L1 CHINESE SPEAKERS' REAL-TIME LEXICAL-SEMANTIC PROCESSING OF CHINESE NEOLOGISMS COINED BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING L2 CHINESE LEARNERS

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Abstract

Chinese neological errors are deviant, non-existent lexical forms coined by English-speaking L2 learners with incomplete lexical knowledge (Xing, 2003). Wang (2018) has examined 4 types of Chinese neologisms coined by English-speaking L2ers, including morphological substitution (e.g. *内 边>里边, inside), blended misuse between word and morpheme (e.g. *花公园>花园, park), clipping by forming a non-existent word (*古楼>古代楼阁, ancient building), and existent structure but non-existent word (e.g. *比赛会>比赛, sport meeting). However, up-to-date studies have never investigated L1 Chinese speakers' processing of different types of neological errors coined by English-speaking L2 learners from a real-time psycholinguistic paradigm. Through examining processing time, we may infer L1 Chinese speakers' lexical-semantic processing difficulty of different neological types. The scholastic inquiry is presented as to whether L1 Chinese speakers' real-time processing times are significantly different for different neological types coined by L2 learners. The study recruited 90 native Mandarin participants with at least a secondary schooling background (age range: 18-22). They were required to complete a self-paced reading with 40 independent critical sentences (4 neological types×10=40 in total) and 40 fillers operative on PCIbex Farm, followed by answering a semantically related question after each sentence. All stimuli in each experiment were aligned with the Latin square design. Unexpectedly, contrary to the hypothesis that "forming non-existent words by clipping" might trigger the longest average processing time, "morphological substitution" incurred the longest period in both critical and post-critical regions on average (mathematically, not statistically). Furthermore, post hoc multiple comparisons of ANOVA (i.e. inferential statistics) substantiates that the participants' processing times were not significantly different between any two neological types, theoretically implying that L1 Chinese users were insensitive to between-type neological discrepancies despite manifesting a relative difference in processing time on average.

The most prominent, distinguishing feature of L1 Chinese users is their sound knowledge of word-morpheme boundary and efficient strategy to parse lexical and syntactic information. They automatically view words comprising morphemes as a holistic construction and comprehend meaning on a macroscopic, contextual level. Regardless of any neological type, L1 users apply the same principle and procedure to effectively figure out any uncertain lexical meaning. They closely engage with the syntactic environment and automatically predict semantically dubious segments. Once L1 users find a cue in either the pre-critical region or post-critical region to imply the possible meaning of a neologism, they tend to search their mental lexicon to confirm an orthographically similar item that also fits in the context. Ultimately, this logical chain well accounts for L1 Chinese speakers' null statistically significant timing and insensitivity among different neological types.