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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>A study on classifier acquisition in Chinese learning</th>
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Introduction

Chinese learners are always unable to distinguish Chinese noun classifiers from measure words, because they only treat classifiers as grammatical components in language. This inaccuracy correlation makes it particularly difficult for foreign Chinese learners to master noun classifier, as the acquisition of classifiers involves semantic understanding and categorization concept from which the classifiers are approached. The aim of the study is to investigate how native speakers understand noun classifiers as well as that of Chinese-Swedish bilingual children, by carrying out tests on these two groups. A noun classifier production test was developed to assess the bilingual children's proficiency, with 5 speakers in each level according to their Chinese proficiency.

Methods & Procedures:

- prepare 30 cards with images of daily objects
- present the cards to each participant one by one in a fixed order
- expect the participants to name each object with correct noun classifier in Chinese
- give enough time for participants to think and rehearse
- encourage optional answers
- followed by a discussion over the correct answers
- each participant was given a score based on their correctness and fluency
- to provide the author with a more insightful understanding on participants' classifier production

Findings & Discussions

Over the three rounds of recordings, the Swedish speakers are found to have progressed on the classifier production over some items that basically fall into two categories (Figure 1). The Swedish speakers are found to have improved over time on some items that have been encountered frequently in everyday life. The degree of classifier usage is not simply a matter of frequency of use. The other category consists of objects whose associated classifier has already been acquired.

The Swedish speakers have more advanced knowledge of classifiers in comparison to the Chinese learners. For example, the Swedish speakers are more likely to use "en" for objects with flat surfaces and round edges like "boko" (a book) and "papper" (a newspaper) since they realize that classifier "en" is used for objects with flat surfaces. Similarly, the Chinese learners are more likely to use "yi" for a classifier for a classifier for "ju" (a cup) after the classifier bar (E) is introduced as a classifier for something to grab with. The Swedish speakers apply a top-down manner in classifier acquisition as in normal learning. They try to match individual noun into conceptual categories where the noun is associated with a cluster of nouns. This pattern always proves to be difficult and misleading since the boundary between categories of classifiers is usually vague.

Figure 4 shows that the percentage correct usage of classifiers by bilingual children is higher than the adult Swedish speakers. "Improper usage" refers to the use of classifiers that is marginally acceptable. Some items with which bilingual children have a higher production than the Swedish speakers are described in Figure 5. Children are found to utilize the animal classifier zh（E）most frequently, as they have much higher productions of "yi" (a horse) and "yi" (a cat). Most of the items listed in Figure 2 are very common daily objects that the children have acquired and use frequently in Chinese.

School of Humanities and Social Sciences
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