

Onomatopoeic Knowledge among Chinese Learners of Japanese in China:

An Examination through the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale

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Abstract

This study delves into the comprehension of onomatopoeic and mimetic words among native Chinese speakers who are learning Japanese in a foreign language setting. The research encompassed a survey of 52 third-year students majoring in Japanese at a university in China. The methodology utilized the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale to gauge the students' understanding of 30 onomatopoeic and mimetic words commonly found in their textbooks. The findings revealed that, despite the presence of these words in educational materials, there was a notable deficiency in the learners' grasp of onomatopoeic and mimetic vocabulary. The proficiency level varied significantly across different words. A detailed analysis of each target word and instances of its misuse suggested several factors influencing the acquisition of such vocabulary among Japanese learners in a non-native environment. These factors include the frequency of these words in teaching materials, the accuracy of translations and example sentences provided, and the learners' comprehension of their meanings. Additionally, the study highlighted that the polysemy and the contextual usage characteristics of onomatopoeic and mimetic words play a significant role in impacting the learning outcomes.

[Keywords] knowledge of onomatopoeias, Vocabulary Knowledge Scale, intentional learning, incidental learning