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Strategies used by Greek CFL Beginner's level learners for Learning Chinese characters

希腊学生初级汉语的汉字学习策略

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摘要：

每年都有越来越多的外国学生学习中文。它还包括许多希腊人。目前，与汉语学习有关的书籍和教材通常以英语或其他语言为主，希腊语并不多。迄今为止的汉语教学的研究主要集中在讲英语的学生或亚洲的学生，本研究的目的是检验希腊学生在开始接触汉字的早期阶段所使用的策略。研究问题是学习初级汉语的希腊学生使用什么策略来识别或使用汉字？根据目前的研究，英语为母语的学生学习汉字的策略是多用汉字、临摹汉字、观察汉字的笔顺、注意汉字的拼写和读音；韩语和日语的学习者注意汉字的笔画位置，而马来西亚的学习者通常在电脑上打字。作者使用定性研究方法，对六名希腊学生进行了访谈，因为此类研究能更好地描述了参与者的经历、意见和感受。访谈结果分析表明，希腊学生学习汉字的策略包括：将汉字的部件与希腊语素联系起来，将汉字与现实生活中的形象联系起来，用在线词典或应用程式中查字，记诵汉字，分析汉字的组成部分，使用拼音和朗读汉字。

关键字：希腊学生，汉字，学习策略
Abstract:
Every year, more and more foreign students learn Chinese. This also includes many Greeks. At present, the books and teaching materials related to learning Chinese are usually in English or other languages, but there are not many in Greek. Research on Chinese language teaching so far has mainly focused on English-speaking students or students in Asia, and the purpose of this study is to examine the strategies used by Greek students in the early stages of their exposure to Chinese characters. The research aim is to study the strategies that Greek CFL beginner’s level students use to recognize and use the Chinese characters. According to current research, English-speaking students' strategies for learning the Chinese characters are to use frequently, copy, observe the stroke order and pay attention to the spelling and pronunciation of the Chinese characters; Korean and Japanese learners pay attention to the stroke positions of the Chinese characters, while Malaysian learners usually type the characters on a computer. Using the qualitative research method, the researcher conducted interviews with six Greek students, as such studies better describe participants' experiences and points of view. Analysis of the interview results showed that Greek students' strategies for learning Chinese characters include: connecting the Chinese characters with Greek morphemes, associating the Chinese characters with real-life images, using online dictionaries or apps to look up characters, memorizing Chinese characters, analyzing Chinese characters’ Components, using pinyin and reading the Chinese characters.

Keywords: Greek CFL learners, learning strategies, Chinese characters
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1. Introduction

Every year Chinese is taught to more and more learners around the world, from different countries and with different mother tongues. As learners from different languages, CFL (Chinese as a Foreign Language) learners usually encounter big challenges in their effort to get familiar to the Chinese characters (Wang & Harris, 2016). More specifically, many learners have a hard time recognizing and using the Chinese characters.

In order to learn the Chinese characters, CFL learners around the world face challenges and apply strategies. Some of these challenges and strategies are proven to be connected to a learner’s mother tongue (Karim, 2003). For example, the strategies for learning Chinese characters, applied by English native speakers and some Asian learners have been researched in depth (Chen, 2008, Everson, & Ke, 1997, Ke, 1998, Kuo et al. 2015, Shen, 2005). However, the strategies for learning Chinese characters, applied by Greek native speakers, whose language belongs to the Hellenic branch of the Indo-European language family, has not been studied. Also, the vast majority of the textbooks (Shen, 2005, Shen 2007, Sung, 2012, Wong, 2013, Wang & Harris, 2016) of learning Chinese are made for English or Asian learners and it is based on the English speakers’ experiences and way of learning. Therefore, in this paper, I aim to explore and analyze the Greek speaking learners’ strategies for learning the Chinese characters.
2. Research Problem, Aim and Question

Because Greek CFL learning is seldom found in the existing bibliography, indicates that Greek CFL learners are a small group among the CFL learners around the globe or around Europe. This paper intends to focus on the strategies used by the Greek CFL learners when learning the Chinese characters. Such strategies are based on their mother language, personal ideas and experiences about language learning.

Thus, the research questions directing the suggested study, are the following: a) What are the strategies Greek speaking learners at CFL Beginner's level use to recognize and write the Chinese characters? b) What are the main challenges Greek CFL learners encounter when learning the Chinese characters? c) What are the main differences between Greek CFL learners and English learners? And what are the main differences between Greek CFL learners and Asian CFL learners when learning the Chinese characters?
3. Literature Review

As research has proven, the learning of the first language has an influence on foreign language learning (Karim, 2003). Thus, the strategies adopted by learners when learning their mother tongue can have an impact on the strategies they adopt when learning a foreign language (Benson, 2002, Chikamatsu, 1996). So, the strategies that Greek learners have adopted when learning Greek at schools could have affected the strategies they use, to learn Chinese.

In Chinese, characters are single-body characters, such as 日 (ri4, sun) or compound characters, such as 媽 (ma1, mother). According to relevant research, English speaking CFL learners, have a hard time recognizing and using the Chinese characters (Ke, 1998). According to other researchers’ findings, CFL learners from both beginner and intermediate level face many difficulties recognizing an important percentage of the characters (Everson & Ke, 1997). Moreover, Shen (2010) mentions that both the sounds and the shapes of the Chinese characters are more difficult than their meanings to CFL learners.

In order to overcome these challenges, CFL learners adopt a lot of strategies that can be of great help to them, when learning the Chinese characters. When it comes to these strategies, research has shown a wide range of them, when learning the Chinese characters (Cui, et al. 2018). Rote repetition and careful observation of the characters, are the most commonly used by English speaking CFL learners for the acquisition of Chinese characters (Shen, 2005).

Furthermore, strategies, such as reviewing the Chinese characters and finding out which are the most difficult parts to learn are the second most commonly used by English speaking CFL learners (Shen, 2005). What is more, a very common strategy, mentioned by recent relevant research, is the careful observation of the stroke order of the Chinese characters (Cui, et al. 2018). In addition, strategies related to pronunciation, meaning and writing down the characters, are also strongly proven to be very useful among the English speaking learners (Sung, 2012).

In addition, one of the most common strategies is looking for the Chinese characters in the student’s book and using online material for examples (Shintani, 2015). Also, frequent exposure to the new characters helps CFL learners better understand how the characters are used and better remember them (Shen, 2005).
Strategies, such as writing down the character repeatedly, until learners get familiarized with them, according to researchers, are also quite useful (Chen, 2008). Additionally, according to recent research, taking frequent tests, online activities and quizzes and focusing on the learners’ weakest points is adequately proven to be one of the most common strategies among CFL learners when learning the Chinese characters (Chang et al., 2017). Additionally, strategies related to frequent exposure to characters and words, in order to analyze how their meaning is constructed, are beneficial to the recognition of Chinese characters by CFL learners (Wang & Harris, 2016). Furthermore, strategies related to the characters’ hand-writing can also be beneficial to the CFL learners, as other researchers mention (Wang & Leland, 2011).

Additional research results show that American CFL learners frequently using phonological strategies (connecting the characters to their sounds) do better on the phonological comprehension of Chinese characters, while American CFL learners frequently using orthographic strategies (practicing on the character writing) do better on the graphic comprehension, graphic production (the shape and composition of the Chinese characters), and phonological production (producing the sounds) of Chinese characters (Sung, 2014).

The existing research so far, has demonstrated a difference between the CFL learners from different languages concerning the strategies they use in order to learn the Chinese characters. For example, Japanese, Korean and Malaysian CFL learners apply different strategies compared with English CFL learners. What is more, Japanese, Korean and Malaysian CFL learners also use different strategies (Wong, 2013· Jaganathan & Lee, 2014).

When it comes to the Asian CFL learners’ strategies for recognizing and using the Chinese characters, typing characters on the computer is of great help to CFL learners, since it demands less effort (Cui, et al. 2018). Also, when it comes to compound Chinese characters, analyzing them in their components can be of good help to Asian learners (Cui, et al. 2018). Emphasizing interactive activities, having semantic and phonic elements as memory cues better help Asian CFL learners to enhance ability to identify characters in the texts (Haphuriwat et al., 2012). CFL learners from Asian languages also seem to pay attention to the Chinese characters’ stroke order and perceive it useful in recognizing and writing the Chinese characters accurately, since this strategy helps them make less mistakes in orthography and learn the characters faster (Jaganathan & Lee, 2014).
Wong’s (2013) research focusing on Asian CFL learners (Korean and Japanese) found that positional strategies related to the position of the radicals in the character are dominant in both Japanese and Korean CFL learners. The same study shows that the looking of the characters through semantic radicals is also quite common (CFL learners connect the characters to their meaning), when it comes to Japanese CFL learners, and focusing on the pronunciation of the character, while writing it down, is very helpful to Korean learners.

All the above research studies prove interesting aspects of the ways English speaking and Asian CFL learners learn the Chinese characters. They also demonstrate a wide variety of strategies for learning the Chinese characters to which Greek learners’ strategies could be compared.
4. Research Method and Data Collection

4.1 Research Method

The research aims at the description of a situation based on the participants’ learning experience. The behavior and experiences of small specific groups can be researched and analyzed thoroughly (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hoy & Miskel, 2013). This research’s goal is to investigate the experiences of a small group, such as Greek CFL learners in the beginner’s level, when learning the Chinese characters. In order to do that, the best research method would be qualitative method, because this type of method will allow the researcher to elaborate and analyze in details the experiences of the participants. This will give the readers a clear and detailed description of the way Greek CFL learners learn the Chinese characters.

Also, as mentioned already, Greek CFL learners in the beginner’s level are so far a small group of people and existing resources have not provided a lot of information about this small group. Since, the size of the investigated group is small, the research method that could help better study this small sample size, would be qualitative research. As Denscombe (2003) mentions a small sample size is quite suitable for keeping with the nature of qualitative data, because qualitative method allows the researcher to gain detailed knowledge of the selected sample and analyze the participants’ experiences in a meticulous and thorough manner.

Furthermore, qualitative method would better serve the aims of the present research because it allows the researcher to follow a trail of clues, like a detective who eventually builds up his case and gathers the missing pieces of a puzzle. This way, the researcher should pursue his investigation until the questions have been answered and things can be explained. Question by question, the information about the participants will be gathered sequentially, until the picture of how they learn the Chinese characters is completed.

In this approach, the selection of people, texts or events to include in the research follows a path of discovery in which the sample emerges as a sequence of decisions based on the outcomes of the earlier stages of the research (Denscombe, 2003). It is a strategy which Guba and Lincoln (1985) describe as emergent and sequential. This way, the researcher can gain, step by step, profound knowledge of the
Greek CFL learners and analyze the way they learn the Chinese characters in detail. This will allow the reader to get a clear understanding of how a small group like Greek CFL learners learn the Chinese characters and of what challenges they encounter in the process of their learning. Thus, the research approach chosen for data analysis is the qualitative approach.

In order to investigate thoroughly the strategies of the Greek CFL learners when learning the Chinese characters and get the full picture of the way they learn, the researcher will need to come to immediate contact with them and share their experiences, problems, thoughts and ideas. This will allow the researcher to interact with his sample and get a complete and thorough understanding of the participants’ experiences when learning the Chinese characters. Through the interviews the researcher will be able to gather every piece of knowledge that he needs in order to answer the research questions and collect the meticulous concept of the way Greek CFL learners learn the Chinese characters. Also, the interview will give the researcher the chance to fill in the existing gaps and make immediate supplementary questions to the participants (if the data provided is insufficient) so that he can eventually manage to collect sufficient data to answer the research questions. Apart from that, the interview will give the researcher the chance to notice the participants’ reactions, while expressing their experiences. It will also give the researcher to allow them to elaborate, so that they can provide an explicit, overall and first-hand concept of their experiences, while learning the Chinese characters, which cannot be easily achieved through other research methods.

Interview is a good way to collect experiences, behaviors, preferences, knowledge, thoughts and opinions, and analyze them in depth (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In order to explore a small number of respondents’ perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation, the method of interviews can be of good use (Kvale, 1996). As Oakley devotedly supports (1998), interview is the most common format of data collection in qualitative research, since it is a type of framework in which the practices and standards are not only recorded, but also achieved, challenged and reinforced.

Therefore, gathering data first-hand by the way of interview with a carefully considered set of interview questions would be a good option for this study. A series
of one to one interviews, based on semi-structured questions that ensure an orbit around the topic of the research, while allowing the participants to develop their personal points of view, can be used to create a primary data set, whereupon the analysis begin in the earnest.

Also, a good way to choose the participants for the interviews of a qualitative research is the snow ball method, which means that the first two interviewees who participated (these first two were chosen by the interviewer due to acquaintance) in the research also introduced other participants that they happened to know (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The first two CFL Greek learners who were asked to participate in the research, introduced the rest of the participants that they were acquainted with. Snowball sampling is often used because the population under investigation is ‘hidden’, either due to low numbers of potential participants or due to the sensitivity of the topic, and it is suitable for qualitative research (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).
4.2 Data Collection

The data was collected through interviews with questions related to the aim of the research and the research questions. The interviews were conducted in Greek through zoom and the interviewer took notes of the participants’ answers.

Before the conduction of the interviews, a pilot interview (test interview) was conducted to one of the interviewees. Thus, a test interview was conducted to the first participant, in order to provide feedback to the interviewer (me) about the effectiveness of the questions that were initially formed and their functionality according to the research goals. Based on the results of this test interview, the interviewer could manage to reform his questions and get a better idea of how to conduct the interview.

The interviews were conducted in a friendly and free style, giving the interviewees the comfort and the time to speculate on their way of learning and talk in details about their experiences. In the pilot interview, the interviewer could get specific examples of strategies which later were used for supplementary questions in the interviews. In particular, connecting 女 to the Greek feminine ending was an example given from the first participant in the pilot interview and later was presented to other participants as an example, if they could not come up with their own examples. More specifically, if the interviewees could not respond to a general question like “What are the strategies that you use in order to recognize the Chinese characters?”, the interviewer could mention this example for brainstorming and then the interviewees could remember similar examples from their own experience of learning the Chinese characters. Thus, examples that came up from the initial interviews, later were used for supplementary questions in the interviews, as inspiration, to help the interviewees open up and provide more specific examples from their own experiences. After the first interviews were conducted, the interviewees had some time to speculate on the strategies that they usually adopt, and supplementary interviews of the same style were conducted, in order to extract more information from the interviewees.
4.3 The Interview Participants

The participants are six Greek CFL learners from the Beginner's level, studying Chinese either in-person or online. Four of them were male and two of them female and their ages are between 20 and 40. They are all Greek native speakers and two of them study Chinese at home, two of them attend a Chinese language school and another two study Chinese in the university. They all are in the beginner’s level and their study period is between five and eight months.

Interviewees’ gender, age and learning environment are as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Learning Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Studying on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Studying on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Studying at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Studying at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Studying at an afternoon language school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Studying at an afternoon language school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Interview Analysis

The participants’ answers have been noted in transcripts by the interviewer. In order to proceed to the analysis of the collected data from the interview, the interviewer formed categories of strategies used for learning the Chinese characters from the participants’ answers.

Based on the participants’ answers, the interviewer created a list of the strategies they prefer including a brief report of their answers. Out of the participants’ answers, the researcher has identified some common themes and patterns across the data set. After this analysis and observation of the collected materials, the researcher summarized the common patterns in the participants’ answers that formed the groups of the strategies in the data analysis and the findings of the research. In order to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the collected data, as well as to develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data, the author adopted an inductive approach of the analysis of the collected data from the interview.
5. Data Analysis

The main questions of the interview were the following: a) Which are the greatest difficulties you have encountered in learning the Chinese characters? Can you provide some specific examples? b) Which are the strategies (plans of action) that you adopt, in order to recognize and use the Chinese characters? Can you provide some specific examples? When needed, the interviewer made supplementary questions, so that the interviewees provide more information that could be of use to the aim of the research.

5.1 Difficulties upon learning the Chinese characters

When it comes to their first encounter with the Chinese language, the participants express different opinions and feelings. Interviewees 1 and 6 feel frustrated due to the difficulties they encounter, interviewees 2 and 4 feel overwhelmed, while interviewees 1, 3, 5 feel tired and keep trying to find out more and more strategies to keep up. Interviewees 2, 3, 4 and 5 say that they keep forgetting the new characters’ structures as a result they have to apply different strategies to learn Chinese strategies. They also said that they have to find a way to connect the new knowledge and their own experiences, and find ways to get familiar with the characters they learn.

Also, as most of the interviewees have pointed out (Participant 1, 3, 4, 5, 6), one of the biggest challenges they face is managing to recall the order of the strokes in order to compose an entire character, as well as to recall the shape and all the components of a character (Participants 2, 3, 4, 6). Additionally to that, participants have expressed their difficulties of using the components in the right place (Participants 1, 2, 4, 5).

As most of the interviewees said, Chinese is a language that is completely foreign and inaccessible to them. They did not have any previous experience of Chinese and they did use Chinese in real life, outside classroom. It is much easier for them to learn the European languages, because Greek has many similarities with these languages, such as the alphabetic script, and, most importantly, they are exposed very often to them. As a result, they say that they feel the need to actively seek common ground between Chinese and their mother tongue, so that they get acquainted with
Chinese. In order to achieve that, according to the participants, Greek CFL learners try to connect Chinese to every aspect of their existing knowledge, everyday lives, experiences and thoughts.
5.2 Strategies of Learning the Chinese Characters

5.2.1 Connecting components of Chinese characters to Greek morphemes

All the six interviewees mentioned that they try to connect the components of Chinese characters to Greek morphemes with similar function. An example mentioned by four participants is connecting certain radicals (often semantic markers) of Chinese characters to Greek affixes, such as connecting the 女 (female) radical, which is typically found in female-related characters such as 妈 （mother）, 姐 （older sister）, 妹 (younger sister) etc. to Greek feminine endings, such as -α and -η. They are used in the end of feminine nouns, such as μαμά (mother), αδερφή (sister), ξαδέρφη (female cousin).

Additionally, Participants 1, 2 and 4 mentioned that the 火 (fire) radical reminds them of the word φωτιά in Greek, which can be found as prefix in words that are related to fire in Greek, just as the Chinese characters with the 火 radical. For example, (light up, photo= φωτογραφία), 灯 (lamp= φως, φωτιστικό), 灵 (bright= φωτεινός).
5.2.2 Connecting the Chinese characters to images of real life

Another strategy found in five of the interviews is associating the Chinese characters to symbols and images of real life. So, participant 1 says he associates 家 to a pig under a roof, in order to remember that this character means house. Participant 5 gives the example of 日, which she connects to a window showing the sun. Participant 3 gives the example of 友, which looks like two friends hugging each other. This is a very useful strategy for the participants and as participant 2 firmly comments, “This is very helpful for me, because these images stay in my mind and help me recall the shape of the Chinese characters that I learn, when I encounter them in a text and when I need to use them.” As participant 3 completes “I use this strategy for almost every character I encounter. This is very helpful for me, because I learn easily the shapes of the characters or at least parts of them and I can recall them without difficulty, when I need to write them. It is for me a fun way to recognize and use the characters, because it also helps me feel familiar with them and face them like they are not something extremely difficult or stranger to me.”
5.2.3 Checking up a character in an online dictionary or an online app

A strategy mentioned by all six participants is checking up a character in an online dictionary or checking an online application. The participants all use online applications and online dictionaries very often, since they all find them really useful for recognizing and then using the characters. As participant 1 says, “I often use online dictionaries like trainChinese app, Yabla and WordHippo. They are very useful, because they help me analyze the character and better understand its structure and meaning.” Additionally, participant 2 specifically says: “Something I do very often is using a cell phone app named “Chineasy”. This is one of most often strategies for learning the Chinese characters, because it makes my learning fun, interesting and connected to real life and helps me keep the shapes of the characters engraved in my mind.” Except for that, participant 4 adds “I sometimes use train Chinese online dictionary. It helps me better understand the shape of the character and write the character that I learn, because it gives an analytical explanation of its structure and components.”
5.2.4 Rote learning of the Chinese characters

Another strategy used by all the participants is their frequent exposure to the Chinese characters they are taught. So, the participants observe the character and write it down many times, so that they can get used to its shape, and they also try to find it in texts and try to get used to its shape. “I type the character and sometimes I write it repeatedly over and over again. I write it down again and again, so that I get more familiar with it. That way, I can better recall the characters, when I have to use them and I get a better understanding of how they are formed.” explicitly explains participant 1, while participant 2 adds “It is very useful for me to see them in texts often and write them down, because this way I can distinguish their shapes with more detail and I can remember them more clearly.” Participant 3 does not seem to have a different opinion, as he clearly states: “Usually, in order to learn the new Chinese characters that I encounter, I rely on the constant repetition. When I want to learn a character, I write it over and over again, until I get familiar with it.” Apart from that, as Participant 4 completes: “When a Chinese character is very difficult for me to learn, I repeat writing it many times, until my hand gets used to producing its shape. This is useful for automating the new knowledge I acquire.” Furthermore, participant 5 adds: “based on my personal experience with learning Chinese, I believe that the most important way to learn how to recognize and use Chinese characters successfully is frequent repetition, writing the Chinese characters again and again. Of course, this procedure should include the repetition of the written form of the character, along with the repetition of reading the character alone and in a text, and the repetition of its pronunciation.”
5.2.5 Analyzing a Chinese character to its components

One strategy frequently used by Greek CFL learners is analyzing a character to its components and to its strokes and writing it component by component and stroke by stroke. This is a very helpful strategy that four of the participants use, since, as they presume it is a good way to remember the character’s orthography and shape. “It is important for me to look at the components and shape of the characters and try to figure out their meaning, before I learn them. This is a good introduction to make me familiar with the characters’ structure and helps me remember their shape easier, when I encounter them or have to write them.” plainly describes participant 6, while participant 3 mentions: “If you write the character with a wrong stroke order from the first time you start copying it (I mean if you change the stroke order, you have the same visual result), then you have a hard time learning the correct stroke order of the character. That is why I try to pay attention to the correct stroke order, when I start copying the Chinese characters.” Additionally, as participant 2 says: “I sometimes focus on the stroke order of the character and write them one by one. This usually helps me to learn how to write the character correctly and avoid confusion, when I have to use it in written speech.”
5.2.6 Using pinyin and reading the Chinese characters aloud

Three of the participants have also said that using pinyin and reading the Chinese characters aloud is very helpful to them. Participant 6 specifically says: “I use recordings and pinyin to better figure out the sound of a character. While listening to the recordings, I try to read aloud, or repeat the sound of the character after the recording, while I am looking at it in the paper or the computer screen. I also usually listen to a recording of a text and read the character in the text along with the recording, until I get accustomed to its shape and sound.” Likewise, participant 2 shares: “I usually read texts in pinyin and then read them in characters, without the use of pinyin, so that I can get accustomed to them and connect them to their sounds. It is an effective procedure that eventually helps me memorize the look of a character and connect it to its sound.”
6. Discussion of Results/Empirical Findings

As the results of the interviews have revealed, each one of the participants many strategies to help them better learn the Chinese characters. The strategies Greek CFL Beginner's level learners, in order to recognize and use the Chinese characters, the most common strategies they use are: Connecting the Chinese characters to Greek Morphemes, Connecting the Chinese characters to images of real life, Checking up a character in an online dictionary or an online app, Rote learning of the Chinese characters, Analyzing a Chinese character to its components, Using pinyin and reading the Chinese characters aloud. Also, according to the interview findings, the main challenges Greek CFL learners encounter when learning the Chinese language are analyzing Chinese characters to their components, writing the strokes in the right order and remembering the characters’ structure.

Regarding the research question about the differences between Greek CFL learners and English CFL learners, as stated in theory, English CFL learners’ most common strategies are writing a Chinese character many times, careful observation of the stroke order of the Chinese characters, checking up the new knowledge in the student book and looking for examples in online sites, taking frequent tests, online activities and quizzes and focusing on the learners’ weakest points, copying Chinese characters and paying attention to the orthography and pronunciation of Chinese characters. On the other hand, Asian learners’ most common strategies, according to theory, are typing characters, analyzing them in their components, having semantic and phonic elements as memory cues, focusing on the character’s stroke order positional strategies related to the position of the radicals in the character, semantic strategies related to the meaning of the character, as well as correct pronunciation of the character. However, Greek CFL learners most common strategies are the Connecting components of the Chinese characters to Greek Morphemes, Connecting the Chinese characters to images of real life, Checking up a character in an online dictionary or an online app, Rote learning of the Chinese characters, Analyzing a Chinese character to its components, Using pinyin and reading the Chinese characters aloud.
Out of these six participants’ answers, we can see that they adopt many strategies that are similar to the other CFL learners. However, difference among the Greek CFL learners’, the English CFL learners’ and the Asian CFL learners’ strategies is that Greek speakers are using their mother tongue more (as stated above) to learn Chinese.

The results of the present research will allow Greek learners to understand their learning processes and support the instructors to develop effective pedagogical methods by enriching the existing knowledge with new aspects of how CFL learners learn the Chinese characters. Apart from that, it will also enrich the existing knowledge concerning the learning of Chinese characters, and cover the existing gap of scientific research in this specific certain sector of language learning.
7. Conclusion

The analysis of interview results shows that Greek students' most common strategies for learning Chinese characters: connecting components of the Chinese characters to Greek morphemes, connecting Chinese characters to images of real life, checking up a character in an online dictionary or an online app, rote learning of the Chinese characters, analyzing a Chinese character to its components and using pinyin and reading the Chinese characters aloud. According the above, when it comes to learning the Chinese characters, there are both similarities and differences among the strategies adopted by Greek CFL learners and the strategies adopted by English and Asian CFL learners. However, there are some strategies not the same, such as connecting components of the Chinese characters to Greek morphemes and using pinyin and reading aloud.
8. Limitations and Suggestions for further research

Since the learning language proficiency has been proven by previous research to have an impact on CFL learning and since the beginner’s level CFL students have the hardest time memorizing the Chinese characters (Wang and Harris, 2016), this study focuses on a specific proficiency level (Beginner’s level). This will be a limitation in the generalization of the results of the study to Greek CFL learners of other levels of proficiency, because they might have adopted different strategies for acquiring the Chinese characters. Hence, an interesting suggestion for future research would be the investigation of Greek CFL learners from the intermediate level. Also, since Greek CFL learners are proven in this research to have some differences from other CFL learners, another suggestion for further research would be to study strategies that Greek CFL learners adopt for learning other fields of Chinese language, such as pronunciation.
References:


44. Wang, J. & Harris, R., B. (2016). *Effective Learning Strategies for the Recognition of Characters and Words by Learners of Chinese with Varying Proficiency in Different Learning Environments*. Indian University-Purdue University, Indianapolis.

