

Effects of Onomatopoeia Type and Context Quantity on Lexical Inference of Japanese Onomatopoeia:

A Study of Chinese Learners' Listening Test

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Abstract

This study investigated lexical inferencing of onomatopoeia with sound-symbolic features and examined whether the difficulty of lexical inferencing depends on the type of onomatopoeia and the quantity of context. A multiple-choice listening test was conducted with 81 Chinese learners of Japanese in Japan, considering onomatopoeia type (*giongo* or *gitaigo*) and the quantity of context (high or low) as variables. The analysis revealed the following two points: 1) Scores for *giongo* were lower than for *gitaigo*, indicating a greater difficulty in lexical inferencing of the former. This may be due to the avoidance of the use of Japanese sound symbolism when inferring *giongo* and the negative transfer of the native language. 2) The effect of quantity of context varies by the type of onomatopoeia. While no significant influence of context was observed for *giongo*, *gitaigo* was easier to infer under conditions with a high context. These findings suggest that knowledge of Japanese sound symbolism is essential for learners to infer the meanings of *giongo*, while providing rich contextual information is crucial for *gitaigo*. This study is significant in exploring ways to support learners in successfully inferring the meanings of onomatopoeia.

[Keywords] onomatopoeia, *giongo/gitaigo*, sound symbolism, quantity of context,
lexical inferencing