Title

Phonological Awareness and Dictation in L1 Italian Learners of L2 Chinese with and without Dyslexia

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between phonological awareness and dictation accuracy in first-language (L1) Italian learners of second-language (L2) Chinese, paying particular attention to differences between students with and without dyslexia. Although phonological awareness is well understood to play a key role in literacy acquisition for alphabetic languages, its impact on orthographic tasks in morphosyllabic second languages such as Chinese is less well understood, particularly in the context of developmental reading disorders.

This research primarily aims to assess whether the accuracy of Chinese dictation, which requires mapping sounds to characters based on auditory input, is affected by underlying phonological processing abilities. The study addresses the following questions:

Do dyslexic learners perform less accurately in Chinese dictation than their peers without dyslexia? (2) Is dictation accuracy associated with performance on phonological awareness tasks?

An experimental battery comprising phonological awareness tasks targeting onset and rime detection, pinyin writing, and a Chinese dictation task was administered to Italian secondary school students (N = 80). In this task, learners were asked to write down words presented orally that were composed of familiar characters. The sample included matched groups of students with and without dyslexia.

The results showed that, although both groups were familiar with the lexical items, learners with dyslexia performed significantly less accurately in the dictation task. This suggests that difficulties in phonological awareness may hinder the ability to retrieve and transcribe the correct characters from auditory input.

These findings provide new evidence that phonological awareness is a key predictor of success in Chinese dictation among learners of alphabetic languages, and that dictation can serve as a diagnostic indicator of difficulties in phonological processing.

This study contributes to both applied phonetics and second language acquisition research by underscoring the phonological demands of character-based writing systems, especially for learners with dyslexia.