

# The Influence of Environmental Factors on the Acquisition of Chinese as a Second Language

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**Abstract:** *In addition to individual factors such as cognition and affect in second language acquisition, the influence of environmental factors on second language acquisition also deserves extra attention from learners and researchers. The environment, as an objective existence, is an external condition that affects second language acquisition. Language is produced in a certain environment, and language learning is inseparable from the environment, and learners need to make full use of the external environmental conditions to facilitate second language learning. In this paper, we are going to talk about the study of strategies for acquiring Chinese as a second language through environmental factors.*

**Keywords:** *second language acquisition, foreign Chinese, environmental factors, language environment*

## 1. Introduction

Language learning is inseparable from the environment, which means that the language learning environment is an important factor affecting learners' language acquisition. At present, there are few studies on the acquisition of Chinese as a second language that take the learners as the starting point, and studying how to "learn" the language from the learners' perspective will help them learn Chinese more easily.

### 1.1. The background of the selected topic

The acquisition of either a first or a second language is closely related to the environment in which the learner is placed. Language is a symbolic system that consists of both form and meaning. The combination of form and meaning of symbols is also arbitrary and not necessarily related. Conventional situations and meanings are determined by social conventions, that is, the form and meaning of linguistic symbols are generated in the social environment. This being the case, the acquisition of a language must be inseparable from the influence of the environment. Behaviorist psychology's view of language acquisition: language is not innate but acquired, emphasizing the role of external conditions in the process of acquiring a first language. This behavior, like other human behaviors, is learned through habit formation in a stimulus-response-reinforcement pattern. The external conditions here then necessarily refer to environmental conditions. When a person first encounters the world, he or she is like a blank sheet of paper with no innate knowledge of the world, and what he or she learns and how he or she forms his or her cognition depends on his or her environment, which also shapes his or her behavior[1].

It is well known that second language learning and teaching emphasize that learners will learn better if they are placed in the environment of the target language country. Even if one is not in the target language country, it is important to create environmental conditions that resemble the target language country as much as possible. In the early years, foreign language learning for students in China was mainly in English. Recall that the nine-year compulsory education in China requires students to learn English from the third grade of elementary school until they graduate from junior high school, which is six years in total. When you think about it, how much English have students learned in these nine years, until they enter undergraduate education, there are still students who cannot pass the English 4 and 6 exams for college students. In nine years of learning a foreign language, I am sure the learners already have answers to questions such as how much vocabulary they have stored, how well they have learned grammar, whether they can understand foreigners, whether they can communicate fluently in English, and so on. Obviously, if you acquire the target language simply through classroom learning, the learning effect is self-evident. Therefore, language acquisition must be supported by a

suitable learning environment.

### ***1.2. Research significance and purpose***

The hypothesis is that there is a critical stage in the developmental maturation of the human brain when language acquisition is easy and learning a second language is much more difficult, especially for people who have passed the critical age for language acquisition. During this stage, language acquisition can occur naturally and effortlessly. However, beyond a certain age, the brain no longer has this ability to process language input. These issues have always puzzled language researchers and learners, and the search for a way for second language learners to successfully acquire a second language has been ongoing. In this paper, we examine the influence of environmental factors on the acquisition of Chinese as a second language, hoping to help learners who love Chinese learn Chinese to some extent, and to help them find a more suitable way to learn Chinese.

Most of the researches in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language take the perspective of "teaching" as the starting point, and study topics such as intercultural communication, teaching materials design, teaching design, teaching Chinese as a foreign language from different perspectives, and the application of a certain culture in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, etc. In general, they study how to In general, the research is on how to "teach". There are relatively few studies on how learners acquire Chinese, and there are also fewer relevant research results in the field of Chinese as a second language acquisition studies. If Chinese learners master the correct methods and ways to learn Chinese, it will make the cause of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in China develop more rapidly and perhaps achieve twice the result with half the effort.

Looking back at the history of research on second language acquisition at home and abroad, the initial research was on acquisition, and our domestic research on second language acquisition was also about how to acquire English. Later, when the Chinese language fever gradually rose and Confucius Institutes began to spread around the world, China began to study Chinese as a second language and explore how to spread Chinese language and Chinese culture, which is how the previous foreign language acquisition theories were applied to the study of Chinese as a second language, which is also the gradual growth process of the field of Chinese as a foreign language. In this paper, based on the theories of our predecessors, we further investigate the influence of environmental factors on the acquisition of Chinese as a second language and try to find more practical ways to help learners learn Chinese[2].

## **2. Classification of language learning environments**

Language learning environment is a concept that has both connotation and extension. It can be said that all the surrounding things that can influence learners to learn Chinese, except the individual learners, can be included in the language learning environment factors. This section provides a simple classification of the language learning environment.

### ***2.1. Classroom Environment***

The classroom environment is the most traditional language learning environment. Students sit in a fixed place with a fixed set of materials and a fixed program and follow a fixed instructor through repetitive drills and communicative activities. Currently, classroom instruction is still the most basic way for both first and second language learners to acquire the language they are learning. That is, it is through a public group organization such as a school that provides the most basic and secure language learning environment for students. Because this language teaching environment is easier to organize and manage, classroom teaching is the language learning environment that will be used for second language acquisition for a long time to come and will not change much. However, there are now many researchers conducting research on how to innovate classroom teaching and learning and how to make the fixed and stagnant classroom environment more innovative and active.

### ***2.2. Social Environment***

In addition to the classroom environment where learners acquire language knowledge, all other places where they can acquire language knowledge are collectively referred to as the social environment. Language and society do not exist in isolation but together. Language is an important tool

in our living space, an integral part of our community and society as a whole. Language cannot be separated from the context in which people live, and it is a part of society from birth, no matter where they live. The social environment includes two major aspects: the linguistic environment and the human environment, of which the linguistic environment includes the visual, auditory, and combined audiovisual environments. The visual language environment, such as books, magazines, newspapers, etc.; the auditory environment, such as music, recordings, radio, etc.; and the audio-visual environment, such as television, movies, short videos, etc.; the target language widely used in the social environment is the best language learning environment, which can provide endless language input for learners, so that learners can learn the most authentic language through the process of immersion. The human environment is more abstract in scope, such as local customs, festivals, culture, history, interpersonal relationships and other aspects of spirituality.

### ***2.3. Target language environment and non-target language environment***

As the name implies, the classification of whether the learner's environment is a target language speaking environment is different from the first two classifications. It can be said that both the target language environment and the non-target language environment include the classroom environment and the social environment. Whether or not the target language is learned in the target language environment is the main difference between second language teaching and foreign language teaching, and the learning of the target language is more effective when the learners are placed in the target language environment. The reason for this wide gap in learning outcomes is that the presence or absence of a target language environment has a wide and profound impact on second language acquisition.

## **3. Language Learning Environment and Acquisition of Chinese**

All else being equal, placing learners in different learning environments will produce different learning outcomes. Of course, different language learning environments have their own advantages and disadvantages and can have different effects on second language acquisition[3].

### ***3.1. The impact of the classroom environment***

As already mentioned, the most important feature of the classroom environment is its fixedness, i.e., the hardware facilities for students' learning are secured in the first place. In the classroom, there are experienced teachers, experience accumulated by previous students, and well-written teaching materials. In the classroom, students can learn the target language in a systematic and planned way, and the knowledge of the target language they acquire is complete and accurate. Usually, the language knowledge that students learn is biased toward the form of the language.

Chinese is a tonal language, and it is difficult for those learners whose native language is not tonal to learn tonality without any foundation, and students will find it boring if they are always practicing phonetics repeatedly in class. The strokes of Chinese characters in the frame structure are complicated, and it is difficult for learners who are native speakers of Pinyin to remember the inter-frame structure and strokes of these characters. It is difficult to provide a real language environment and real language training materials in the classroom, which is not conducive to learners' practice in a real language environment, and thus cannot develop their ability to use Chinese for communication.

### ***3.2. Influence from the social environment***

The social environment here generally refers to the social environment in the target language country. The most important feature of the social environment is that it allows learners to immerse themselves in the real target language environment and to receive the culture of the target language in a comprehensive way. The linguistic environment in the social environment can provide learners with a large amount of vivid language materials in the target language, which can fill the gap of the lack of real language resources for learners to practice in the classroom environment; the human environment in the social environment can not only provide learners with the social background for acquiring the target language and related cultural factors naturally, but also have many real activities for students to communicate. Therefore, the presence or absence of a social environment for the target language is of great significance to second language learning. The socio-cultural contextualization of language acquisition, through social interactions, is where people begin to internalize or acquire language use

skills.

Chinese grammar is characterized by a rich set of implicit grammatical relations and flexible ideograms, so a better understanding and proficient use of Chinese grammar needs to be based on specific contexts, i.e., the grammatical rules are used in certain situations; the phonetic changes of Chinese speech also require learners to feel the changes in real conversational communication in order to better grasp the rules of phonetic changes in speech flow. In all these cases, it is necessary to combine the actual social environment to help learners acquire Chinese.

### ***3.3. How to use favorable environmental factors to help learners learn Chinese***

First of all, both teachers and students should make full use of the advantageous conditions of the classroom environment. Learners should follow the teacher in the classroom through the textbook and learn systematically according to the teaching and training program, and should have a conceptual understanding of Chinese phonetics, vocabulary and grammar, and have a general framework in their minds. In particular, students who are not self-motivated learners should form good habits of self-motivated learning in a classroom environment with the help of their teachers and classmates. Teachers should always be available to answer and solve students' questions so that problems do not accumulate in students' minds for a long time making them intimidated to learn Chinese. Learners should be unashamed to ask questions when they encounter difficult problems and seek help from the teacher in a timely manner. The teacher should correct the mistakes made by students in the learning process, and pay attention to the ways and means and occasions when correcting mistakes. In short, learners should use the classroom environment to enrich and consolidate their language knowledge and enhance their language skills.

Secondly, the social environment is also suitable for learners to acquire Chinese language knowledge. If you are in the social environment of the target language country, learners should seize all opportunities to practice their language communication skills, try to overcome their timidity and shyness and actively participate in the social environment of the target language, and communicate more with the local people. Pay attention to local customs and culture, cultural and tourist attractions, etc. For example, to learn Chinese phonetics, it is necessary to learn Mandarin with national norms and standards, and to feel the phonetic changes in phonetics in real conversations, so as to master Chinese phonetics faster by combining theoretical knowledge and practice; the multiple meanings of Chinese vocabulary also require learners to master the meanings of vocabulary in actual language communication; the flexible and changeable characteristics of Chinese grammar are reflected in the actual language communication process. The flexibility of Chinese grammar is reflected in the actual language communication process, and learners have to keep speaking and practicing in the social environment in order to learn the most authentic expressions.

Finally, by combining the classroom environment with the social environment, learners can quickly enrich their language knowledge and improve their ability to use Chinese for communication in a short period of time while inputting systematic knowledge in the classroom and in the social environment.

## **4. Conclusion**

Environmental factors, as external conditions affecting learners, can change from time to time, and learners need to actively adapt to the language learning environment around them. More importantly, they should be able to integrate the classroom environment with the social environment. Learning a language is actually a process of learning the culture of the target language country. I believe that if possible, learners should go to the target language country to study and live there as much as possible, to experience the local language and culture of the target language country, and to learn Chinese by immersion in order to get more ideal learning results.

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