

Effects of linguistic similarity on Japanese text processing by native Chinese and Korean speakers

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Summary

The present study investigated the effects of linguistic similarities on the reading of two types of Japanese texts, one with many of both kanji-presented words and one with katakana-presented loanwords, by native Chinese and Korean speakers learning Japanese. Based on a Japanese vocabulary and grammar test, 20 matched pairs of native Chinese and Korean speakers (20 each) were selected to be equal in lexical and grammar skills. Native Chinese and Korean groups were asked to read two texts (one with many kanji words, and one with many katakana words) displayed on a computer monitor using the self-paced reading technique. The speed of reading each part of the texts was automatically measured and recorded by computer. The study found the following three points. First, due to script similarity of kanji used in Chinese and Japanese, native Chinese speakers processed kanji-presented words in a text faster than native Korean speakers. Second, due to Korean and Japanese being agglutinate languages, native Korean speakers processed complex predicates faster than native Chinese speakers. Third, due to similarity between both Korean and Japanese phonetic scripts, native Korean speakers processed katakana-presented words faster than native Chinese speakers. Linguistic similarities between learners' first language and target language were clearly shown to have their effects on text processing.

Key words : text processing, linguistic similarity, native Chinese and Korean speakers, Japanese learners