

A Study on the Role of Psychological Drivers in Learning Strategy Choice in Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract: This study systematically explores the psychological drivers underlying the choice of learning strategies and their critical roles in the process of second language acquisition (SLA). By conducting an in-depth analysis of key psychological factors including learners' motivation, emotional states, self-efficacy, and cognitive style, this research clearly reveals how these internal factors directly influence learners' selection, application, and persistence of different learning strategies. It further makes a comparative investigation into the actual effects of various learning strategies in promoting the development of different dimensions of language proficiency, such as vocabulary accumulation, grammatical comprehension, listening comprehension, and oral expression. The findings demonstrate that positive psychological drivers can effectively motivate learners to select and apply appropriate learning strategies in a more flexible, targeted and efficient manner, thus significantly improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of second language acquisition. Meanwhile, this study strongly emphasizes the core value of personalized learning strategy configuration, and puts forward specific and operable practical guidance for designing individualized learning programs based on learners' unique psychological characteristics, so as to provide a reliable reference for both second language teaching practice and autonomous learning optimization.

Keywords: Learning Strategies; Psychological Drivers; Second Language Acquisition; Self-Efficacy

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Purpose

In the complex and dynamic process of second

language acquisition, the selection and application of learning strategies are not random behaviors, but are deeply driven and restricted by a variety of internal psychological factors. Typical factors include learning motivation, emotional attitude, perceived self-efficacy, cognitive style and other individual psychological variables. These psychological elements do not simply affect which strategies learners tend to choose, but more importantly, they determine the frequency, intensity and sustainability of strategy use, and further shape the final effect of strategy application. For example, learners with strong internal motivation and positive emotional states tend to take the initiative to try, select and stick to high-efficiency learning strategies, while those with a high level of self-efficacy are more confident and determined in the process of strategy implementation, and are less likely to give up when facing learning difficulties [1].

By further systematically analyzing the correlation between specific learning strategies and language acquisition outcomes, this study finds that different types of learning strategies have obvious differential effects in improving different aspects of language ability. Some strategies show outstanding advantages in vocabulary memory and consolidation, while others are more effective in promoting grammatical understanding, logical expression and communicative competence. Through an in-depth exploration of the internal mechanism of how these strategies promote the input, processing, absorption and output of language knowledge, this study aims to provide a solid theoretical basis for the optimization of teaching design, the innovation of teaching methods and the improvement of learners' autonomous learning behavior [2]. It helps teachers and learners clearly understand which strategies are more suitable for specific learning tasks and stages, so as to avoid blind and inefficient learning behaviors.

On the basis of clarifying the interaction between psychological drivers and learning strategies, this study also focuses on providing personalized and targeted learning guidance for second language learners. By guiding learners to comprehensively understand their own psychological characteristics, dominant traits and potential deficiencies, they can accurately identify the learning strategies that match their own psychological conditions, so as to greatly improve learning efficiency and achieve better learning results. For learners with insufficient motivation, we can stimulate their internal interest and internal drive through targeted guidance, and then guide them to take the initiative to adopt positive and autonomous learning strategies [3]. For learners with low self-efficacy, we can enhance their learning confidence and sense of accomplishment through small-step tasks and timely positive feedback, so as to encourage them to persist in using scientific and effective learning methods and overcome the psychological barriers in the learning process [4].

1.2 Research Significance

Theoretically, this study has important academic value and promoting significance for the development of second language acquisition research. Firstly, it deeply expands and enriches the theoretical system of second language acquisition by systematically revealing the interaction mechanism between psychological factors and learning strategy selection, providing a new research perspective and empirical theoretical support for the in-depth study of SLA [5]. Secondly, this study tentatively constructs a theoretical model linking psychological drivers, learning strategy selection and second language acquisition effects, which provides a clear logical framework for the intersection and integration of learning psychology, cognitive psychology and applied linguistics, and effectively promotes the development of interdisciplinary research in related fields [6].

In terms of practical application, this study can provide strong empirical support and operational guidance for second language teaching practice, and help comprehensively improve the quality and effect of language teaching. By providing teachers with clear and reliable research evidence about the relationship between learning strategies and psychological factors, it enables teachers to design teaching plans, organize

classroom activities and allocate learning tasks more in line with the psychological development rules and individual differences of learners, so as to realize the transformation from traditional unified teaching to personalized precise teaching [7]. At the same time, this study also helps learners establish correct learning awareness, master scientific strategy selection methods, enhance learning confidence, effectively overcome learning anxiety and other obstacles, and significantly improve the efficiency and sustainability of autonomous language acquisition [8].

From a broader social perspective, this study helps to improve the efficiency and quality of language learning, further promote cross-cultural communication and exchanges between different language and cultural groups in the context of economic globalization and cultural diversification, and enhance people's cross-cultural communicative competence and inclusive awareness. In addition, by cultivating learners' autonomous learning ability and strategic learning awareness, this study firmly practices the lifelong learning concept, helps learners master sustainable learning methods, better adapt to the rapid changes and diverse needs of modern society, and provide strong ability support for personal academic progress, career development and comprehensive quality improvement [9].

2. Literature Review

In the academic field of second language acquisition (SLA), learning strategies have long been regarded as one of the core variables that determine the success or failure of language learning and the speed of progress. Learning strategies can be accurately defined as a series of conscious, purposeful and planned external behaviors and internal thinking methods adopted by learners in order to improve learning efficiency, optimize learning processes, reduce learning burden and effectively overcome learning obstacles [10]. In recent decades, scholars at home and abroad have carried out a large number of extensive, in-depth and multi-angle studies on the classification standards, influencing factors, functional mechanisms and application effects of learning strategies in second language acquisition. However, most previous studies have paid more attention to the cognitive and cultural background factors affecting strategy selection, while relatively

insufficient attention has been paid to the internal psychological drivers that play a decisive role. Therefore, this paper focuses on the unique role of psychological factors in the whole process of learning strategy choice, and deeply discusses their specific application paths and actual impact effects in the context of second language acquisition [11].

2.1 Classification of Learning Strategies and Their Impacts on Second Language Acquisition

The systematic research on learning strategies originated in the 1960s. With the continuous advancement of research and the accumulation of empirical evidence, scholars have put forward a variety of strategic classification systems from different theoretical perspectives. Among them, the three-category classification system of learning strategies proposed by O'Malley and Chamot has been widely recognized and applied in the international academic community [12]. The three types are cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies and social-affective strategies. Cognitive strategies mainly include memory skills, reasoning analysis, induction and summary, deduction and other specific methods, which are directly used by learners to complete information encoding, effective storage, fast retrieval and flexible application. Metacognitive strategies refer to the strategies for learners to monitor, evaluate, plan, adjust and control their own learning process, including formulating learning plans, conducting self-assessment, adjusting learning methods and so on. Social-affective strategies cover a series of behaviors such as communicating and interacting with others, actively seeking help, carrying out emotional self-regulation and maintaining learning motivation [13].

These three types of learning strategies play an irreplaceable and synergistic role in second language acquisition. Cognitive strategies provide specific operational methods for the processing and absorption of language input; metacognitive strategies are responsible for the overall planning and dynamic regulation of the learning process, ensuring that learning activities develop towards established goals; social-affective strategies provide guarantee for maintaining emotional stability and sustaining learning motivation [14]. A large number of empirical studies have shown that successful and proficient second language learners are often

able to flexibly select, comprehensively apply and effectively coordinate these strategies according to different learning tasks and scenarios, so as to maximize the efficiency and effect of language learning [15].

2.2 The Relationship between Learning Strategy Choice and Psychological Factors

The choice of learning strategies is far from a simple technical operation problem, but a complex decision-making process closely related to learners' long-term psychological states, stable personality traits and dynamic emotional changes. Many core psychological factors, such as learning motivation, emotional experience, self-efficacy level and cognitive style, play a decisive, dominant and regulatory role in the whole process of learning strategy selection and use [16].

2.2.1 Motivation and learning strategy choice

Motivation is considered to be one of the most critical and influential psychological factors in learning strategy selection. According to Dörnyei's classic second language learning motivation theory, motivation can be divided into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation [17]. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive generated by learners' genuine interest, love and curiosity in the target language itself, while extrinsic motivation refers to the learning motivation generated by external goals such as achieving exams, obtaining certificates, meeting job requirements and gaining praise. Relevant studies have confirmed that learners with strong intrinsic motivation are more inclined to take the initiative to choose autonomous, exploratory and long-term effective learning strategies such as metacognitive strategies and social communication strategies, which helps them maintain high efficiency and persistence in long-term language learning [18]. In contrast, learners dominated by extrinsic motivation are more dependent on external supervision, guidance and feedback, and their strategy selection tends to focus on cognitive strategies and social-affective strategies that can quickly obtain short-term effects [19].

2.2.2 Emotion and learning strategy choice

Emotional state also has a profound, lasting and potential impact on learners' strategy selection behavior. In the actual language learning process, learners often experience a variety of emotional experiences, among which negative emotions such as learning anxiety, psychological pressure,

self-doubt and frustration will directly interfere with and restrict their strategic choice [20]. High anxiety may cause learners to overly rely on rigid, mechanical and low-risk cognitive strategies such as rote memorization, and avoid trying flexible, creative and challenging metacognitive strategies and interactive strategies. On the contrary, positive and optimistic emotional states can stimulate learners' initiative and creativity, making them more willing to try innovative strategies such as social interaction, cross-scene application and independent exploration, which is more conducive to the natural internalization and effective output of language skills [21].

2.2.3 Self-efficacy and learning strategy choice

Self-efficacy, defined as learners' subjective judgment and belief in their ability to successfully complete specific learning tasks, also plays a key guiding role in learning strategy selection. Learners with high self-efficacy have strong psychological confidence, tend to choose challenging, exploratory and high-efficiency learning strategies, and are willing to invest more time and energy into strategy practice. Studies have shown that learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to take the initiative to use metacognitive strategies to carry out learning planning, process monitoring, effect evaluation and timely adjustment. These strategies can help them maintain a positive and stable learning attitude when facing difficulties and setbacks, and effectively improve the final learning effect.

2.2.4 Cognitive style and learning strategy choice

Cognitive style refers to the relatively stable and consistent individual preferences shown by individuals in the process of information perception, processing, processing and decision-making. Differences in cognitive styles often lead to obvious differences in learners' preference for learning strategies. Visual learners are more inclined to use visual cognitive strategies such as pictures, charts, mind maps and color marks to assist memory and understanding; auditory learners are better at enhancing language perception and ability through listening input, voice imitation and verbal communication. In addition, studies have shown that learners with high-structured thinking prefer organized, systematic and procedural learning strategies, while those with low-structured thinking are more accustomed to using intuitive, random and experiential learning

methods.

2.3 The Psychological Driver Mechanism of Learning Strategies and Second Language Acquisition

In the whole process of second language acquisition, psychological drivers run through all links of learning strategy selection, use, adjustment and evaluation, and play an important regulatory and driving role. Learners' psychological characteristics not only directly determine the types and quantities of strategies they choose in learning, but also affect the implementation quality, adjustment flexibility and final output effect of strategies to a large extent. It should be emphasized that the choice of learning strategies is not a static one-time decision, but a dynamic and developmental process. Learners' psychological states, cognitive levels and strategic abilities will continue to change and develop with the changes of learning scenarios, task requirements and personal growth experience.

A large number of research results show that positive psychological drivers, such as strong intrinsic motivation, high self-efficacy, stable and positive emotions, can help learners comprehensively improve their strategic awareness, flexibly adjust strategic choices, and efficiently use strategic tools, so as to significantly improve the effect and efficiency of language learning. On the contrary, negative psychological factors such as high anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and weak motivation will limit learners' strategic vision, easily make them fall into a single and rigid strategic use model, reduce learning initiative and creativity, and then hinder the smooth progress of language acquisition.

3. Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive and in-depth analysis above, psychological drivers play an indispensable, far-reaching and decisive role in learning strategy selection and the whole process of second language acquisition. The choice of learning strategies is affected and driven by a variety of psychological factors, among which motivation, emotion and self-efficacy are the most core and influential variables. Strong learning motivation and positive emotional states can significantly enhance the selection rationality and application effect of learning strategies. In addition, different learning

strategies show significant differential advantages in improving different dimensions of language skills: cognitive strategies have outstanding effects in vocabulary memory and knowledge consolidation; metacognitive strategies play an irreplaceable role in learning process planning, monitoring and adjustment. Personalized learning strategy selection that highly matches learners' psychological characteristics can greatly optimize the learning path and significantly improve the efficiency and effect of language acquisition.

In terms of future theoretical development, subsequent research can further expand the research scope, deeply explore the complex mechanism and interaction effects of multiple psychological drivers in more complex and realistic learning scenarios, and strive to build a more comprehensive, refined and explanatory theoretical model of learning strategy choice. In practical application, the research conclusions of this paper can provide clear and operable guidance for second language teaching design and teaching reform, help teachers accurately grasp learners' psychological characteristics and individual differences, and formulate more targeted, scientific and effective teaching plans and strategy training programs. In addition, the deep integration of psychology and linguistics will further promote the innovative research and practical optimization of learning strategies, and provide stronger theoretical support and practical guidance for the promotion of lifelong learning and the development of cross-cultural communication.

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