

Learner Strategies in Studying Chinese as A Second Language: An Interview Study

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors that contribute to variations in students' academic achievements, focusing on the diverse learning strategies employed by individuals studying Chinese as a foreign language. Drawing on Oxford's (2011) Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model, a list of open-ended interview questions was designed to elicit different (meta-)cognitive, (meta-)affective, and (meta-)sociocultural interactive strategies adopted by three second-year university students exhibiting varying levels of academic performance. The findings indicated that the student with the highest academic performance exhibits strategic self-regulation, utilising strong cognitive strategies and tactics to excel in acquiring the Chinese language outside of the classroom setting. Conversely, the student with the lowest academic performance struggle with metacognitive learning strategies such as planning, organising, and monitoring, and required assistance in cultivating cognitive strategies and tactics to improve their learning outcomes. All students reported grappling with negative sentiments in their Chinese learning journey, yet those achieving academic success managed to tap into supportive emotions, beliefs, and attitudes to maintain their motivation to learn. In contrast, the student with lower academic performance needed support in developing a growth mindset and self-efficacy. Regarding sociocultural interaction strategies, the top-performing student tended to study independently and attend social activities to develop linguistic, social, and cultural competence, whereas the lower-performing student preferred peer-based learning. These findings present a valuable viewpoint on the learning needs of students acquiring Chinese as a second language. They emphasise the significance of paying attention to students' learning strategies and guiding them towards strategic self-regulated learning during the language acquisition process.

Keywords: strategic self-regulation, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural interactive strategies, Chinese language acquisition