

Study on the Influence of External Environment on Foreign Students' Acquisition of the Pivotal Sentences

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Abstract: Foreign Students learning Chinese both in China and abroad are exposed to different language environment which has crucial and extensive effects on the second language acquisition. The pivotal sentence is a special pattern in Chinese, which makes foreign students confused with the occurring of various mistakes and errors. This paper examines the influence of language environment on foreign students' acquisition of pivotal sentence with the test designed for groups at home and at abroad. Subsequently, according to the statistical results of the test, this paper tries to summarize enlightenments that contribute to the combination and distinctiveness between Chinese as a foreign language and Chinese as a second language.

Keywords: Foreign students at home; Foreign students at abroad; Pivotal Sentences; Influence of external environment

1. Introduction

Language environmental factors in second language acquisition theory consists of two parts: internal environment and external environment.^[1] The environmental factors affecting SLA, in another opinion, are divided into macro-environment and micro-environment. The performance of learners, the utterances of teachers, the input of the second language, and the interaction between the teacher and learner catch the focus in many researches. ^[2]Liu Jing (2012) explores the application and contributes of language environmental theory in English teaching in campus. Zhang Linpeng (2018) emphasize the effects of the teaching environments designed by teachers on the international education of Chinese^[3].

The pivotal sentences are those which contain the concurrent/ pivotal phrase as predicate or independent sentence with language structures that "N1+V1+N2+V2" The study of pivotal sentences involving aspects of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. This study will combine the learning (CSL) of Chinese as a second language and the learning (CFL) of Chinese as a foreign language. According to the corresponding classification of the types of simultaneous sentence errors in pivotal sentences. And the influence of the language environment on the acquisition of Chinese pivotal sentences. Domestic and foreign students will be investigated in the form of test questions as well as enlightenments that contribute to the combination and distinctiveness between CFL and CSL.

2. Experiment

2.1 Introduction of the subjects.

Subjects: 16 domestic students and 16 foreign students, the basic situation of the two groups is shown in Table 1.

Type of subjects	Male-female ratio	Average age
Foreign students at home	8 : 8	24.81
Foreign students at abroad	9 : 7	26.50

Table 1. Basic Information of Domestic and Foreign Subjects

2.2 Experimental design and material preparation

The experiment was designed with the experiment design of 2 (the type of subjects: domestic students and foreign students) × 4 (the main error types: missing components, missing components, disordered structures, misuses of concurrent verbs). In this experiment, the learning environment (domestic and foreign) is the independent variable, and the correct rate of the subjects' answers is the dependent variable. The first test questions are from HSK test exercises and students' composition exercises. The test maintains single-choices and multiple-choices. To verify that each option is

uncontroversial, and that the correct option conforms to Chinese grammar and native language habits, 30 Chinese undergraduates completed the test before the experiment, and the test results are shown in Table 2.

tested	N	single-choice	multiple-choice
Chinese undergraduates	30	0.98	0.96

Table 2. The correct rate of Chinese students' verification pretest

It is presented that the correct rate of single-choice is 0.98, and the multiple-choice, 0.96. There're only two comprehension errors about "allow" and "remind me of", which are proved the careless mis-election. And subjects tested on the pretest express no objection to sentences in the test questions. In addition, five foreign students were asked to take the predictive test and were asked opinions about the test design. Two of the subjects showed that they were able to pick out the correct options during the test, but could not understand each sentence.

According to the results of the two pre-test, after comprehensive consideration, it is decided to adjust the test questions and the number of sentences. Finally, a total of 40 judgment questions were compiled based on the expression in the first design of multiple choice questions. There are four types(Composition omission, Redundant ingredients, Structural disorder, Misapplication of pivotal verbs) of false or ture sentences, each of which takes 10. Each sentence should be between 10-12 words in length (roughly understood as the same length of the sentence).

Types	Error Example 1	Error Example 2
Composition omission	I'm sick. Can * take me to the hospital?	She invites me * her birthday party every year.
Redundant ingredients	We allow let children to keep cats at home.	I asked have a friend to help me drive home.
Structural disorder	Mother asked tonight Xiao Lin to have dinner with his uncle.	My grandfather and I help grandma buy vegetables go to the supermarket.
Misapplication	This Christmas, I'm going to invite her to my house.	This dress give reminds me of my mother.

Table 3. Sample sentences in test

2.3 Experimental process

Group testing, that is, two groups of subjects completed the test on-line, respectively, and feedback is collected.

2.4 Statistics and analysis

Type of subjects	N	Composition omission		Redundant ingredients		Structural disorder		Misapplication of pivotal verbs	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Foreign students at home	16	0.70	0.10	0.74	0.10	0.73	0.09	0.60	0.10
Foreign students at abroad	16	0.68	0.07	0.64	0.09	0.64	0.09	0.50	0.06
total	32	0.69	0.08	0.69	0.10	0.68	0.10	0.55	0.10

Table 4. The correct rate of the two groups

2.5 Analysis of the research results

The type of subjects show its main effects, according to the ANOVA, $F(1, 30)=21.709$, $p<0.001$. Both the univariate tests and pairwise comparisons prove that the overall correct rate of foreign students at home ($M=0.69$) is significantly higher than that of foreign students at abroad ($M=0.61$). Meanwhile, the type of errors show the main effect, $F(3, 28)=20.531$, $p<0.001$. More specifically, it is statistically confirmed in pairwise comparisons that the correct rate of Composition omission ($M=0.69$), Redundant ingredients ($M=0.69$) and Structural disorder ($M=0.68$). is markedly higher than that of Misapplication of pivotal verbs ($M=0.55$). In addition, on the basis of the test of within-subjects contrasts and between-subjects effects, there's no evident interactive effects between the type of subjects and errors, $F(3, 28)=1.991$, $p=0.138$.

3. Enlightenments from the researches.

3.1 Distinguish teacher training of TCFL and TCSL

Teacher requirements and teacher training. Because it is taught in the target language environment, almost all the teachers of Chinese as a second language (TCSL) are native speakers of Chinese (Chinese native speaker), while a considerable number of teachers of Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) who teach in a non-target language environment are not native speakers of Chinese (non-native speaker), and non-native speaker), have different degrees of mastery of Chinese. Therefore, in order to become a real TCFL teacher, especially in foreign primary and secondary schools engaged in Chinese teaching, there are high requirements for foreign languages (the language of the host country). Teacher chaining of TCSL and TCFL have different principles and rules, therefore we attach importance to put forward a clear distinction between them.

3.2 Distinguish textbook design of CFL and CSL

Different countries have different cultures, different national conditions and local colors, so we should especially strengthen the cultural adaptability of teaching materials. Therefore, the compilation of national and regional teaching materials, the way of compilation of Chinese and foreign countries, is the direction of development in the future. The compilation of CFL teaching materials need more innovation and variation. For example, "Chinese listening, speaking, Reading and Writing" was published in 1993, and the official version was published for the first time in 1997. The book to introduction to Chinese was officially published in 2003. And these language materials were used over and over again for a long time as the practice of compiling many teaching materials in China. Recalling the Chinese textbooks used in France before 1990s, it was found that some textbooks used in France over the past 30 years, and the most popular Chinese textbooks are two sets of textbooks based on the principle of character standard. The discussion

on the pertinence of teaching materials focused on the development of teaching materials for different countries or regions. The basic characteristic of the new generation of teaching materials for Chinese as a foreign language is to highlight the pertinence of teaching materials, especially for foreign use, to consider the characteristics of country, nationality, culture and environment, and to advocate the co-compilation of teaching materials by Chinese and foreign experts. Only when the teaching materials are targeted can they have better applicability and higher effectiveness.

3.3 Guide but not compel L2 learners to explore themselves to the target language environment

Situational factors refer first to the acquisition environment of language learners, while there not always be natural environment for language acquisition.^[6] The environment of language learning mainly refers to the classroom environment and the autonomous learning environment after class. Besides, situational factors have a great deal to do with the topic of the conversation. In a classroom setting, teachers and students use formal language, Learners learn explicit knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar and so on. The autonomous learning environment after class, due to the lack of real natural language acquisition environment, it is difficult for learners to communicate as the center, to acquire the meaning of language, and to promote the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Situational factors coincide with “situational construction” advocated by constructivism. Learners should experience and learn in the real environment. Only in this way can we assimilate the existing knowledge, experience and current new knowledge in the cognitive structure to complete the construction of meaning. Constructivism emphasizes the cooperative and interactive nature of learning. In the process of discussing and cooperating with others, learners find problems and learn new knowledge from each other.

4. Conclusion

It can be seen that environmental factors can affect learners’ learning beliefs, which in turn can affect learning styles, learning strategies and learning processes. Ellis claims that there may be radical differences between a second language and a foreign language environment, which lead us to emphasize the distinction.^[4] Lv Bison points out that geography is not the necessary and enough item to distinguish between a second language and a foreign language since factors that determine the rules of learning and acquisition are various.^[5] To cultivate and improve the subjective initiative of Chinese learning, to stimulate the potential of students, to enable students to obtain the effect of language acquisition in the process of Chinese learning, so as to effectively improve the learning effect. This paper agrees with the two scholars on the second language and foreign language perspective, the second language acquisition environment theory of inquiry is not only in China to learn foreign students, should include foreign students to learn Chinese. “Chinese as a second language learning” (CSL) and “Chinese as a foreign language learning” (CFL) .

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