Impact of Fonts on Language Learning Among Elementary School Students in Japan

Mutsumi Iijima
Vice President, Professor, Global Initiative Center, Gunma University, Japan

Abstract

This study explores how different font types affect the visibility, legibility, and readability of English text for fifth- and sixth-grade elementary Japanese students who face difficulties transitioning from auditory learning to written learning. Adopting an inclusive education framework, the research examines the intricate process by which reading activities transition into writing activities. The author administered a timed four-question survey to evaluate whether five distinct typographical fonts impact learner performance. While no significant differences emerged when identifying a single matching character, substantial variances occurred during complex tasks. Times New Roman demonstrated the lowest average performance in rapid multi-character identification and visual memory recall, notably regarding its serif "g" character. Conversely, the Ball & Stick-style UD Digital Textbook Font consistently yielded the highest recall rates and most favorable identification outcomes for multi-character non-words across both grade levels. Statistical data also revealed that fifth graders identified more characters on average than sixth graders. Ultimately, the study concludes that typographical disparities heavily influence character learning. To bridge reading recognition and writing instruction effectively, educators should utilize fonts that closely mirror actual handwriting and place special emphasis on stroke order during classroom lessons.