

Development of Linguist Students' Lexical Reading Skills in a Foreign Language by the Method of Lexical Item Meaning Morphemic Analysis

By

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Abstract

The lexical skills development in the process of teaching Chinese as a foreign language to linguist students comes to the fore, since it is the volume of learned lexical items that most determines the development of occupational skills and competencies. The lexical skills development effectiveness is determined by the ability of students to correctly use lexical items in all language activities, which «significantly depends on correct lexical item meaning understanding» (Shen Heling, 2011). Understanding of a text in a foreign language also depends on understanding of the lexical item meaning. Today, the most commonly used method in Russia for explaining the Chinese lexical item meaning is the dictionary entry method, according to which a new lexical item is given hieroglyphically, with its phonetic sound pinyin and its meaning. But this approach does not take into account the Chinese language peculiarities, namely, the word formation peculiarities - the complex word meaning is made up and determined by the meaning of each hieroglyph forming it. The authors justify the view that the most efficient method of developing lexical skills is the morphemic analysis method, which suggests explaining the meaning of a complex Chinese word by explaining the meaning of morphemes forming it. The morphemic analysis method will help students not only to better understand the meaning of a complex word, but also to deepen their knowledge in Chinese language word formation, will contribute to understanding the functioning of morphemes in complex words, as well as sentence members, which will significantly quicken the memorization of lexical items, reproduction of lexical items in speech, will increase the effectiveness of developing reading skills in Chinese and fostering tolerance, because «today tolerance is a fundamental universal principle the world, in general, and the individual community, in particular, should be based on.» (Abdrifikova Albina, 2017).

Keywords: teaching Chinese, morphemic analysis, word formation, logical links, lexical and

grammatical links, complex words, lexical reading skills.

1. Introduction

The relations of comprehensive partnership and cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation contribute to a constant expansion of the society areas that need specialists with the knowledge of Chinese. Following the increase in the need for specialists with the knowledge of Chinese, the requirements to the quality of linguistic education and quality of competence in Chinese as a foreign language increase expectedly. In March 2021, a document entitled "Chinese as a foreign language. Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards" (GF0025-2021) was published on the website of the Ministry of Education of the PRC, which regulates all competencies that should be mastered by a student studying Chinese as a foreign language. It also indicates the number of syllables, hieroglyphs, words and grammatical points required for mastering for each language proficiency level. It is expected to transfer from the 6-level system of the international standardized Chinese language proficiency test HSK for non-native Chinese speakers to the 9-level system. As a result, there is a sharp increase in the requirements to the number of lexical items from 5000 to 11092 lexical items that should be mastered by students. The number of classroom hours established by the Federal State Educational Standard 3++ (FSES3++) is insufficient for mastering such number of lexical items. And the teacher has the task of developing a set of skills in students that would allow them to develop their vocabulary independently and effectively. One of the most efficient activities allowing not only to increase vocabulary, but also to broaden knowledge about the target-language country, is reading literature in the studied language.

2. Methods

Today, the most common method in Russia for explaining the lexical item meaning is the dictionary entry method, where a word is given hieroglyphically with its phonetic transcription pinyin and translation into Russian. This method of introducing and explaining vocabulary is used both for simple one-morpheme lexical items and for complex lexical items consisting of two or more morphemes.

Currently, the teaching methods of European languages such as English, French, German are applied to the Chinese language. But this approach does not take into account the Chinese language peculiarities. Its disadvantages are students' perception of lexical items as an element indivisible into semantic parts, as well as the absence or lack of knowledge about the word formation specifics in the Chinese language.

As a result, students are unable to see the relationship between the meaning of a complex word and the meaning of the elements forming it. Students are forced to memorize new vocabulary as "new", without finding a relationship with previously studied material. This significantly reduces the ability to develop vocabulary quickly and efficiently. This circumstance also negatively affects the development of reading skills, since hieroglyphs are remembered only in the composition of previously studied words. And students, seeing previously studied hieroglyphs in the composition of not studied words, cannot remember these hieroglyphs, as if they are seeing them for the first time.

Even if a new complex word in a text consists entirely of previously studied hieroglyphs, it causes difficulties in reading. If students are reminded in the composition of which word or words, they have previously seen these hieroglyphs, then they immediately remember their

reading, but find it difficult to assume the meaning of a new word consisting of previously studied hieroglyphs.

Different teaching methods should be applied to Chinese words with different structure. 80% of the total volume of lexical items are complex words, that is, consisting of two or more morphemes. Therefore, the main focus should be on methods for explaining the meaning of complex words, as well as the ability to predefine the meaning of an unfamiliar lexical item based on the analysis of morphemes forming it. Development of morphemic analysis skills will also contribute to development of lexical reading skills.

The morphemic analysis method with a focus on explaining the lexical item meaning is caused by the Chinese language word-forming peculiarities. V.I. Gorelov distinguished such ways of forming complex words as «compounding, semi-affixation, affixation, transposition, collision, separation and reduplication» (Gorelov, 1984). Compounding is dominant in the Chinese language word-formation system. Subordinating and coordinating complex words are formed as a result of compounding. Using the example of subordinating complex words, we will consider the application of the morphemic word analysis method, which also helps to understand the Chinese mentality specifics.

If we will analyze the methods of forming complex ideographic hieroglyphs, as well as the methods of forming complex words, phrases and simple sentences, then we will see that the same grammatical and syntactic links are used at these four levels.

Chinese linguists distinguish «five types of subordinating complex words: definition, verb-object, verb-complement, subject-predicate and special type» (Gao, 2019). At the sentence level, six sentence members are distinguished: the subject, the predicate, the object, the attribute, the adverbial modifier and complement (post-positive predicated definition) (Li Dejin, 2008). Let's consider the logical links between the components of subordinating complex words and syntactic links between the Chinese sentence members.

With a definition link type between complex word components, the first part explains the second part. For example: the complex word 工人 [gōngrén] *worker* is formed by adding two morphemes 工 [gōng] *work* and 人 [rén] *person*, the first of which refers to the relative feature of the object, and the second - to the object itself. We see a similar link type in the sentence between the attribute and the attributed word. For example, the phrase 汉语老师 [hànyǔlǎoshī] *Chinese teacher* is formed by adding two words 汉语 [hànyǔ] *Chinese language* and 老师 [lǎoshī] *teacher*, where the first word serves as an attribute, and the second - as an attributed word.

The Chinese language is characterized by a direct word order in a sentence, a fixed word order in a phrase, and a fixed word order within a complex word. This Chinese language peculiarity is due to the absence of morphological changes and the word order at the level of a complex word, phrase or sentence performs a semantic distinctive function. This means that, in definition-type subordinating complex words, the first component will always refer to the object feature, and the second component - to the object itself.

Subordinating complex words of the verb-object type are complex words, where the first component denotes an action and the second - the object of this action. For example: 动身 [dòngshēn] *to take the road; to take off; to drive out* is formed by adding two morphemes 动 [dòng] *to move* and 身 [shēn] *body*. We see a similar link type in the sentence between

the verbal predicate and object. For example, in the sentence "我学习汉语。", the phrase 学习汉语 [xuéxihànyǔ] *to study Chinese* is formed by adding two words 学习 [xuéxí] *to study* and 汉语 [hànyǔ] *Chinese language*, where the first word expresses an action and serves as a verbal predicate in the sentence, and the second word expresses the action object and serves as an object in the sentence.

Subordinating complex words of the verb-complement type are complex words, where the first component denotes an action and the second - the action result. For example: 升高 [shēnggāo] *to raise to lift* is formed by adding two morphemes 升 [shēng] *to rise* and 高 [gāo] *high*. We see a similar link type in the sentence between the predicate and the postpositive predicatedefinition. For example, in the sentence "你说得对。", the phrase 说得对 [shuōdeduì] *to say correctly* is formed by adding the verb 说 [shuō] *to say*, the adjective 对 [duì] *correct, right* and the structural particle 得 [de], which is used for expressions of grammatical links. In this phrase, we see the verb predicate expressing the action, and the result of this action expressed by the adjective serving as a postpositive predicatedefinition in the sentence in combination with the structural particle.

Subordinating complex words of the subject-predicate type are complex words, where the first component denotes an object and the second - a feature (action as a variable feature or quality as a constant feature). Thus, complex wordcomponents are in a subject-predicative relationship. For example: 地震 [dìzhèn] *earthquake* is formed by adding two morphemes 地 [dì] *earth* and 震 [zhèn] *to quake*. We see a similar link type in the sentence between the subject and the predicate. For example, in the sentence "我休息。 *I have a rest*", the first component 我 [wǒ] is a pronoun and serves as a noun, that is, a subject, the second component 休息 [xiūxi] is a verb, that is, a predicate. In Chinese sentences, the subject is always in preposition, the predicate - in postposition. We see a similar word order in subordinating complex words of the subject-predicative type.

Subordinating complex words of the special type are complex words formed as a result of adding an autosemantic morpheme and synsemantic morpheme. There are few such words in the Chinese vocabulary, so we will not consider them.

Based on the performed analysis, we can conclude that the morpheme in a complex word function in the same way as a sentence member. Thus, the morphemic analysis method will help not only to better understand the meaning of a complex lexical item, word formation of complex words, but also the work order in a phrase and sentence.

The morphemic analysis method involves not only the introduction of new vocabulary by the explanation of the meaning of morphemes forming them, but also the explanation of logical links between complex wordcomponents, as well as the explanation of the Chinese languageword formation peculiarities.

Here are some examples of using this method. All exercises based on the morphological analysis of lexical items can be divided into two groups: 1) work with a lexical item isolated from context, 2) work with a lexical item in context.

Here are some examples of morphemic analysis exercises for lexical items isolated from context.

Task 1. When explaining the meaning of some complex word, the teacher consistently explains the meaning of each morpheme that is part of this lexical item, but does not say the meaning of the whole lexical item, then the teacher asks students, based on the meaning of morphemes, to independently formulate the meaning of this complex word. After listening to several proposed options, the teacher gives the meaning of new lexical item, explains the way of word formation, as well as cultural and national peculiarities, if they are reflected in this lexical item. For example:

The complex word 动员 [dòngyuán] *to mobilize* is formed by adding two morphemes 动 [dòng] *to move* and 员 [yuán] *staff*, since the complex word components are in unequal relations, so this word is a subordinating complex word. Since the first morpheme names the action, and the second - the action object, this is a subordinating complex word of the verb-object type.

Task 2. During the introduction of some lexical item, one morpheme of which has already been studied previously, and the second morpheme is a new, the explanation of such lexical item should begin with a repetition of the previously studied morpheme. The teacher asks students to say its meaning and lexical items, which include it. This is done in order to show students that the morpheme meaning is preserved regardless of which compound word it is used in. It also allows to repeat the previously learned material. After making sure that students remembered the meaning of the studied morpheme, the teacher explains the meaning of the second, not yet studied morpheme. And asks students to formulate the complex word meaning based on the meaning of all morphemes. After listening to several options, the teacher says the correct one, also commenting on the way of word formation. For example, it is necessary to introduce a new word 食堂 [shítáng] *dining room*, which is formed by adding two morphemes 食 [shí] *to eat* and 堂 [táng] *hall*. Among these two morphemes, 食 [shí] *to eat* was previously studied, and the morpheme 堂 [táng] *hall* is a new morpheme. The teacher asks students to remember previously studied words that include the morpheme 食 [shí] *to eat*. For example, 食物 [shíwù] *food products*, consisting of two morphemes 食 [shí] *to eat* and 物 [wù] *thing, object* and 食品 [shípǐn] *foodstuff*, also consisting of two morphemes 食 [shí] *to eat* and 品 [pǐn] *thing, object*. These examples express very similar concepts and are united by the morpheme 食 [shí] *to eat*. Having remembered the meaning of the morpheme 食 [shí] *to eat*, you can proceed to explain the meaning of the new lexical item.

Task 3. When it is necessary to introduce several complex lexical items consisting of previously studied morphemes, it is recommended to introduce these lexical items using the next task. Morphemes that form these complex words are written in two columns. In column A, there are morphemes in preposition in a complex word. In column B, there are morphemes in postposition in a complex word. Column C - meanings of complex lexical items that should result from the combination of these morphemes. Students should group morphemes so as to get the desired meaning. The task can be performed in teams or independently. It is necessary to allocate a certain amount of time to perform the task independently. After the task is checked, mistakes are corrected, necessary comments on word formation and complex word meaning are given. For example:

A	B	C
开	疼	<i>To lift the curtain</i>
改	幕	<i>To shorten</i>
头	短	<i>Head ache</i>

Here is an example of the morphemic analysis exercise for lexical items in context.

Task 4. A context can be used to introduce a new lexical item and to explain its meaning. If we introduce a lexical item in a sentence, then all words, except for the introduced lexical item, should be studied by students. Only in this case will they be able to fully concentrate on analyzing the new lexical item. For example, the teacher demonstrates the sentence «我去书店买书。» to students. The aim is to introduce a new lexical item 书店 [shūdiàn] *bookstore*. All other words in this sentence are already familiar to students, the morphemes forming the new word are also familiar to students, that is, they know their pronunciation and meaning separately, but do not know the complex word meaning. First, the teacher asks students to read the sentence, underlining the unfamiliar word. As a result, we get "我去书店买书.". Then we analyze the sentence, skipping the unfamiliar word. "我去.....买书。 *I'm going to buy a book.*". Since the morphemic analysis method also helps to develop linguistic feeling, the teacher can ask suggestive questions. For example, "Where do you most often buy books?" Analysis of a new lexical item can begin from both the first and second morphemes. In this example, we see the independent use of the morpheme 书 [shū] *book* and the use of the complex word 书店 [shūdiàn] *bookstore*, so it is better to start the explanation from the second morpheme, since the meaning of the first is obvious. The morpheme 店 [diàn] is found in the complex word 商店 [shāngdiàn] formed by the combination of the morpheme 商 [shāng] *trade* and 店 [diàn] *store*. After analyzing the meaning of these two morphemes, we get the meaning of the complex word 书店 [shūdiàn] *bookstore*. After that, we return to the original sentence. "我去书店买书。 *I'm going to the bookstore to buy a book.*".

3. Results and Discussion

The method of morphemic analysis of lexical items in developing lexical skills proposes mastering the trilogy "syllable-hieroglyph-lexical item" by students, that is, the introduction of lexical items by explaining the meaning of morphemes forming them. Students should understand the main Chinese language word formation peculiarities. It is necessary to emphasize the independence of the syllable in the Chinese language. During the study of Chinese hieroglyphic writing, students should, first of all, understand single-syllable words, with their ability to function as a morpheme in the word formation process, as well as understand the meaning of a morpheme in a complex word.

4. Summary

The method of morphemic analysis of lexical items in developing lexical skills contributes to a comprehensive mastery of the meaning of lexical items, a gradual understanding of the national specifics of the Chinese language and the peculiarities of the Chinese mentality and develops linguistic feeling skills, which will allow students to quickly develop vocabulary with a minimum amount of effort and time. And also it will help to bring up a creative person, because «the question of bringing up a creative person is being raised with increasing frequency in our society» (Kayumova, 2019; Barry, 2022; Bukia, 2021).

5. Conclusions

The current system of training linguist students studying Chinese as a foreign language does not fully take into account the Chinese vocabulary peculiarities, namely, the vocabulary is introduced without taking into account word-forming models and without explaining

meanings of complex words by explanation of meanings of morphemes forming them. In this regard, the following measures are proposed to solve the revealed issues: development of a set of exercises aimed at developing morphemic word analysis skills.

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