

Abstract

Competing Cues in Differential Sensitivity to Syllabic and Syntactic Errors in Chinese L2 Acquisition: A Study of Verbal Monosyllabic-Disyllabic Word Pair Processing

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Building upon the research of Wu (2012) and Wu & Guder (2014) on vocabulary acquisition patterns among German-speaking Chinese learners, this study examines the development of syllabic awareness and its interplay with syntactic competence in the acquisition of synonymous monosyllabic-disyllabic word pairs. While previous research has not classified errors in verb-object structures' monosyllabic-disyllabic combinations as a distinct error category, emerging studies demonstrate that mastery of monosyllabic-disyllabic combination rules plays a crucial role in Chinese second language acquisition (Qiao, 2017; Li, 2017; Ke, 2012; Xu, 2013). The significance of syllabic combination awareness remains underappreciated in pedagogical practice, as teachers often overlook this aspect despite its substantial impact on learners' language production accuracy (Chuenchoksant, 2012; Xu, 2013).

Through a carefully designed error correction task, this study investigates how intermediate and advanced German-speaking Chinese learners process and identify both syllabic errors and syntactic errors in Chinese language acquisition. The research specifically examines whether these learners exhibit differential sensitivity to errors in synonymous monosyllabic-disyllabic combinations compared to syntactic error types. The experimental design incorporates two complementary test phases: Phase One presents participants with a corpus of 24 sentences, comprising 7 sentences containing typical errors in synonymous monosyllabic-disyllabic verb-object structures, 7 sentences with syntactic errors and 10 fillers to ensure robust experimental validity. Phase Two implements a multiple-choice format where participants evaluate pairs of correct and incorrect forms drawn from Phase One, with implicit prompts designed to assess their syllabic and syntactic error awareness. The study focuses exclusively on intermediate and advanced learners of Chinese, as this population has sufficient exposure to disyllabic verb-object structures to make meaningful judgments about their usage.

The study hypothesizes differential patterns in the processing of synonymous monosyllabic-disyllabic word combinations between intermediate and advanced German-speaking Chinese learners. At the intermediate level, learners are expected to display overt difficulties in recognizing and correcting syllabic combination errors, indicating a gap in syllabic awareness. Advanced learners, while more proficient overall, are anticipated to reveal more nuanced challenges in their processing of syllabic combinations, particularly in complex syntactic environments. These predicted findings carry significant implications for both theoretical frameworks in Chinese second language acquisition and practical pedagogical approaches, potentially informing the development of targeted instructional strategies for fostering syllabic awareness across different proficiency levels.

Keywords: Teaching Grammar; Error Analysis; Syllabic and Syntactic Errors; L2 Acquisition