

## Are we forgetting the words?

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The primary function of language is communication, which is achieved through words, both written and spoken. We study a foreign language in order to communicate with the inhabitants of a foreign country orally and through reading and writing. The problem today is that the majority of language learning systems are neglecting to concentrate on the acquisition of **words**, the basic units of communication.

Words have been displaced by a proliferation of didactic tools now available to teachers and language learners. Discussions of language acquisition are centered in such things as graphics, photos, pictures, videos, and movies, all with a profusion of colors. Against all logic of linguistic learning methodology, images have assumed prominence over words. Students are hardly even required to read, but instead concentrate almost exclusively on images. They almost don't read, only look at, observe, guess, compare images in the textbooks, look for apartments with all type of furniture, streets, cities, walk around the city looking at the trees, cars, people, or go on a trip to exotic countries in search of more images...

Where does this leave **words**, the basic building blocks of language?

We seem to be trapped in an endless need to discover and employ ever more complex didactic tools. New tools are discovered and then "enhanced" to make them more inviting. The result is that students only "advance" to the next level of the attractive new teaching gimmick without any effective learning taking place. Bookstore shelves are full of language learning texts devoted almost entirely to images, not words. The result is that learning progresses so slowly that the enterprise is abandoned before there is any meaningful language acquisition. This feeds into a never-ending cycle of new tool production, with ever more attractive and eye-catching exercise books, DVDs, audios, computer games and the like.

And, when would we be able to read in the language we are learning? It seems almost impossible.

The status of studying and learning Chinese is in a sad state due to the need of learning the sinograms in order to read and write in Chinese. Some years ago, it was accepted as a given that learning Chinese was difficult. Learning Chinese sinograms was believed to be even more difficult, if not impossible. Then some scholar hit upon what seemed to be the ideal solution: Learn *pinyin*, which is the phonetic transcription of the Chinese language. The solution was to learn the language by its sounds. Language learners,

freed from the need to learn the troublesome sinograms, were encouraged, even learning to speak a little Chinese. The problem was they were unable to read or write the language; they were illiterate. Having already spent one, two or three years learning an abstract phonetic language, they were unwilling to devote more years learning to read and write. So they abandoned their study. The rate of abandonment of the study of Chinese is alarming. While it is true that there is ever more interest in learning Chinese, most students drop their study after only a few months. A language cannot be learned through the study of its sounds alone.

I have developed the Kěyǐ System to recover the all-important **words**. Words assume even greater importance in the study of Chinese because in addition to carrying meaning, they have an intrinsic beauty. A Chinese written text has a beauty of composition and equilibrium, the words succeeding each other in perfect squares of harmony.

The Kěyǐ books are the “Books of Void.” Only the void can be full. The Kěyǐ books have empty space surrounding the sinograms. Nothing must compete with the sinograms because not only they have meaning but also an image. And, why to destroy an image with another image? The beauty of a Chinese sinogram is such that it must be kept in isolation or surrounded by images of its kind: other sinograms. Only in this way will the Chinese language be a mean not only of communication but also of understanding the Chinese culture.

#### THE BOOKS OF VOID

Only void  
can be full.  
Sinograms fill the void  
with meaning and  
beauty.

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