

A Comprehensive Approach to Sino-Korean Vocabulary Instruction Based on Word-Formation Productivity and Semantic Components

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Abstract: This article examines a comprehensive approach to teaching Sino-Korean vocabulary based on word-formation productivity and semantic components. The relevance of the study is determined by the high proportion of Sino-Korean vocabulary in the Korean lexicon and the need to improve the efficiency of its acquisition by foreign learners. The paper analyzes principles for selecting Sino-Korean elements based on their word-formation productivity and proposes a method for explaining word meanings through semantic components without teaching Chinese characters themselves. Particular attention is paid to distinguishing between lexical units that should be learned holistically and those that allow semantic analysis. The proposed approach aims to systematize vocabulary, facilitate the understanding of new words, and improve learners' language competence.

Keywords: Sino-Korean vocabulary, Korean language, vocabulary teaching, word-formation productivity, semantic components, foreign language teaching.

Introduction: In the process of learning a foreign language, the development of vocabulary skills plays a crucial role, as lexical competence largely determines successful communication. In the Korean language, this issue becomes particularly significant due to the high proportion of Sino-Korean vocabulary. Therefore, mastering such vocabulary is an essential condition for improving language proficiency and developing communicative competence.

An important aspect of teaching Sino-Korean vocabulary is the selection of instructional material. One of the most effective principles is word-formation productivity, which involves identifying those Sino-Korean elements that generate the largest number of words and are most frequently used. Analysis of the lexical system shows that a substantial portion of Korean vocabulary is of Sino-Korean origin, and certain elements participate in forming a large number of derived words. For example, a single element may

appear in multiple words such as 학생, 생일, 생활, demonstrating high productivity. Such elements are especially valuable for instruction, as they allow learners to expand their vocabulary efficiently through a limited set of core components.

Equally important is the method of presenting the meanings of Sino-Korean words. The traditional approach based on teaching Chinese characters themselves is not always effective for foreign learners. As an alternative, a method based on identifying semantic components within words is proposed. This approach groups words according to shared meanings of their components, making it possible to reveal recurring semantic patterns and facilitate vocabulary acquisition. For instance, words such as 가족, 가정, 가구 share the meaning "home/family," while 작가, 음악가, 화가 reflect the meaning "a person engaged in a certain activity." Similarly, 가격 and 물가 express the

meaning “price,” whereas *추가* convey the meaning “addition.”

The use of such semantic groupings enables learners not only to memorize individual words but also to build stable associative connections between them. This contributes to the development of the ability to independently interpret unfamiliar vocabulary. For example, once learners understand the meaning “a person who does something,” they can more easily infer the meaning of new words with a similar structure.

At the same time, it is important to note that not all Sino-Korean words are suitable for semantic decomposition. In some cases, it is more effective to learn them as whole units. For example, the word *국가* should be taught as a single lexical item without dividing it into components, as such analysis may lead to misunderstanding. On the other hand, words with transparent semantic structure can be effectively taught using an analytical approach, which enhances linguistic intuition.

Thus, teaching Sino-Korean vocabulary requires a combination of approaches, including the selection of material based on word-formation productivity and the explanation of meanings through semantic components. Additional importance lies in considering the structural features of Sino-Korean elements, which may exhibit properties of both words and affixes, occupying an intermediate position in the language system. The integrated application of these principles ensures systematic vocabulary acquisition, facilitates lexical expansion, and improves the overall effectiveness of Korean language learning.

Another important aspect of Sino-Korean vocabulary teaching concerns the selection and presentation of lexical items in actual educational contexts. It is emphasized that vocabulary selection should not rely solely on dictionary listings or frequency data, as such sources may not fully reflect real-life language use across different social groups and situations. For example, corpus-based frequency lists may overrepresent certain lexical items while underrepresenting others depending on the composition of the data. Therefore, vocabulary selection in teaching should consider learners’ needs, proficiency level, and communicative context, rather

than depending exclusively on statistical frequency.

In addition, it is important to note that not all Sino-Korean words should be treated equally in instruction. Some lexical items function as basic vocabulary units and are best introduced through direct explanation, visual aids, or contextual usage. In contrast, other words may be more effectively taught through semantic analysis based on shared components. This distinction corresponds to different levels of vocabulary processing: a primary level focused on direct comprehension and a secondary level aimed at deeper semantic generalization.

Furthermore, the analysis of Sino-Korean elements demonstrates that their internal structure is not always transparent, and their meanings may vary depending on context. In some cases, the same phonological element can represent different semantic functions, which requires careful pedagogical treatment. For instance, the element “가” may convey meanings such as “house,” “person,” “price,” or “addition,” depending on the lexical environment. This multiplicity of meanings highlights the importance of organizing vocabulary into semantic groups rather than relying on a one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning.

Finally, it is also noted that Sino-Korean elements may exhibit characteristics that place them between independent lexical items and affix-like units. Such elements can participate both in word formation and in larger syntactic structures, which reflects their intermediate status within the language system. This feature further supports the need for a flexible and integrative teaching approach that takes into account both structural and semantic properties of Sino-Korean vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated that effective teaching of Sino-Korean vocabulary requires a comprehensive approach that combines careful selection of instructional material with appropriate methods of semantic presentation. The significant proportion of Sino-Korean words in the Korean lexicon necessitates their systematic inclusion in the language learning process.

The analysis has shown that one of the most effective selection criteria is word-formation productivity, which

allows for the identification of the most frequent and functionally important elements. Mastery of such elements enables learners to expand their vocabulary by generating multiple derived words from a limited number of core components.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the meanings of Sino-Korean words can be effectively taught without direct instruction of Chinese characters. A method based on semantic components allows vocabulary to be grouped according to shared meanings, fostering analytical skills and facilitating comprehension of new lexical items. It is also important to distinguish between words that should be learned holistically and those that benefit from analytical treatment.

In conclusion, the integration of word-formation and semantic approaches enhances vocabulary acquisition, supports knowledge systematization, and improves overall language proficiency. Future research may focus on developing practical teaching materials based on these principles and testing their effectiveness in educational settings.

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