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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-58107

Title: The Use Of Story Teaching Method In The Teaching Of Chinese Characters-A case of Pakistani students.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity			✓	
Significance	✓			

Reviewer's ID: JPR- 212

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Overall Assessment

This research paper presents a mixed-methods quasi-experimental study investigating the effectiveness of story-based instruction for teaching Chinese characters to Pakistani beginner learners. The study compares the story-based method with conventional stroke-based instruction, examining immediate learning outcomes and long-term retention. The paper addresses a significant gap in the literature, as limited empirical research has focused on Chinese character pedagogy for Pakistani learners specifically. The study demonstrates strong theoretical grounding, careful research design, and thoughtful attention to methodological rigor. However, the manuscript requires substantial revision to address issues related to clarity, presentation, analysis depth, and discussion of limitations before it can be recommended for publication.

Strengths of the Paper

- Original and Timely Research Gap:** The study addresses a genuine gap in the literature—the lack of empirical research on Chinese character pedagogy for Pakistani learners. This is a significant contribution given the growing interest in Chinese language education in Pakistan.
- Strong Theoretical Framework:** The paper effectively integrates multiple theoretical perspectives, including the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen), multi-modal learning theory, and the concept of "Hanzi Narrativization." These frameworks are appropriately applied to interpret the findings.
- Methodologically Rigorous Design:** The quasi-experimental design with random assignment, equal instructional time, single instructor, blinded scoring, and delayed post-test demonstrates careful attention to internal validity.
- Comprehensive Mixed-Methods Approach:** The integration of quantitative tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews provides a holistic understanding of both learning outcomes and participant perceptions.
- Appropriate Participant Selection:** The use of purposive sampling to select participants with similar backgrounds (Urdu native speakers, no prior logographic writing experience) strengthens the study's internal validity.
- Well-Designed Instruments:** The character knowledge test with multiple question types (picture-character matching, character filling, pinyin-character matching, writing from pinyin) comprehensively assesses different dimensions of character knowledge.

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7. **Transparent Discussion of Limitations:** The paper demonstrates intellectual honesty by acknowledging sample size limitations, short intervention duration, single-site design, and the author's dual role as researcher and instructor.
8. **Practical Pedagogical Implications:** The study provides actionable recommendations for Chinese language teachers working with learners from alphabetic L1 backgrounds.

Major Concerns

1. Clarity and Organization Issues

Abstract: The abstract is overly long and contains awkward phrasing that obscures key findings. It should be more concise and clearly state the main results, effect sizes, and significance levels.

Problem Statement: The problem statement section (pages 1-4) is excessively long and could be more focused. It covers multiple topics (script differences, current challenges in Pakistan, script-speech alignment, theoretical frameworks) without clear transitions. The section would benefit from restructuring with subheadings.

Methodology Section Flow: The methodology section (pages 4-11) contains substantial detail but lacks logical organization. The section jumps between participant descriptions, measures, instructional procedures, and validity/reliability with limited coherence. A clearer structure with subheadings would improve readability.

Repetition of Content: Several concepts are repeated across sections. For example:

- The script differences between Urdu and Chinese are discussed multiple times (pages 1-3)
- The challenges faced by Pakistani learners are described repeatedly
- The theoretical frameworks are introduced in the introduction and revisited in the discussion

Reference List Inconsistencies: The reference list contains inconsistencies in formatting:

- Some entries include full publication details; others are incomplete
- Entries 22 and 23 appear to be duplicates (Zhang, X. T., 2018)
- Some references lack publication years or complete publisher information
- Multiple citation styles appear to be mixed

2. Methodology Section Requires Clarification

Sample Size Justification: The paper states "the study had adequate power to detect large effects (Cohen $d > 0.80$)" but does not provide a formal power analysis. A power analysis should be included to justify the sample size of 15 participants per group.

Randomization Procedure: While the paper states participants were "randomly categorized," the specific randomization procedure (e.g., random number generator, lottery method) is not described. This information is important for replication.

Blinding Implementation: The paper mentions "blinded scoring" where the test scorer was "unaware of group assignment." However, it is unclear how this was achieved given that the instructor (author) was the same for both groups. The paper should clarify the blinding procedure.

Instructional Fidelity: The paper states that "lesson plans of the two groups were standardized and were reviewed by an independent observer," but it does not provide details about:

- What specific criteria were used to assess fidelity
- The qualifications of the independent observer
- How many sessions were observed
- Whether any deviations from the protocol were noted

Questionnaire Administration: The paper does not specify when the questionnaire was administered (immediately after instruction, after the delayed test, or at another time). This is important because responses could be influenced by test performance.

Interview Selection Criteria: The paper states that four learners and four teachers were interviewed but does not explain:

- Why these specific participants were selected from the larger sample
- What criteria were used for selection
- Whether participants were selected based on test performance, demographic characteristics, or other factors

3. Data Analysis Issues

Statistical Analysis Depth: The paper reports only t-tests comparing the experimental and control groups. Additional analyses would strengthen the findings:

- Mixed-design ANOVA to examine Group \times Time interactions

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- Effect sizes for all comparisons (Cohen's d is reported only for the delayed test)
- Confidence intervals for mean differences
- Correlation analyses between questionnaire responses and test performance

Character Type Analysis: The paper acknowledges that "descriptive analysis of the data indicates that the experimental group scored particularly well on pictographs and associative compounds" but does not conduct statistical tests to confirm this pattern. Given the pedagogical implications of character type differences, the analysis should be completed or the discussion of this point should be more cautious.

Gender Analysis: The paper notes possible gender differences in method preference but does not:

- Report descriptive statistics by gender
- Conduct statistical tests
- Provide sufficient sample sizes for meaningful analysis

The paper appropriately avoids overinterpreting these gender trends but should either conduct the analysis or remove this discussion.

Questionnaire Validation: The paper reports Cronbach's alpha (0.79 overall, 0.71-0.84 for subscales) and confirmatory factor analysis but does not provide:

- The specific factor loading values for each item
- Fit indices for the CFA model
- Details about the questionnaire development process

4. Discussion Section Needs Strengthening

Mechanism Explanation: The paper proposes two mechanisms for the observed effects (cognitive: multi-modal encoding; affective: reduced anxiety) but:

- The discussion relies heavily on speculation rather than direct evidence
- The paper acknowledges that "direct and validated scale of anxiety" was not used but continues to invoke the Affective Filter Hypothesis
- The multi-modal learning explanation is plausible but not directly tested

Comparison with Prior Research: While the paper references prior research on story-based instruction, it does not systematically compare its findings with previous studies. A more comprehensive discussion of how these results align with or diverge from existing literature would strengthen the paper.

Contradictory Findings: The paper finds no significant difference on the immediate test but a significant difference on the delayed test. This pattern is interesting and should be discussed more thoroughly:

- What are the implications for instructional practice?
- Why might story-based instruction affect long-term retention but not short-term performance?
- Are there other studies that have found similar patterns?

Practical Implications: The paper suggests a "two-phase plan" (use stories to introduce characters and systematic stroke teaching for accuracy) but does not provide specific guidance on implementation:

- How much class time should be allocated to each approach?
- At what point should teachers transition from story-based to stroke-based instruction?
- What are the resource requirements for implementing story-based instruction?

5. Theoretical Framework Integration

Inconsistent Application: The theoretical frameworks are introduced but not consistently applied throughout the paper. For example:

- The TPACK framework is mentioned in the literature review of the previous paper but is not discussed in this paper, despite being relevant to technology integration in character instruction
- The "Hanzi Narrativization" framework is mentioned briefly but not used to structure the analysis

Lack of Theoretical Contribution: The paper tests the effectiveness of story-based instruction but does not clearly articulate how the findings contribute to theoretical understanding. The theoretical implications section could be strengthened.

Affective Filter Hypothesis: As acknowledged by the authors, the paper did not directly measure anxiety. The discussion of the Affective Filter Hypothesis would be more credible if the paper had included validated measures of anxiety or motivation.

6. Writing Quality Issues

Awkward Phrasing: Throughout the paper, there are numerous instances of awkward or unclear phrasing:

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"The study design used was a quasi-experimental design with questionnaires and interviews to examine the effectiveness of story based teaching method in learning Chinese character among the Pakistani beginners learners."

"The fact that the experimental and the control group did not differ significantly on the immediate post-test (68.4 vs. 67.8, $p = 0.927$) but had a significant difference on the delayed post test (75.8 vs. 65.2, $p = 0.019$, Cohens $d = 0.91$) is notable and must be carefully interpreted."

"The retention privilege of the experimental group was evident when they were tested after one month without any further instructions."

Grammatical Errors: The paper contains numerous grammatical errors:

- Subject-verb agreement issues
- Incorrect article usage
- Tense inconsistencies
- Preposition errors

Chinese Character Display: The paper includes Chinese characters in the text, but some appear to be displayed incorrectly or are missing formatting. For example, on pages 5-6, the character examples appear to have formatting issues.

Table Formatting: The table on page 6 (question types) is poorly formatted and difficult to read. The tables in the validity and reliability section (page 11) are also presented in a confusing format.

7. Title and Abstract

Title: The title "The Use Of Story Teaching Method In The Teaching Of Chinese Characters- A case of Pakistani students" could be improved. Consider:

- "The Effectiveness of Story-Based Instruction for Teaching Chinese Characters to Pakistani Beginner Learners" (more precise and formal)
- Or maintain the current format but correct capitalization and punctuation

Abstract: The abstract requires revision:

- It is overly long and contains redundant information
- Key findings (effect sizes, p-values) should be reported
- The theoretical mechanisms should be briefly stated rather than elaborated
- The abstract should be self-contained and avoid references to specific pages

8. References and Citation Issues

Incomplete References: Several references appear to be incomplete:

- Entry 22: "Wan, Y. X. (2012). Collected papers on Chinese characters and Chinese character teaching. Beijing Language and Culture University Press." - Does not specify if this is an edited volume or monograph
- Entry 23: Appears to be a duplicate of entry 22 with formatting issues
- Several references lack DOIs or other identifying information

Missing References: The paper references authors in the text that are not included in the reference list:

- Liu Xun (2000) appears in-text but the reference list has inconsistent entries
- Hou Hongyu (2015) is cited but not included in references

Citation Format: The paper uses multiple citation styles inconsistently. Some citations include first names, others use initials. The paper should adopt a single consistent citation style.

9. Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: The paper mentions informed consent but does not provide details about:

- How consent was obtained (written? verbal?)
- Whether consent included permission to use data in publications
- Whether participants were compensated for their participation

Vulnerable Participants: The age range (including participants under 18) suggests that some participants may have been minors. The paper should specify whether parental consent was obtained for participants under 18.

Institutional Review: The paper does not mention institutional ethical approval. The name of the ethics committee and approval number should be provided.

Minor Issues

1. **Inconsistent Terminology:** The paper uses several different terms interchangeably:
 - "story teaching method" / "story-based instruction" / "story-based teaching method"

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- "Pakistani learners" / "Pakistani beginner learners" / "Pakistani novice learners"
- "Chinese characters" / "Hanzi" / "characters"
- 2. **Number Formatting:** The paper inconsistently formats numbers (e.g., "8 to 10" vs. "8-10", "p > 0.05" vs. "p<0.05").
- 3. **Page Numbering:** Page numbers are present but sometimes inconsistent.
- 4. **Figure/Table References:** The paper contains references to "image" with coordinates that appear to be technical formatting artifacts rather than proper figure captions.
- 5. **Abbreviation Introductions:** Some abbreviations (e.g., HSK, L1, SOV, SVO) are used without explanation.
- 6. **Ethical Considerations Section:** The ethical considerations section is brief and appears at the end of the document rather than in the methodology section where it would be more appropriate.

Specific Recommendations for Revision

Major Revisions Required:

1. **Restructure the Introduction:** The introduction should be organized with clear subheadings to improve readability. Consider the following structure:
 - Background (importance of Chinese character teaching)
 - Challenges for Pakistani Learners (script differences, current issues)
 - Theoretical Framework (storytelling, narrative approaches, multi-modal learning)
 - Research Gap and Rationale
 - Research Questions
 - Study Significance
2. **Clarify Methodology:** Provide more detailed information about:
 - Power analysis and sample size justification
 - Randomization procedure
 - Blinding implementation
 - Instructional fidelity monitoring
 - Questionnaire administration timing
 - Interview participant selection criteria
3. **Strengthen Data Analysis:** Conduct additional statistical analyses:
 - Mixed-design ANOVA for Group × Time interactions
 - Effect sizes for all comparisons
 - Confidence intervals for mean differences
 - Statistical tests for character type differences (if sample size permits)
4. **Enhance Discussion:** Address the following in the discussion:
 - More systematic comparison with prior research
 - Thorough explanation of the immediate vs. delayed test pattern
 - Direct connection between findings and theoretical frameworks
 - Specific pedagogical recommendations with implementation guidance
5. **Improve Writing Quality:** The manuscript needs thorough editing for:
 - Grammar and syntax
 - Clarity and concision
 - Consistent terminology
 - Proper academic tone
6. **Revise References:** Standardize all citations and ensure consistency in formatting.
7. **Complete Ethical Information:** Provide details about:
 - Institutional review board approval
 - Informed consent procedures
 - Handling of participants under 18
8. **Strengthen Limitations Discussion:** More fully acknowledge and discuss limitations:
 - The dual role of author as researcher and instructor (potential bias)
 - The lack of direct measures for proposed mechanisms
 - The short intervention period relative to typical language courses
 - The single-site design and implications for external validity

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9. **Revise Abstract:** Condense and clarify the abstract to include:
- Clear statement of research purpose
 - Brief description of methods
 - Key quantitative findings with effect sizes
 - Main conclusion

Minor Revisions Required:

1. **Standardize Terminology:** Use consistent terms throughout the paper.
2. **Fix Character Display Issues:** Ensure all Chinese characters display correctly.
3. **Improve Table Formatting:** Make all tables clear and readable.
4. **Correct Page Numbering:** Standardize page numbers throughout.
5. **Add Figure Captions:** Provide proper captions for all figures.
6. **Check All Citations:** Ensure every in-text citation has a corresponding reference list entry.
7. **Provide Translations:** Ensure all non-English terms are explained.

Recommendation for Revision

Based on the assessment above, I recommend **Accept after major revision**. The study addresses an important and underexplored topic with a methodologically sound design. The findings have significant implications for Chinese language pedagogy in Pakistan and other non-Chinese character cultural contexts. However, the manuscript requires substantial revision to address issues related to organization, clarity, analysis depth, and discussion of implications.

The required revisions are achievable but will require significant effort. The core research design and findings are strong; the weaknesses primarily relate to presentation and depth of analysis rather than fundamental flaws in the research approach. With careful revision addressing the issues identified in this review, the manuscript would make a valuable contribution to the field.

Summary of Required Revisions

Area	Priority	Description	
Organization	High	Restructure introduction and methodology with clear subheadings	
Methodology Details	High	Provide detailed information about randomization, blinding, instructional fidelity	
Statistical Analysis	High	Add Mixed-design ANOVA, effect sizes, confidence intervals	
Writing Quality	High	Edit for grammar, clarity, and consistency	
Discussion	High	Strengthen comparison with prior research, provide more practical implications	
References	High	Standardize formatting, remove duplicates, ensure completeness	
Abstract	High	Condense and clarify, include key findings with statistics	
Ethical Information	Medium	Provide IRB approval details, consent procedures	
Table Formatting	Medium	Improve readability of all tables	
Chinese Character Display	Medium	Fix display issues	
Terminology	Low	Standardize terms throughout	
Theoretical Integration	Medium	Strengthen connection between theory and findings	
Gender/Character Analysis	Type	Medium	Either complete the analyses or remove discussion

Final Remarks

This study makes a potentially significant contribution to the field of Chinese language pedagogy for learners from alphabetic L1 backgrounds. The finding that story-based instruction improves long-term retention while having similar immediate effects to stroke-based instruction is both theoretically interesting and practically useful. The mixed-methods approach provides rich data that can inform both research and practice.

The manuscript demonstrates substantial effort in research design and data collection. With thorough revision addressing the issues identified above, particularly in organization, analysis depth, and writing quality, this paper would be well-suited for publication. The reviewer encourages the authors to pursue these revisions, as the topic is timely and the findings are meaningful.

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