ENGLISH LEARNERS' L2 PROCESSING OF THE LEXICAL CUE IN CHINESE MULTI-VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

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English and Chinese have typologically different cues in distinguishing verbs in Multi-Verb Constructions (MVCs), which refer to a series of verbs appearing in a mono-clause, without pauses or conjunctions. Multiple verbs in English are distinguished via morphological cues, represented as finite and non-finite forms. In contrast, Chinese multiple verbs in most cases appear in bare verbs, and the aspectual adverb "*yijing*" (already) as a lexical cue can help determine the function of verbs in Chinese MVCs, i.e., "*yijing"* is only allowed before finite verbs (Li& Thompson, 1981; Xing, 2004). Given the typological differences in the cue of MVCs between English and Chinese, it arises the question of whether English learners can process "*yijing*" in Chinese sentences with multiple verbs in a native-like way.

An online self-paced reading and an offline grammaticality judgement task were designed to test if participants were sensitive to the violated position of "*yijing*" in MVCs and if this lexical cue is processable among English learners. 56 participants including 25 native Chinese speakers (age: 18-20) and 32 English-L1-Chinese-L2 learners (age: 19-21) were involved in the research. Participants in the L2 group were 3rd-year and 4th-year undergraduates of related majors in Chinese studies in UK universities and were ranked as above-intermediate L2 learners according to an HSK model test. The results showed variation in the sensitivity to the lexical cue in different types of MVCs. In sentences with Verb Phrase (VP) as subject, English learners were less sensitive to the lexical cue online and offline in comparison with Chinese natives. However, in other types of sentences, i.e., VP as object, pivotal, and serial verb sentences, they showed native-like sensitivity both online and offline. This evidenced the processability of lexical cues for L2 learners from a morphology-salient L1 and meanwhile revealed the crosslinguistic influence, i.e., "already" is allowable at the sentence initial in learners' L1 and it has been transferred into L2 processing.

Li, C. N., & Thompson, S. A. (1981). *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Xing, X. (2004). *Xiandai Hanyu Jianyushi [Pivotal Sentences in Modern Chinese]*. Beijing: Communication University of China press.