

The Influence of Environmental and Behavioral Practices on Second Language Acquisition from a Constructivist Perspective

Jin Shao

*Foreign Languages College, Inner Mongolia University, Huhhot, China
Olivia08162023@outlook.com*

Abstract. Nowadays, how to achieve second language acquisition has received widespread attention, yet there are still shortcomings in the teaching and learning processes of a second foreign language. This paper focuses on analyzing three characteristics of second language acquisition and explores the influence of environment and behavioral practice on second language acquisition from a constructivist perspective. Based on the analysis, this paper concludes, from the constructivist theory, that second language acquisition is influenced by target language input, individuals' prior experiences, and cultural context. Therefore, this paper offers the following recommendations: educators should build a learning feedback loop, conduct flexible teaching and individualized instruction, and carry out teaching within a cultural context.

Keywords: Constructivism, Environment, Practice, Second Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

As enthusiasm for education increases the issue of how to acquire a second language has become crucial for students, parents and teachers alike. Initially the focus has shifted from "how to teach" to "how to learn." Moreover when instructing a language educators typically depend on the traditional PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) method but often neglect the production phase resulting in a rigid and mimicry-based teaching approach. This implies that learners are only able to understand the meaning of the language and are unable to use or convey it in authentic situations. Ultimately confronted with progressing language models students tend to hold a doubtful perspective regarding the success of human second language learning. Similar, to acquiring forms of knowledge the journey of learning a second language requires learners to reflect on integrate and incorporate new information grounded in their current knowledge frameworks thus building a novel linguistic system [1].

Within this framework constructivist theory offers an approach to tackle the challenges. Embodied by Piaget's theory of development Bruner's theory of cognitive structures and Vygotsky's sociocultural-historical development theory constructivist theory emphasizes not only the functional aspect of acquiring a second foreign language but also acknowledges the learner's pivotal role, in the process promoting exploratory learning. At the same time, from a constructivist perspective, the

meaning of language depends on context, so learning a second foreign language should be acquired through continuous interaction and communication in authentic situations [2]. However, based on the current social education system, the current teaching methods still differ to some extent from those advocated by constructivism. Therefore, combining the above viewpoints, this paper presents new reflections on implementing second language acquisition from a constructivist perspective and fully leveraging the roles of the environment and individual behavior.

2. Characteristics of second language acquisition

2.1. Based on the principle of "comprehensible input", interaction constitutes the core step

At the start of acquiring a language the initial stage is always to obtain input. In language learning input establishes the base for learners to progressively grasp the vocabulary grammar and sounds of the language they are studying. Nevertheless not every input qualifies as reference material for learners. "Comprehensible input" is an aspect of second language acquisition. As Krashen's Input Hypothesis, second language acquisition is an ever-changing process of " $i + 1$." " i " refers to the learner's existing proficiency in the target language and " $+1$ " denotes input that is, beyond their current level of understanding. This process enables learners to build on their existing knowledge to grasp information turning the "unknown" into the "known." Within this framework the learner's " i " is continually. Interaction provides the bridge to transform " $+1$ ", playing a crucial role in the process of second language acquisition. Through continuous communication and practice, learners flexibly use the knowledge they have acquired. To eventually produce clear and accurate output, learners need to undergo multiple repetitions and revisions to ultimately achieve the ideal state of second language acquisition: meaningful negotiation [3].

2.2. Exhibits individual variability

Depending on each person's situation meaning individual differences even when everyone undergoes an identical learning process the ultimate learning results will differ. Individual differences in second language acquisition are primarily observable from three perspectives: the learner's language aptitude, learning motivation and the connection, between the language and the target language. These three factors not independently impact the second language acquisition process but also interact with one another to affect language learning. Initially a learner's language aptitude forms the basis for how they learn a second language. Various degrees of language aptitude lead to differences, in the pace at which learners acquire information. Secondly the origins and intensities of learning motivations can partially impact the second language acquisition process. Intrinsic motivation tends to be more lasting for instance a learner's interests. During language acquisition utilizing a learner's internal motivation can enable them to engage actively in overcoming difficulties. On the hand when learning is motivated by external influences or pressure a learner's skills might advance quickly in the short run yet maintaining prolonged exploration and learning proves challenging [4]. Lastly the extent of similarity or difference, between a learner's language and the language being learned impacts how difficult the learning process is. English and French are both part of the European language family so native English speakers might benefit from positive transfer when acquiring French. For example, the English word "difficult" and the French word "difficile" are very similar in spelling. Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, so Chinese students cannot rely on their native language when learning French and need to start from scratch. Overall, individual

differences are an important feature of second language acquisition. Different aspects of individual differences affect the speed and effectiveness of second language acquisition in different ways.

2.3. Influenced by the degree of social and cultural integration

When acquiring a language the speed and precision of your learning as well as your ultimate proficiency largely hinge on the extent to which you immerse yourself in the culture. Immersing yourself culturally involves experiencing the language, in its setting and being able to apply it in real-life conversations. Therefore cultural immersion offers three perspectives on acquiring a language: the target learning objectives within a particular cultural context the learners existing language proficiency and the advancement from their present capabilities to those target objectives, via social engagement [5]. To begin with learners coming from social and cultural environments possess varying language learning aims. For instance a student preparing for the college entrance exam will have distinct objectives compared to a person intending to relocate overseas. This inevitably alters the focus of their attention during the learning process. Additionally a learner's present proficiency in the target language—essentially personal variations—plays a role in second language acquisition. Lastly learners apply their existing knowledge to engage with cultural communities aiding them in achieving their desired second language objectives. In language acquisition social interaction simply refers to communicating with individuals, from the target language group. Therefore social interactions can be categorized into two types: implicit. Explicit interaction is when learners directly use their current knowledge of the target language to chat with native speakers, usually a two-way exchange with feedback. Implicit interaction is when they connect with native speakers indirectly through some medium, which might be one-way. Basically, the more often and deeply learners hang out in the social and cultural environment, the quicker they'll pick up the second language.

3. The mechanisms by which environmental and behavioral practices influence second language acquisition from a constructivist perspective

3.1. Contextualized input media facilitate meaning negotiation and the internalization of knowledge

From a perspective that values clarity context-rich input offers learners an atmosphere, to real language use, which can improve learning. Unlike grammar teaching centered on the instructor and lacking context this kind of input utilizes the environment to encourage multisensory involvement and support helping learners genuinely grasp the material. When learning a language real or simulated target language scenarios provide a multisensory method to understanding making learning simpler. Inside the target language environment learners can absorb concepts through methods and sensory channels. Based on the situation when students come across vocabulary they can understand the meanings either through a peer rephrasing it or, by seeing the actual item. In this setting multiple senses of the students engage, facilitating the absorption of information. Following the lesson students can remember both the idea and the appearance of the object. They may also recall the interaction that occurred. From a constructivist perspective, negotiating meaning and internalizing knowledge means that learners actively connect new information with their existing experience, integrating and building knowledge in the process. Ultimately, the supportive environment helps learners remember, construct, and use the second language flexibly in real situations to negotiate meaning.

3.2. An individual's prior experiences construct a framework for acquired knowledge

From a constructivist point of view, learners don't come to class as blank slates. Actually, before picking up a second language, they already have all sorts of personal experiences. These past experiences, like their first language knowledge, thinking strategies, and learning history, affect how they learn a second language later on. Krashen's theory says that "acquisition" is about naturally using a language without thinking, while "learning" is more about studying and getting a handle on language structures, like vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar [6,7]. The learner's native writing system, grammatical structures, and pragmatic habits can lead to native language transfer. When the native language and the second foreign language share similarities in certain dimensions, the learner's prior native language experience can facilitate positive transfer in learning the second foreign language. Conversely, prior native language experience can impede the process of learning a second foreign language. Therefore, when the learner's native language and the second foreign language are considerably different, learners should establish "personalized connections" to promote positive transfer. For example, elementary school kids whose first language is Chinese might use Chinese characters or Pinyin to mark how English words are pronounced. For most people, learning a second language usually goes from 'learning' to the more ideal 'acquisition' stage. Having the right mindset and behavior can speed up that transition. A learner's previous thinking and behaviors, like logical thinking skills, memory strategies, and metacognition, can affect how they handle second language knowledge. Based on past learning experiences, everyone has already developed their own ways of learning. At the same time, learners can use their past learning experiences to actively shape how they pick up a second language. Past experiences naturally guide them to pick the right learning strategies, letting them play to their strengths and make up for their weaknesses. For example, someone with spoken communication experience can draw on their past practice in "starting topics and taking turns speaking" when doing group discussions, making it easier to get through the task, while those without that experience might need extra guidance. Overall, building on your own past experiences in the right way can really boost second language learning [7]. The learner's native writing system, grammatical structures, and pragmatic habits can lead to native language transfer. When the native language and the second foreign language share similarities in certain dimensions, the learner's prior native language experience can facilitate positive transfer in learning the second foreign language. Conversely, prior native language experience can impede the process of learning a second foreign language. Therefore, when the learner's native language and the second foreign language are considerably different, learners should establish "personalized connections" to promote positive transfer. For example, elementary school kids whose first language is Chinese might use Chinese characters or Pinyin to mark how English words are pronounced. For most people, learning a second language usually goes from 'learning' to the more ideal 'acquisition' stage. Having the right mindset and behavior can speed up that transition. A learner's previous thinking and behaviors, like logical thinking skills, memory strategies, and metacognition, can affect how they handle second language knowledge. Based on past learning experiences, everyone has already developed their own ways of learning. At the same time, learners can use their past learning experiences to actively shape how they pick up a second language. Past experiences naturally guide them to pick the right learning strategies, letting them play to their strengths and make up for their weaknesses. For example, someone with spoken communication experience can draw on their past practice in "starting topics and taking turns speaking" when doing group discussions, making it easier to get through the task, while those without that experience might need extra guidance. Overall, building on your own past experiences in the right way can really boost second language learning.

3.3. Cultural context facilitates the collaborative construction of linguistic knowledge and production

From a constructivist socio-cultural theory view, the meaning of language isn't in the "symbols" themselves, but in the social and cultural context they sit in. In a target language setting, making knowledge involves both the environment and the practice, letting them shape each other together. Traditional second language learning often treats learning and using knowledge as a straight, step-by-step process: first you learn, then you use it—like when you apply learned vocab and grammar in writing. Constructivism, on the other hand, sees the relationship as more of a "working together and shaping each other" thing. On one hand, the cultural environment provides a "cultural meaning framework" for actual output. How learners understand language knowledge in a cultural context affects how they produce language. A common example is the cultural differences and conflicts between high-context and low-context groups. On the other hand, practice output gives validation and feedback for the knowledge learners have gained. Learners get feedback from the social environment, which helps them build knowledge that fits better with the social and cultural context. For instance, a student whose first language is Chinese might initially say "I am sorry" when asking for directions in English. Native speakers might respond with a puzzled look or an awkward silence. Getting this kind of feedback pushes learners to rethink and rebuild their knowledge. Learners integrate into the cultural context from a holistic perspective, engaging in practical output that dialectically unites individual perception, cognition, and imagination [5]. By engaging in deep "perezhivanie" to collaboratively build cultural contexts and practices, learners can improve their second language skills. Without these elements, knowledge and output might end up feeling disconnected from actual use. Learners may know lots of vocabulary and grammar, but if it doesn't fit cultural norms, their language output might not effectively get their message across.

4. Inspiration

4.1. Establish a closed-loop learning system

Educators' teaching practices should focus on constructing a learning closed loop, rather than merely engaging in simple "input-output" repetition. The approach should center on a dynamic updating system characterized by the core sequence of "contextualized input - interactive negotiation - knowledge internalization - output feedback - new contextual input." Firstly, educators should provide learners with sufficient opportunities for output. Many educators, in pursuit of progress in second language acquisition, tend to overlook the importance of learners' practical output. From the perspective of output theory, the development and enhancement of language proficiency itself require time and continuous adjustment [8]. Therefore, educators should not be impatient for quick results, nor should they ignore the issues that students expose during output practice. At the same time, traditional teaching often lacks a connection between the feedback generated from practice and new input. For instance, after grading assignments, teachers frequently overlook the extent to which learners have mastered the knowledge. Teaching practices remain unadjusted, and new input is delivered according to the preset schedule. When educators ignore students' practice feedback, errors go uncorrected, and new content is added, resulting in a fragmented knowledge system. Educators should establish a learning closed loop by adopting a "feedback-driven new input" model to address this issue. Feedback should not only identify mistakes but also serve as the basis for designing new contextual input. For example, learners frequently confuse the simple past tense with the present perfect tense. The next feedback provided by educators should clearly explain the rules for using

these tenses, and the new input should focus on contrasting the use of the two. Educators' instructional actions should be based on students' productive practice to ensure that the new input precisely addresses the learners' knowledge gaps.

4.2. Flexible teaching and individualized instruction

In traditional teaching, teachers often assume that all learners start from the same initial level, which, to some extent, overlooks individual differences. However, variations in learners' prior experiences result in different actual starting points. Therefore, teachers' instructional approaches should be flexible and adaptable, employing different methods and objectives for different students. According to the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), flexible teaching practices do not entail lowering the difficulty of instruction; rather, they involve setting tiered objectives to establish "reachable" ZPD goals for various learners. Learners can achieve these goals with guidance from the teacher. Van Der Veer and Valsiner suggest that educators can determine a learner's lower baseline through pre-assessment and estimate the achievable upper goals, while integrating the school's ideal educational objectives to define the zone of proximal development [9]. When educational goals are fundamentally based on individual experiences and aim at each person's potential abilities and achievable objectives, second language acquisition education can have a positive impact on every learner [9]. When promoting second language acquisition teaching, educators should implement differentiated instruction and carry out varied educational practices. The differences in learners' prior experiences determine different optimal paths for constructing a second language. For example, in the same classroom, some learners rely on transfer from their native language experiences, some rely on situational perception, and others follow autonomous exploration paths. Traditional teaching practices, such as Presentation-Practice-Production, which enforce the same learning method for all learners, may result in learners being unable to effectively acquire second language knowledge. Therefore, educators should adopt different grouping strategies according to learners' differences and employ multiple teaching practices. It is worth noting that learners' learning preference patterns may change dynamically, and educators should continuously monitor these patterns and adjust their teaching accordingly.

4.3. Second language acquisition in a cultural context

The fundamental problem of traditional second language teaching is that language learning is detached from its cultural context. Educators treat language as a "symbol system" independent of culture, focusing solely on grammar rules, vocabulary memorization, and pronunciation accuracy, while neglecting the constraints that cultural context imposes on meaning. Under this teaching model, learners face two major challenges: the formalization of language knowledge and misaligned language output. The environment serves as a carrier of cultural context, and educators should break the limitations of the traditional classroom, striving to construct a three-dimensional "sociocultural environment" that immerses learners in cultural contexts. According to experiments conducted by scholar Sangmin-Michelle Lee, when educators actively create a "metaverse" target language context, it not only stimulates learners' interest in learning but also, through situational and gamified English learning models, provides learners with authentic and meaningful opportunities for language output and interaction [10]. When educators attempt to recreate cultural contexts, they should pay attention to both the physical and social environments. The core of shaping the physical environment lies in concretizing abstract cultural contexts through static cultural symbols, thereby activating learners' sensory perception. For example, a classroom can set up a cultural corner for the

target language, displaying native books from countries where the language is spoken, such as original editions of Harry Potter, or cultural handicrafts, such as everyday items related to Mexico's Day of the Dead masks, allowing learners to perceive the cultural context through direct interaction with these objects. The core of shaping the social environment is to enable learners to dynamically perceive the "implicit" rules of cultural context through authentic interactions with participants of the target language culture. For example, organizing cross-cultural collaborative projects: establishing online exchanges with schools in target-language countries and carrying out projects on cross-cultural themes. In the process of collaboration, learners need to use a second language to communicate ideas, allocate tasks, and resolve disagreements, while simultaneously understanding the cultural perspectives of others, thereby achieving both linguistic communication and cultural interaction.

5. Conclusion

This article focuses on the three core characteristics of second language acquisition: interaction based on comprehensible input, individual differences, and the influence of sociocultural integration. From a constructivist perspective, it analyzes the mechanisms through which environment and behavioral practice affect second language acquisition. Contextualized input mediums facilitate meaning negotiation. Learner's prior experiences construct a framework for acquired knowledge. Cultural context facilitates the collaborative construction of linguistic knowledge and production. Three mechanisms all facilitate the process of second language acquisition. Finally, based on the analysis, targeted insights are proposed. Second language acquisition (SLA) instruction should revolve around the learning feedback loop, flexible teaching, and the integration of cultural contexts. These three insights encompass environmental and behavioral practices, providing a reference for practical SLA teaching.

Future research should further promote the integration of "theory-mechanism-insight." Combining large language model analysis with long-term instructional experiments to validate the effectiveness of strategies will continuously refine the SLA teaching system and help learners acquire second language proficiency more efficiently.

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