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Asian youth forgetting how to write

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

A new study commissioned by the China Daily Youth newspaper has found many young Chinese people are forgetting how to write traditional Chinese. Chinese schoolchildren grow up memorizing well over 3,000 different characters. However, the study shows they rarely need to write them by hand and are forgetting their shape. Instead, young people are using their phones and computers to write. On these, they type in a system called 'pinyin,' which is the sounds of the Chinese characters written on an English keyboard. A list then appears showing the corresponding character in Mandarin. The report said 83% of the 2,072 respondents have problems writing characters while 43% said they only write when they need to sign something.

The problem is so big that there is a name for it: 'tibiwangzi,' which means "take pen, forget character". Chinese characters are the oldest writing system in the world in current use. They date back over 3,000 years. University student Li Hanwei, 21, said: "I can remember the shape, but I can't remember the strokes that you need to write it...It's a bit of a problem." The phenomenon is known as "character amnesia" and is also common in Japan, where Chinese characters are one of four different alphabets used in writing. Ayumi Kawamoto, 23, explained why she often forgot how to recall and write characters she learnt at school: "We rely too much on the conversion function on our phones and PCs."

WARM-UPS

1. WRITING: Walk around the class and talk to other students about writing. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

studies / forgetting / memorizing / shapes / phones / computers / typing / characters / problems / writing systems / strokes / phenomenon / amnesia / alphabets / function

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. FORGETTING: Can we forget these things? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

	Dangers of forgetting	How we stop forgetting
Writing with pens		
Manners		
Traditional cooking		
Festivals		
Friends		
English		

4. MOBILES: Students A **strongly** believe mobile phones are much more important than pens and pencils; Students B **strongly** believe the opposite. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. LANGUAGE: Which of these are most important? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- Writing
- Speaking
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Listening
- Reading
- Grammar

6. KEYBOARD: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'keyboard'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE:

Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A study found kids from Sri Lanka to China have poor writing ability. | T / F |
| b. Chinese children learn over 3,000 written characters at school. | T / F |
| c. Chinese people use English letters on keyboards to write Chinese. | T / F |
| d. Over half of Chinese people only write when a signature is needed. | T / F |
| e. Sanskrit is the world's oldest writing system being used today. | T / F |
| f. A student said she had to stroke the page to remember how to write. | T / F |
| g. people in Japan have a similar forgetfulness with Chinese characters. | T / F |
| h. A Japanese woman suggested people use phones too much. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH:

Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. commissioned | a. alternatively |
| 2. memorizing | b. occurrence |
| 3. instead | c. pops up |
| 4. corresponding | d. depend |
| 5. appears | e. rote learning |
| 6. current | f. forgetfulness |
| 7. phenomenon | g. transformation |
| 8. amnesia | h. ordered |
| 9. rely | i. matching |
| 10. conversion | j. present |

3. PHRASE MATCH:

(Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. A new study commissioned | a. different alphabets |
| 2. well over | b. to sign something |
| 3. A list | c. use |
| 4. showing the corresponding | d. on the conversion function |
| 5. they only write when they need | e. 3,000 |
| 6. the oldest writing | f. of a problem |
| 7. in current | g. system in the world |
| 8. It's a bit | h. by the China Daily Youth |
| 9. one of four | i. then appears |
| 10. rely too much | j. character in Mandarin |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A new _____ commissioned by the China Daily Youth newspaper has found many young Chinese people are forgetting how to write _____ Chinese. Chinese schoolchildren grow up _____ well over 3,000 different characters. However, the study shows they _____ need to write them by hand and are forgetting their shape. Instead, young people are using their phones and computers to write. On these, they type in a _____ called 'pinyin,' which is the sounds of the Chinese characters written on an English keyboard. A list then _____ showing the corresponding _____ in Mandarin. The report said 83% of the 2,072 respondents have problems writing characters while 43% said they only write when they need to _____ something.

system
sign
traditional
appears
memorizing
study
character
rarely

The problem is so _____ that there is a name for it: 'tibiwangzi,' which means "take pen, forget character". Chinese characters are the oldest writing system in the world in current _____. They date back over 3,000 years. University student Li Hanwei, 21, said: "I can remember the _____, but I can't remember the strokes that you need to write it...It's a bit of a problem." The phenomenon is known as "character _____" and is also _____ in Japan, where Chinese characters are one of four different _____ used in writing. Ayumi Kawamoto, 23, explained why she often forgot how to _____ and write characters she learnt at school: "We _____ too much on the conversion function on our phones and PCs."

shape
alphabets
use
rely
big
common
recall
amnesia

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

A new study commissioned by the China Daily Youth newspaper has found many young Chinese people _____ write traditional Chinese. Chinese schoolchildren _____ well over 3,000 different characters. However, the study shows they rarely need to write them by hand and are forgetting their shape. _____ using their phones and computers to write. On these, they type in a system called 'pinyin,' _____ the Chinese characters written on an English keyboard. A list then appears showing the _____ Mandarin. The report said 83% of the 2,072 respondents have problems writing characters while 43% said they only write _____ something.

The problem is _____ name for it: 'tibiwangzi,' which means "take pen, forget character". Chinese characters are the oldest writing system in _____. They date back over 3,000 years. University student Li Hanwei, 21, said: "I can remember the shape, but I can't _____ that you need to write it...It's a bit of a problem." The phenomenon is known _____ and is also common in Japan, where Chinese characters are one of four different alphabets used in writing. Ayumi Kawamoto, 23, explained why she often forgot _____ characters she learnt at school: "We rely too much on _____ on our phones and PCs."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'English' and 'keyboard'.

English	keyboard

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• commissioned• grow• instead• system• list• sign	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• big• current• strokes• bit• four• rely
--	---

STUDENT WRITING SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

Write five GOOD questions about writing in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

WRITING DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'forget'?
- c) Are you forgetful?
- d) How important is writing with a pen to you?
- e) Do you think technology has made people's writing worse?
- f) What do you think of Chinese youth forgetting how to write because they use mobile phones too much?
- g) When do you absolutely need to use a pen or pencil?
- h) Do you think the need for handwriting will disappear in the future?
- i) How important is writing to you compared with reading, speaking and listening?
- j) Do you think writing on phones and PCs makes us more expressive?

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WRITING DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What do you think of the 'tibiwangzi' phenomenon?
- c) Which writing system would you like to learn?
- d) How much of what you learnt at school have you forgotten?
- e) What should China's government do about 'tibiwangzi'?
- f) Do you prefer sending and receiving text messages or real letters?
- g) How important is good handwriting to you?
- h) What's the most difficult thing about writing in English?
- i) How can you get better at writing?
- j) What questions would you like to ask someone with 'tibiwangzi'?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1008/100827-writing.html>

A new study (1) _____ by the China Daily Youth newspaper has found many young Chinese people are forgetting how to write traditional Chinese. Chinese schoolchildren grow up (2) _____ (3) _____ over 3,000 different characters. However, the study shows they rarely need to write them by hand and are forgetting their shape. (4) _____, young people are using their phones and computers to write. On these, they type in a system called 'pinyin,' which is the sounds of the Chinese characters written on an English keyboard. A list (5) _____ appears showing the corresponding character in Mandarin. The report said 83% of the 2,072 respondents have problems writing characters while 43% said they only write when they need to (6) _____ something.

The problem is (7) _____ big that there is a name for it: 'tibiwangzi,' which means "take pen, forget character". Chinese characters are the oldest writing system in the world in (8) _____ use. They (9) _____ back over 3,000 years. University student Li Hanwei, 21, said: "I can remember the shape, but I can't remember the strokes that you need to write it...It's a (10) _____ of a problem." The phenomenon is known as "character amnesia" and is also common in Japan, where Chinese characters are one (11) _____ four different alphabets used in writing. Ayumi Kawamoto, 23, explained why she often forgot how to recall and write characters she learnt at school: "We (12) _____ too much on the conversion function on our phones and PCs."

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. | (a) commissioned | (b) commission | (c) commissions | (d) commissioner |
| 2. | (a) memorabilia | (b) memorable | (c) memorizing | (d) memories |
| 3. | (a) good | (b) well | (c) best | (d) better |
| 4. | (a) So | (b) Moreover | (c) While | (d) Instead |
| 5. | (a) that | (b) thus | (c) then | (d) therefore |
| 6. | (a) sign | (b) signal | (c) singe | (d) sine |
| 7. | (a) sow | (b) such | (c) as | (d) so |
| 8. | (a) currant | (b) current | (c) currency | (d) currants |
| 9. | (a) time | (b) year | (c) date | (d) second |
| 10. | (a) bit | (b) biting | (c) bite | (d) byte |
| 11. | (a) by | (b) of | (c) at | (d) on |
| 12. | (a) rely | (b) reply | (c) really | (d) rely |

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WRITING

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Write about **writing** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about 'tibiwangzi'. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. WRITING: Make a poster about writing and how important it is. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. AMNESIA: Write a magazine article about people who have 'character amnesia'. Include imaginary interviews with them.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to a character amnesiac. Ask him/her three questions about his/her forgetfulness. Give him/her three pieces of advice on how to remember the characters. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. T e. T f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. commissioned | a. ordered |
| 2. memorizing | b. rote learning |
| 3. instead | c. alternatively |
| 4. corresponding | d. matching |
| 5. appears | e. pops up |
| 6. current | f. present |
| 7. phenomenon | g. occurrence |
| 8. amnesia | h. forgetfulness |
| 9. rely | i. depend |
| 10. conversion | j. transformation |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. A new study commissioned | a. by the China Daily Youth |
| 2. well over | b. 3,000 |
| 3. A list | c. then appears |
| 4. showing the corresponding | d. character in Mandarin |
| 5. they only write when they need | e. to sign something |
| 6. the oldest writing | f. system in the world |
| 7. in current | g. use |
| 8. It's a bit | h. of a problem |
| 9. one of four | i. different alphabets |
| 10. rely too much | j. on the conversion function |

GAP FILL:

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A new **study** commissioned by the China Daily Youth newspaper has found many young Chinese people are forgetting how to write **traditional** Chinese. Chinese schoolchildren grow up **memorizing** well over 3,000 different characters. However, the study shows they **rarely** need to write them by hand and are forgetting their shape. Instead, young people are using their phones and computers to write. On these, they type in a **system** called 'pinyin,' which is the sounds of the Chinese characters written on an English keyboard. A list then **appears** showing the corresponding **character** in Mandarin. The report said 83% of the 2,072 respondents have problems writing characters while 43% said they only write when they need to **sign** something.

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LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - c 3 - b 4 - d 5 - c 6 - a 7 - d 8 - b 9 - c 10 - a 11 - b 12 - d