higher level mediation strategies, such as character level mediation, and allowed more autonomy, during this process. Results of the commentary mediation analyses demonstrated that Hong Kong mothers offered more negative than positive responses compared to Beijing mothers, particularly for kindergartners. In addition, the literate mediation and print mediation scale scores were significantly correlated with Chinese reading and writing in both Hong Kong and Beijing K3 children, but not in Beijing first graders. Scores on the literate mediation scale explained 11% to 25% unique variance in literacy skills in Beijing K3 children and reading skills in Hong Kong K3 children, even with maternal education, nonverbal reasoning, visual skills and metalinguistic awareness statistically controlled. In Hong Kong K3 children, children's orthographic awareness partially mediated the relation between literate mediation and Chinese word reading. Of all commentary mediation measures included, only the process mediation measure, focused on specific comments toward children's effort or strategies, was found to be uniquely associated with Chinese word reading and writing in Hong Kong K3 children and significantly related to Chinese word reading in Beijing K3 children with children's age, nonverbal reasoning and maternal education statistically controlled. Study 3 extended and tested the maternal mediation measure to Pinyin writing in Beijing K3 children. Maternal Pinyin mediation was uniquely associated with Chinese word

reading even apart from children's general cognitive skills, maternal education, and phonological awareness.

The present research was among the first attempts to analyze the nature of maternal mediation of writing in Chinese and its association with literacy skills. The findings highlight the importance of maternal mediation of writing in preschool children's independent literacy development in Chinese across Hong Kong and Beijing.

摘要

该论文于三个研究中探讨了北京香港两地母亲对儿童的书写辅导策略，以及各种书写辅导策略与儿童元语言意识和独立读写能力之间的关系。首先，研究 1 通过考察各种书写辅导策略与儿童阅读能力的关系，建立了两个书写辅导量表。其一为书写编码量表，包括注重笔顺、形象、部首分割、结构、形旁、声旁和字间比较等七种策略，并且辅导水平依次从低到高排列；其二是书写自由度量表，包括母亲抓写、一部分一部分抄写、整体抄写，无模型口头指导书写，仅监督鼓励等策略，同样辅导自由度依次从低到高排列。研究 2 增加分析了母亲的辅导反馈，并比较了京港两地母亲在辅导编码、辅导自由度和辅导反馈三方面的异同，同时更进一步考察了他们与儿童元语言意识和读写能力发展的关系。结果表明，香港母亲比北京母亲更多的使用笔顺和形象等策略，却少用形旁以及字间比较等策略。香港母亲更多的出现批评否定等反馈信息。同时，研究 2 表明，即使在统计上控制了基本背景信息和儿童元语言意识，在京港两地均发现书写编码量表与儿童独立阅读书写能力显著正相关。而自由度辅导量表则仅在北京儿童中发现与儿童读写能力显著正相关。研究 3 扩展探讨了母亲拼音书写辅导与儿童读写能力之间的关系，结果表明，采用深层分析性地提取分解语音、音位与儿童阅读能力呈显著正相关。基于以上结果，该论文表明了有效的书写辅导策略对学前儿童读写能力发展的重要作用。同时，此结果对中文语文教学有一定得启示意义。