

IRSTI: 14.07.09

UDC 37.0:811.581

<https://doi.org/10.52269/NTDG2542278>

ANALYSIS OF EASILY CONFUSED WORDS AS TYPICAL LEXICAL ERRORS IN CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING THEM

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Vocabulary instruction is an essential component of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. It should be noted that the degree to which learners master vocabulary directly affects their communicative competence. However, one of the main difficulties in learning Chinese lies in the large number of homonyms, synonyms, and near-synonyms, as well as the overall richness and complexity of the language's lexical system. These factors create significant challenges for foreign students. As their vocabulary expands, learners increasingly encounter words that are easily confused. At the same time, in contemporary methodology for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, there is a noticeable lack of research addressing the problem of easily confusable words for speakers of Russian or Kazakh. In this study, the authors aim to examine this issue using the example of students at Kazakhstani universities who have been studying Chinese for 2–3 years or more. For this purpose, a survey was conducted to identify the types of lexical errors in students' speech related to difficulties in pronunciation, similar orthography, semantic similarity, and other factors. Based on contrastive analysis theory and an analysis of learner errors, the researchers developed a classification of specific error types. It is expected that the results of this study will contribute to improving the process of learning Chinese as a foreign language for Kazakhstani students.

Key words: Chinese lexicology, easily confused words, synonyms and semantically similar words, words with equivalent translations, words with identical or similar pronunciation, error analysis.

ҚЫТАЙ ТІЛІН ОҚУ ПРОЦЕСІНДЕ БІЛІМ АЛУШЫЛАР ЖИІ ШАТАСТЫРАТЫН СӨЗДЕРДІ ЛЕКСИКАЛЫҚ ҚАТЕЛЕР РЕТІНДЕ ТАЛДАУ ЖӘНЕ ОЛАРДЫ ТҮЗЕТУ ӘДІСТЕРІ

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Лексиканы меңгеру шет тілі ретінде қытай тілін оқытудың маңызды бөлігі болып табылады. Студенттердің сөздік қорды меңгеру деңгейі олардың коммуникациялық қабілетіне тікелей әсер етеді. Алайда, қытай тілін меңгерудің қиындығы тілдегі көптеген омонимдер, синонимдер және мағынасы жақын сөздердің болуынан, сондай-ақ жалпы тілдік лексикалық жүйесінің өте бай және күрделі болуынан туындайды. Бұл шет тілі ретінде қытай тілін оқытын халықаралық студенттер үшін шынымен де айтарлықтай қиындықтар тудырады. Атап айтқанда, олардың сөздік қоры өскен сайын олар шатастырылуға алып келетін сөздерге жиі кездеседі. Сонымен бірге, қазіргі заманғы шет тілі ретінде қытай тілін оқыту әдістемесінде ана тілі орыс немесе қазақ тілді білім алушылар үшін жиі шатастырылатын сөздер мәселесіне арналған зерттеулер өте аз. Бұл зерттеуде авторлар 2-3 жылдан астам уақыт бойы қытай тілін оқып келе жатқан Қазақстан жоғары оқу орындарының студенттері мысалында бұл мәселені зерттеуді мақсат етеді. Осы мақсатта авторлар айтылым кезінде туындайтын қиындықтар, жазылуы ұқсас, мағынасы жақын және т.б. себептерінен болатын лексикалық қателердің түрлерін анықтау үшін сауалнама жүргізді. Салыстырмалы талдау және студенттердің қателерін талдау теориясы негізінде зерттеушілер белгілі бір қате түрлерін жіктеп жасады. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері Қазақстан студенттерінің шет тілі ретінде қытай тілін меңгеру үрдісін жақсартуға ықпал етеді деп күтілуде.

Түйінді сөздер: қытай тілі лексикологиясы, жиі шатастырылатын сөздер, синонимдер және мағынасы жақын сөздер, аудармасы ұқсас сөздер, дыбысталуы бірдей немесе ұқсас сөздер, қателерді талдау.

АНАЛИЗ ЛЕГКО СПУТЫВАЕМЫХ СЛОВ КАК ТИПИЧНЫХ ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИХ ОШИБОК ПРИ ИЗУЧЕНИИ КИТАЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА И РЕКОМЕНДАЦИИ ПО ИХ УСТРАНЕНИЮ

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Обучение лексике является важной частью преподавания китайского языка как иностранного. Следует сказать, что степень усвоения словарного запаса напрямую влияет на коммуникативные способности учащихся. Однако сложностью в усвоении китайского языка является факт наличия в китайском языке большого количества омонимов, синонимов и близких по значению слов, а сама лексическая система языка чрезвычайно богата и сложна. Это действительно создает значительные трудности для иностранных студентов, изучающих китайский язык. В частности, с ростом словарного запаса студенты сталкиваются со все большим количеством легко спутываемых слов. При этом в современной методике преподавания китайского как иностранного крайне мало исследований, посвященных проблеме легко спутываемых слов для носителей русского или казахского языка. В рамках данного исследования авторы ставят задачу изучить данную проблему на примере студентов Казахских вузов, изучающих китайский язык более 2-3 лет. С этой целью авторами проведено анкетирование для определения типов лексических ошибок в речи, вызванных сложностями произношения, схожего правописания, схожие по значению и т.д. На основе теории сопоставительного анализа и анализа ошибок обучающихся, исследователи разработали определенные типы ошибок. Предполагается, что результаты этого исследования помогут улучшить процесс усвоения китайского языка как иностранного казахстанскими студентами.

Ключевые слова: лексикология китайского языка, легко спутываемые слова, синонимы и близкие по смыслу слова, слова с эквивалентным переводом, слова с одинаковым или схожим звучанием, анализ ошибок.

Introduction. In recent years, numerous studies in China have shown that among all the errors made by foreign learners of Chinese, lexical errors occur most frequently. Therefore, vocabulary teaching and learning should be considered a primary task in Chinese language education. Special attention should be paid to easily confused words, as correctly distinguishing and using them presents challenges not only for students but also for instructors who develop teaching methodologies.

Based on personal experience studying Chinese and an analysis of relevant materials, it can be noted that for learners of Chinese as a foreign language, fully mastering a word involves acquiring several aspects simultaneously—pronunciation, meaning, usage, and writing, as well as the ability to differentiate it from other similar words in terms of meaning, sound, syntactic function, or graphic form. Insufficient mastery of any of these components often leads to confusion between words.

Although most errors arise from similarities in meaning, confusion may also result from similarities in sound, form, or grammatical function. In addition, the learners' native language exerts a significant influence, often confusing even between Chinese words that are not similar in form, sound, or meaning.

In this study, "easily confused words" are defined as groups of words that learners of Chinese as a second language tend to mix up in their cognitive perception of meaning, regardless of the underlying reason—an issue that subsequently leads to errors in usage.

Furthermore, due to fundamental differences between Chinese and the learners' native languages, many Chinese words that have different meanings and are not semantically related are easily confused by students. As Liu Xiaoyin aptly notes: "From the perspective of foreign students learning Chinese, words that require differentiation are those language units that are easily subject to confusion in the process of understanding and using the target language. This category includes not only synonyms or near-synonyms within the Chinese linguistic system itself, but also other easily confused words related in meaning or even arising from learners' subjective perceptions. We group them under the general term 'easily confused words' or treat them as synonyms in a broad sense" [1, p.175].

At present, in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, there is a notable lack of research specifically devoted to easily confused words. Agreeing with Zhang Bo (2007), the author proposes broadening the scope of synonym studies to include words that are similar in meaning and prone to confusion [2, p.20].

This paper uniformly refers to this phenomenon as «easily confused words».

The purpose of this study is to analyze the typical lexical errors made by Kazakhstani learners of Chinese, with a particular focus on words that are easily confused. The study aims to deepen understanding of the linguistic challenges faced by learners whose native language is Kazakh or Russian and to improve the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching in Chinese as a foreign language.

Objectives of the Study

1. **To identify and classify typical lexical errors** made by Kazakhstani students learning Chinese, especially errors involving easily confused words.
2. **To examine the linguistic factors**—including differences in structure, semantics, pronunciation, and writing— that contribute to confusion between words in Chinese.
3. **To analyze the influence of the learners' native languages** (Kazakh and Russian) on their acquisition of Chinese vocabulary and the occurrence of lexical interference.
4. **To review existing pedagogical approaches** to teaching easily confused words and evaluate their relevance to Kazakhstani learners.
5. **To propose recommendations for improving instructional methods** for teaching vocabulary and preventing lexical errors among students learning Chinese as a foreign language.
6. **To highlight the lack of research** on lexical confusion among Russian- and Kazakh-speaking learners and emphasize the need for further studies in this area.

Comparative analysis of methodological approaches to the study of easily confused words in Chinese/global and Kazakhstani practice.

The study of easily confused words (ECWs) in second language acquisition relies on several methodological traditions, whose use varies between international (particularly Chinese) and Kazakhstani research.

- **Lexicographic Approach.** In Chinese L2 pedagogy this is the most developed line of research: specialized dictionaries systematically document problematic word pairs based on empirical learner data. In Kazakhstan, however, lexicographic support remains limited. The absence of ECW dictionaries designed for Kazakh- and Russian-speaking learners, together with dependence on literal translation in textbooks, often leads to the very errors observed in our “equivalent-translation” category.

- **Corpus-Based Approach.** International studies—especially in China—actively employ learner corpora (e.g., HSK corpus) to identify statistical patterns in ECW-related errors. In Kazakhstan, corpus methods in Chinese language pedagogy are only emerging. The lack of a dedicated corpus documenting Kazakhstani learners' mistakes represents a major gap, partly addressed in this study through the collection of targeted empirical data.

- **Contrastive-Interference Approach.** While global research mostly explores interference between English and Chinese, Kazakhstani learners face a triple source of influence: Kazakh (L1), Russian (L2), and Chinese (L3). This produces a distinctive error profile not adequately reflected in existing models based on bilingual interference. Research from Kazakhstan therefore, expands the scope of ECW studies to trilingual contexts.

Positioning of the Present Study. The comparative overview shows a methodological imbalance: although international research offers robust analytical tools, Kazakhstani studies lack approaches sensitive to local linguistic realities.

Materials and research methods.

In 1988, the Israeli linguist Batia Laufer proposed the concept of “synforms”—lexical units that are similar in sound or written form. She noted that such words often lead of errors among foreign language learners [3, p.113-131].

Later, in 2005, the Chinese researcher Zhang Bo put forward a similar idea by introducing the concept of “easily confused words” (易混淆词, yìhùnxiáo cí). He applied this term to words that are not synonyms and have only distant semantic connections but often cause difficulties for learners of Chinese [4, p.97-128].

In 2007, Zhang Bo further refined and expanded his concept, noting that errors in the use of such words may arise due to the influence of an intermediary language. He suggested classifying these words according to the frequency and nature of the errors they cause [5, p.98-107].

Thus, “easily confused words” are understood as lexical units with partially similar features that can mislead learners and create difficulties in correct usage [6, p.193-194].

Significant progress has already been made in teaching Chinese as a foreign language in terms of distinguishing between similar words. In recent years, several specialized dictionaries have been published, including the *Chinese-English Dictionary of Synonym Usage* edited by Deng Shousin (1994), the *Chinese Synonym Dictionary* by Ma Yanhua and Zhuang Ying (2002), *Distinguishing Synonym Usage* by Liu Naishu and Ao Guihua (2003), *Comparison of Usage of 1,700 Pairs of Near-Synonyms* by Yang Zizhou and Jia Yongfen (2005), among others. These publications, explicitly designed for learners of Chinese as a foreign language, have significantly influenced the improvement of Chinese vocabulary instruction and learning.

Alongside the publication of dictionaries, numerous scholarly articles have addressed lexical differentiation. Notable works include Zhou Li's *Distinguishing Synonyms in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language* (2004), Yang Zizhou's *Comparison of Near-Synonym Usage in Classroom Practice* (2004), Zou Xue's *Research on Synonyms and Teaching Chinese Vocabulary as a Foreign Language* (2005), Ao Guihua's *Methods of Teaching Synonym Differentiation* (2008), Wu Ling's *Systematic and Methodical Teaching of Synonyms* (2008), and Li Shaoling's *Objects and Principles of Differentiating Word Meanings* (2010), among others.

These studies have made a significant contribution to the development of a methodology for teaching Chinese vocabulary to foreign learners and have helped improve approaches to teaching synonymy.

The primary material for this study was the work by Yang Zizhou and Jia Yongfen, *Comparison of Usage of 1,700 Pairs of Near-Synonyms*, chosen for the following reasons [7, p.40].

First, its author, Yang Zizhou, is an experienced researcher and teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, with extensive practical experience and a deep understanding of the difficulties learners face.

Second, the dictionary was explicitly created for foreigners learning Chinese and includes over 1,700 word pairs that commonly cause errors among students from different countries. Although the term “near-synonyms” is used in the title, the content essentially concerns “easily confused words” in a broader sense.

This study, building on previous research, is conducted from the perspective of Kazakhstani learners of Chinese and the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. Through a questionnaire survey, the types of errors and their causes are systematized, and effective teaching methods are proposed based on the survey results and the author’s personal learning experience.

The specific research methods are as follows:

1. **Questionnaire Method:** The author-designed questionnaire consists of three parts: the first collects basic information about the respondents; the second includes four questions investigating learners’ use of easily confused words; and the third is an interview.

2. **Statistical Method:** Classification and systematization of survey results, and statistical processing of the issues identified, to provide a quantitative basis for further research.

The questionnaire consists of four main parts. The first part collects general information about the respondents, including their educational institutions, levels of Chinese proficiency, and study durations.

The second part is a 25-question multiple-choice test. It uses pairs and groups of words that, according to the literature and the authors’ observations, are frequently confused by learners of Chinese. The answer options are designed with three aspects in mind: form, pronunciation, and meaning. The test includes words with identical or similar pronunciation, words that are similar in writing, words that share common morphemes, and words that are identical or similar in meaning, either in the students’ native language or in Chinese. The correct answer must be chosen based on the context. One point is awarded for each correct answer, and zero points for an incorrect answer. There is also an option “cannot distinguish” – if participants select this, it indicates that they do not know the difference between the words, and no points are awarded.

The third part is a translation exercise consisting of 10 questions. In each question, participants are asked to create a Chinese sentence from a Russian sentence, using one of the words provided in parentheses. These words usually have similar meanings.

The fourth part of the study is an interview, aimed primarily at gaining a deeper understanding of how students use and perceive easily confused words. During the interview, it is explored how often they encounter such words, what difficulties they experience in distinguishing them, and what strategies they use to resolve related problems.

Sample and Methods. This study employed a **purposive sampling** method. The sample consisted of students from Kazakhstani universities (N=60) who had studied Chinese for more than 2–3 years and had reached proficiency levels of HSK 3–6. These criteria ensured the sample’s relevance for investigating lexical difficulties at the upper beginner and intermediate stages. The main research tool was an author-designed questionnaire. Its validity was supported by the selection of test items from authoritative dictionaries of easily confused words and the analysis of typical learner errors.

Limitations. This research is **exploratory (pilot) in nature**. Its limitations include a relatively small, non-randomized sample, which limits broad statistical generalization, and a primary focus on receptive rather than productive skills. These limitations were partially offset by including qualitative interviews and translation tasks. Recognizing these constraints is essential for interpreting the results and helps outline directions for future research, such as developing a corpus of errors from Kazakhstani learners and conducting longitudinal studies.

Results and discussion.

The respondents represented several higher education institutions. The largest proportion of participants studied at L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU), accounting for 37.1% of the sample. Students from E. A. Buketov Karaganda University and A. K. Kusainov Eurasian Academy of General Education and Innovation (EAGI) each made up 25.7% of the respondents. Participants from Ablai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages (KazUM & IMYa) constituted 8.6%, while only 2.9% of respondents were from Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU).

In terms of Chinese language proficiency, the majority of respondents demonstrated a high level of competence. Most participants (65.7%) held an HSK 5 certificate. A smaller proportion had HSK 4 and HSK 6 levels, each accounting for 11.4% of the respondents. Only 8.6% of the participants reported an HSK 3 level.

Regarding the duration of Chinese language study, the largest group of respondents (37.1%) had been studying Chinese for 3–4 years. Those with 5–6 years of study experience accounted for 34.3%, while 22.9% had studied Chinese for 2–3 years. A very small number of respondents reported longer periods of study: 2.9% had studied Chinese for 7 years, and another 2.9% indicated a study duration of 15 years.

2. To present the results of the study, five types of errors were identified in the second part of the questionnaire:

The survey conducted among Kazakhstani students made it possible to determine the most common lexical errors, which the authors of this article classified into the following types:

1. Confusion due to the identical or similar pronunciation of words;
2. Confusion due to the similar writing of characters;
3. Mixing of words with shared morphemes;
4. Mismatch of word meanings in Chinese and the native language.
5. Confusion of words with similar conceptual meanings.

The first three types of errors are relatively easy to identify and correct if appropriate teaching methods are used. However, the last two types (related to differences in meaning and conceptual similarity) are the most complex, as the causes of these errors are more diverse and closely connected to students' cognitive processes.

Table 1 – Mastery of Easily Confused Words with Identical or Similar Pronunciation:

Question	Chooosed the correct one	Chooosed the incorrect one
I called out to him from the window, but he showed no (反,应) at all.	34.7%	65.2%
Air, water, and food are (必,需) for life.	39%	61%
The story of Einstein gave me great (启,示).	17.3%	82.6%
I clearly helped him out of kindness, yet he actually (抱,怨) about me.	52.1%	47.8%
Because I went on a trip and neglected my studies, (以,致) I even failed the exam	60.8%	39.2%

According to the survey results, 59.2% of respondents answered correctly. This indicates that Kazakhstani learners of Chinese have relatively well mastered words with identical or similar pronunciation.

Table 2 – Mastery of easily confused words with similar written forms

Question	Chooosed the correct one	Chooosed the incorrect one
The leader is very (开,明) and readily agreed to my request.	34.7%	65.3%
After working for over two hours, everyone had completely (清, 除) the piled-up trash there	34.7%	65.3%
I have an (不,详) feeling that I messed up the exam again	43.4%	56.6%
He told the teacher the thoughts he had been (压,抑) in his heart for a long time.	39%	61%
We can (吸,级,汲) learn from the experience of other places	47.8%	52,2%

The study found that only 40% of respondents selected the correct answers. This indicates that Kazakhstani students demonstrate a relatively low level of mastery of words that are easily confused because of similar written forms. The authors believe the native language influences this, as Kazakh is not a logographic language, and writing Chinese characters poses a particular challenge for Kazakhstani learners of Chinese.

The occurrence of this type of easily confused words is also related to the characteristics of the Chinese language itself: the complex and variable structure of characters, which are often very similar in form. Since Kazakh does not use the Latin alphabet, its writing poses significant difficulties for most Kazakhstani students. The authors recommend that learners devote more time and effort to practicing character writing.

Table 3 – Mastery of easily confused words with shared morphemes

Question	Chooosed the correct one	Chooosed the incorrect one
Students should care for and help each other (爱护, 爱惜, 珍惜)。	47.8%	52.2
His outstanding military achievements earned him (表扬, 表彰)。	43.4%	52.2%
The teacher (嘱,咐) me to review well and get good grades.	52.2%	39%
At the current speed, we can (到, 达) by 3 o'clock	56.5%	43.5%
We need to (生, 产) more grain ourselves	60.8%	39.2%

The findings from this part of the survey indicate that only 52% of the respondents provided the correct answer. This outcome is particularly disappointing, given that all participants have extensive experience learning Chinese and have successfully passed either the HKS Level 5 or Level 6 examination.

Table 4 – Mastery of Chinese Words with Near-Identical Meanings in the Learner's Native Language

Question	Chooosed the correct one	Chooosed the incorrect one
His selflessness has earned him the admiration of the people (赞美, 奉承)。	39%	52.4%
He takes care(思念, 惦记) of the elderly folks in the neighborhood as soon as he gets off work	43.4%	56.6%
We would rather die than (出售, 出卖) Trust your own comrades。	34.7%	60.8%
As young people, we must (果断, 武断), We must think twice before we act	43.4%	52.4%
They overcame countless (顽强, 顽固) difficulties with their unyielding spirit	39%	52.4%

Based on the questionnaire, the survey participants' grasp of words that are easily confused because of nearly identical conceptual meanings is quite poor. Only 39% of respondents provided the correct answer, primarily **because of their underdeveloped understanding of Chinese, which prevents them from distinguishing the** meanings of such words.

Analysis of this section of the questionnaire reveals that Kazakhstan students' proficiency in mastering easily confused words is far from satisfactory. The majority of students demonstrate a medium to low level of mastery, with only a small minority able to use these words accurately. Among them, the most challenging categories are easily confused words with similar written forms and those with nearly identical conceptual meanings.

The third part of the questionnaire consists of translation tasks. Respondents were required to translate Russian phrases into Chinese, using provided keywords to constrain their responses to the target vocabulary. These keywords consisted of two or more words with nearly identical conceptual meanings. This section included ten sentences.

Table 5 – Performance on Translation Tasks Based on L1 Meaning

Sentences	Keywords provided	Correct	Incorrect
1. It's better to store these medicines in the refrigerator.	保存保管	4 (17.3%)	19 (82.7%)
2. In this matter, the guy should take the initiative.	采用, 采取, 采纳	10 (43.4%)	13 (56.5%)
3. All the things (that) we bought last time are useless	用法, 用处	16 (69.5%)	7 (30.5%)
4. This movie, which reflects the real life of a Chinese village, is very interesting.	反映, 反应	13 (56.5%)	10 (43.4%)
5. Today, the physics teacher will supervise our experiment.	辅导, 指导	11 (47.8%)	12 (52.2%)
6. According to the weather forecast, heavy rain is expected in the southern regions of Kazakhstan within the next 24 hours.	将来, 未来	5 (21.7%)	18 (78.2%)
7. I am not psychologically ready for today's exam.	准备, 预备	17 (73.9%)	6 (26.1%)
8. The duty of police officers and soldiers is to ensure public order.	保障, 保证	8 (34.7%)	15 (65.2%)
9. After graduating from college, I rarely communicated with my former classmates anymore.	交流, 交际	10 (43.4%)	13 (56.6%)
10. If you hadn't helped in time, he wouldn't be here anymore.	按时, 及时	7 (30.4%)	16 (69.5%)

Based on the translation section of the survey, it is evident that Kazakhstan students still struggle to master words with nearly identical core meanings. Students often make mistakes when trying to convey their intended messages.

For instance, performance on Question 1, which required the use of "保管" or "保存," was the poorest—only three respondents (14% of the total) answered correctly. This indicates an inability to distinguish between the meanings of these two words. Additionally, relatively weak results were observed in Questions 6, 8, 9, and 10.

This suggests that the following five word pairs are particularly challenging and easily confused by learners:

- "保存" and "保管"

- "将来" and "未来"
- "保障" and "保持"
- "交流" and "交际"
- "按时" and "及时"

The fourth section of the questionnaire is an interview segment. This part was designed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences with easily confused words in their Chinese language learning. For example, it explores whether they have encountered difficulties with such words during their studies, what methods they consider most effective for mastering them, and whether distinguishing between easily confused words poses a significant obstacle to their Chinese language acquisition.

Table 6 – Learner Attitudes and Learning Strategies Regarding Easily Confused Words

1. During your process of learning Chinese, have you experienced issues with confusing word meanings? If so, how frequently does this occur?	A. Frequently (17 respondents, 74%); B. Occasionally (6 respondents, 26%); C. Rarely (0%); D. Never (0%)
2. Do you find it challenging to differentiate between easily confused words?	A. Very Difficult (16 respondents, 70%); B. Somewhat Difficult (7 respondents, 30%); C. Not Very Difficult (0%); D. Very Easy (0%)
3. Does distinguishing between easily confused words pose an obstacle to your Chinese learning?	A. It poses a significant obstacle (5 respondents, 28%); B. It has a somewhat negative impact (18 respondents, 72%); C. It has no impact (0%)
4. What approach would you take to resolve issues of word meaning confusion?	A. Morpheme Analysis (8 respondents, 34.7%); B. Example Sentence Analysis (10 respondents, 43.3%); C. Consulting Reference Materials (4 respondents, 22.0%); D. Other (0%)
5. Which method do you consider most effective for resolving issues of word meaning confusion?	A. Morpheme Analysis (7 respondents, 30%); B. Example Sentence Analysis (10 respondents, 43%); C. Dictionary Look-up & Translation Method (3 respondents, 13%); D. Other (0%)
6. Do you find words that share identical morphemes prone to confusion?	A. Very Prone to Confusion (13 respondents, 56.5%); B. Occasionally Confusing (10 respondents, 43.5%); C. Not Confusing (0%)
7. Do you think words with the same or similar pronunciations can cause you to mix up their meanings?	A. Very easy to confuse (13 respondents, 56.5%); B. Sometimes confusing (10 respondents, 43.5%); C. Not confusing (0%)
8. Do you think orthographically similar words are prone to semantic confusion?	A. Very easy to confuse (12 respondents, 52%); B. Sometimes confusing (11 respondents, 48%); C. Not confusing at all (0%)
9. Do you think words with near-identical conceptual meanings are likely to be confused?	A. Very easy to confuse (14 respondents, 60%); B. Sometimes confusing (9 respondents, 40%); C. Not confusing at all (0%)

Based on this section of the questionnaire, it can be observed that Kazakhstan students frequently encounter words that are easy to confuse during their Chinese language learning. Differentiating between these words proves challenging for them and poses an obstacle to their Chinese language acquisition. When faced with such words, they tend to employ morpheme analysis and example sentence analysis to resolve the difficulties. The majority of respondents believe that words with shared morphemes, similar written forms, or nearly identical core meanings are particularly prone to semantic confusion.

Statistical Significance and Hierarchy of Difficulty

Although the pilot sample (N=60) limits statistical testing, the performance patterns (39–59% correct) suggest a clear hierarchy of difficulty:

- Most difficult: near-synonyms and orthographically similar characters (e.g., 赞美/奉承, 郎/朗) with only ~39–40% accuracy, indicating deep, persistent challenges even at HSK 5–6;
- Moderately difficult: shared-morpheme pairs (爱护/爱惜) and L1–L2 translation mismatches (将来/未来), ~52% accuracy;
- Relatively easier: phonologically similar pairs (必须/必需), ~59%.

Semantic and graphemic confusion clearly outweigh phonological challenges.

Psycholinguistic Interpretation

Error types correspond to distinct cognitive mechanisms:

- Orthographic similarity: mistakes like 郎/朗 arise from visual recognition overload and high “neighborhood density” of similar characters;
- Shared morphemes and near-synonyms: confusion (爱护/爱惜, 赞美/奉承) reflects incomplete refinement of semantic networks, where related meanings remain insufficiently differentiated;
- Phonological similarity: better performance on 反应/反映 suggests phonological memory is a more reliable cue, though homophone interference persists.

Cross-Linguistic Interference

Errors linked to L1–L2 translation mismatches highlight complex trilingual interference:

- Semantic transfer: single Kazakh/Russian equivalents (e.g., “будущее”) map onto multiple Chinese concepts (将来/未来), causing overgeneralization;
- Structural absence: difficulty with visually similar characters results from lacking an equivalent skill in alphabetic L1s;
- Intermediary-language effect: reliance on Russian as the metalanguage (Kazakh → Russian → Chinese) amplifies mismapping (e.g., 保障/保证).

In summary, the errors are not random. They are systematic manifestations of:

- cognitive overload in visual and semantic discrimination;
- incomplete restructuring of lexical semantic networks;
- persistent negative transfer from a bi- (or tri-) lingual conceptual system.

Teaching Strategies for Easily Confused Words

Based on surveys and analyses of the use of easily confused words by Kazakhstani international students, as well as the causes of errors, we propose the following recommendations to enhance the efficiency of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, particularly for Kazakhstani students. We hope these suggestions will assist TCFL teachers in instructing Kazakhstani students on easily confused words in the future.

1. Focusing on Error Analysis in Vocabulary Teaching

Based on the analysis of questionnaires and errors identified in the HSK writing corpus, we can observe that Kazakhstani students most frequently confuse the following categories of words: paronyms with nearly identical meanings, words with identical or similar written forms, and words sharing common morphemes.

When teaching paronyms with similar meanings, merely defining one word with another—without explaining their similarities and differences—will inevitably lead to confusion between the terms and fail to achieve the goal of acquiring new vocabulary. For this reason, we recommend that when introducing a new word, it is best to select a previously learned word and clearly explain both the commonalities and distinctions between the two during instruction. This approach not only facilitates the learning of new vocabulary but also reinforces previously studied words, effectively leveraging known vocabulary to acquire new terms.

For example, when teaching the word “满足” (mǎnzú – to satisfy/meet), the previously learned word “满意” (mǎnyì – to be satisfied/pleased) can be used for explanation. Students should be reminded that “满足” and “满意” share similar meanings, but the teacher must clearly articulate the distinctions between them to prevent future misuse.

1. Emphasizing the Development of Reading and Writing Skills in Kazakhstani Students

Analyses of the HSK writing corpus and the sentence-making samples I have encountered from Kazakhstani students reveal that their writing skills are generally not strong. Many characters are misspelled, and words are misused. Therefore, at the intermediate and advanced stages, Kazakhstani students must not lower their standards. Instead, they need to engage consistently in Chinese reading and writing practice.

As instructors, we should regularly remind them of this and provide opportunities for learning through error correction. From my personal perspective as a Kazakhstani learner of Chinese, such step-by-step, persistent effort not only enhances students’ writing skills but also cultivates their language intuition, which is crucial for accurately distinguishing between easily confused words and for using vocabulary appropriately.

2. Emphasizing the Teaching Materials and Dictionaries Used by Kazakhstani Students

The textbooks used by Kazakhstani students differ from those used in China. In Kazakhstan, new vocabulary is usually explained in Russian, while in China, where classes include students from many countries, English is commonly used. Although using a foreign language can help beginners, it also has drawbacks. English-based explanations often lead to misunderstandings among Kazakhstani students, resulting in incorrect use of Chinese vocabulary. Therefore, teachers should rely more on Chinese when introducing new words.

Some students also purchase textbooks solely to prepare for the HSK exam, without considering their quality or difficulty. As a result, they may form incorrect impressions of the language even at the beginner level. For this reason, both in Kazakhstan and China, students should use materials recommended by qualified teachers.

While electronic dictionaries are very convenient and widely used, they provide only basic translations without detailed explanations or collocation information. Based on the author’s experience, this often leads to the misuse of words.

To develop stronger language skills, intermediate and advanced learners should switch to Chinese explanatory dictionaries, such as the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语词典》). Understanding vocabulary through Chinese definitions leads to clearer comprehension and better retention. These dictionaries also offer a broader range of vocabulary.

To distinguish subtle differences between near-synonyms, specialized synonym dictionaries are handy, such as *A Comparison of 1700 Near-Synonym Usage Pairs* (Beijing Language and Culture University Press, 2007). Resources like *Collocations of Common Chinese Words* (Beijing Publishing House, 1984) and *A Usage Dictionary of Chinese Verbs* (The Commercial Press, 1997) also help improve verb usage and overall proficiency.

Conclusion. Vocabulary constitutes a crucial component of language and represents one of the key focus areas in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL). As their lexical knowledge expands, Kazakhstan students encounter increasingly confusing words. Drawing on personal learning experiences and survey data, this study identifies near-synonyms as the primary category of confusing lexical items for these learners. Furthermore, analysis of the translation task reveals significant challenges in distinguishing between graphically similar characters. The research also demonstrates widespread confusion among Kazakh learners regarding words sharing identical morphemes.

The study also reveals that, beyond inherent Chinese near-synonyms, differences in native-language structures, cultural backgrounds, and cognitive patterns lead Kazakh learners to confuse other word categories or misinterpret meanings.

Ultimately, this research proposes a comprehensive teaching framework addressing the specific characteristics and root causes of lexical confusion among Kazakh Chinese learners.

Regarding easily confused words, effective teaching requires careful observation, systematic investigation, and analytical summarization. When issues arise, educators should identify underlying causes and develop targeted resolution strategies.

Instruction regarding easily confused words represents both a priority and a challenge in TCFL. Building on existing pedagogical experience while considering distinctive characteristics of Kazakh learners, this study proposes specific teaching methodologies, hoping to contribute meaningfully to the field of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.

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IRSTI 15.01.17:

UDC 159.99

<https://doi.org/10.52269/NTDG2542287>

PREPARING FUTURE PSYCHOLOGISTS: INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN SLOVAKIA AND KAZAKHSTAN

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The relevance of this study lies in the growing global need to enhance the quality and compatibility of psychology education across different countries, particularly in light of the Bologna Process and increasing international academic mobility. The purpose of this research is to conduct a comparative analysis of psychology training programs at the Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan) and University of Trnava (Slovakia). The main objectives are to examine the historical development of psychology education, analyze the structure and content of undergraduate programs, identify differences in admission procedures, assess graduate employment pathways, and explore opportunities for further education. The research uses a qualitative comparative methodology, including document analysis, review of official university curricula, and national education policy sources. The study highlights fundamental differences in program structure: Kazakhstan follows a four-year bachelor model with early entry into the workforce, while Slovakia implements a two-tier system with a mandatory master's degree and subsequent supervised practice. The scientific significance lies in revealing how cultural, historical, and institutional contexts shape psychology education. Practically, the findings can inform curriculum reforms, international partnerships, and mutual recognition of qualifications. This research contributes to the field of comparative education and psychology by offering evidence-based recommendations for improving the training and professional readiness of psychology graduates in both countries.

Key words: psychology education, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, practice, admission, employment.

БОЛАШАҚ ПСИХОЛОГТАРДЫ ДАЯРЛАУ: СЛОВАКИЯ МЕН ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ БІЛІМ БЕРУ БАҒДАРЛАМАЛАРЫНЫҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

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Зерттеудің өзектілігі Болон үдерісінің жүзеге асырылуы және академиялық ұтқырлықтың кеңеюі жағдайында әртүрлі елдердегі психологиялық білімнің сапасы мен өзара үйлесімділігін арттыру қажеттілігінің өсуімен айқындалады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы