Lexical categorization of cutting and breaking events by Chinese and Korean-speaking learners of Japanese

HONG Chunzi

This study conducted a language production experiment to investigate commonalities and diversities of the lexical categorization of "cutting and breaking" events (i.e., separation in material integrity by a person) in Japanese Korean, and Chinese and comparing two L2 learner groups Chinese and Korean-speaking advanced foreign language learners of Japanese (CJL and KJL) to explore the common features of L2 learners and L1 influence. 3 aspects of lexical categorization of "cutting and breaking" events were analyzed: ①the number of word types, ②the coverage of words, ③the way of distinguishing the events by words.

The results show that, firstly, about the number of word types, JNS's word types were the least, compare to KNS and CNS. CJL and KJL showed some common features, such as overgeneralizing the L2 words which can be applied to a wide range of references, and avoiding the L2 words which can only be applied to specific references. As a result, the number of word types was similar in CJL and KJL.

On the other hand, CJL and KJL showed some differences in the coverage of L2 words and the way of distinguishing the events in L2, from which we can say that the learners were affected by the L1. In addition, L2 learners not only overgeneralized the L2 words which can be applied to a wide range of references, but also overgeneralized the L2 counterparts of L1 words which can be applied to a wide range of references, indicating that L1 words which can be applied to a wide range of references are transferred more easily.

Furthermore, about the way of distinguishing the events by words, L2 learners acquired the general common lexical categorization features of these languages (i.e., the predictability of the locus of separation), while as to the more specific way of distinguishing the events in L2, the L1 influence was observed. CJL showed greater difficulty with the breaking verbs than KJL since the meaning components expressed in the verbs are different in CJL's L1 and L2.

As to the influence of the commonalities and differences of L1 and L2, the results support the Modified Hierarchical Model (Pavlenko, 2009). The general common lexical categories of L1 and L2 were easy to learn, for the positive transfer of L1. When L1 and L2 lexical categories were partial (non) equivalence, the partial overlap equal part of L1 and L2 were learned through positive transfer, while the negative transfer was observed to the different parts of L1 and L2. While constructing new lexical categories that are different from L1 was quite challenging when lexical categories of L1 and L2 were quite different.

Among the "number of word types", "coverage of words", "the way of distinguishing the events by words", the influence of "number of word types" has the smallest influence, while "the way of distinguishing the events by words" has the largest influence were newly found.