

Delexical HAVE/MAKE + Noun Collocations: A Comparison of Advanced Swedish and Chinese Learner English

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Abstract

Collocations, i.e., recurrent word combinations such as *take advantage (of)*, *strong tea*, and *deeply absorbed*, are receiving increasing attention in SLA research because of their importance to “native-like” production of language. Previous studies suggest that collocations pose a serious challenge to language learners and that learners’ L1 plays a crucial role in this respect. My paper aims to shed light on learners’ collocation acquisition by comparing the use of delexical HAVE/MAKE + noun collocations (e.g. *have no doubt*, *make a decision*) by two groups of learners of English. One group comprises native speakers of Swedish, a language that is close to English typologically; the other group consists of native speakers of Chinese, a non-Indo-European language.

My principal research question concerns what linguistic aspects of the use of delexical HAVE/MAKE + noun collocations are peculiar to Swedish or Chinese learners and thus possibly L1-dependent, and what aspects are shared by both groups of learners and thus more likely to be developmental. I attempt to answer the research question by means of empirical studies, using learner corpora as the main source. More specifically, I examine the frequencies and patterns of delexical HAVE/MAKE + noun collocations (including the collocability of lexical items, and the choice of determiner, preposition, tense, aspect and voice) in the two learner corpora. I then compare the results with the language produced by native speakers of English to detect types of overuse, underuse, and errors which are restricted to one group of learners, as opposed to types that are shared by both groups. Two parallel corpora of Swedish/English and Chinese/English are also used to detect the influence of the learners’ L1 on their English production.

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