

Lexical-Semantic Processing by Chinese as a Second Language Learners

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Abstract : The present study aimed to elucidate the lexical-semantic processing for Chinese as second language (CSL) learners. Twenty L1 speakers of Chinese and twenty CSL learners in Taiwan participated in a picture naming task and a category fluency task. Based on their Chinese proficiency levels, these CSL learners were further divided into two sub-groups: ten CSL learners of elementary Chinese proficiency level and ten CSL learners of intermediate Chinese proficiency level. Instruments for the naming task were sixty black-and-white pictures: thirty-five object pictures and twenty-five action pictures. Object pictures were divided into two categories: living objects and non-living objects. Action pictures were composed of two categories: action verbs and process verbs. As in the naming task, the category fluency task consisted of two semantic categories – objects (i.e., living and non-living objects) and actions (i.e., action and process verbs). Participants were asked to report as many items within a category as possible in one minute. Oral productions were tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Both error types and error frequency were calculated. Statistical analysis was further conducted to examine these error types and frequency made by CSL learners. Additionally, category effects, pictorial effects and L2 proficiency were discussed. Findings in the present study helped characterize the lexical-semantic process of Chinese naming in CSL learners of different Chinese proficiency levels and made contributions to Chinese vocabulary teaching and learning in the future.

Keywords : lexical-semantic processing, Mandarin Chinese, naming, category effects

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