

Article

Learners' Perceptions of Interaction in Chinese as a Second Language Classes

Rui Bao

Zhejiang Normal University, China

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Abstract

Interaction plays an important role in L2 teaching and learning. However, learners' perceptions of interaction may vary in different contexts. This study drew on an open-ended survey to examine learners' perceptions of interaction in Chinese as a second language classes. The results showed that CSL learners perceived interaction conducive to their learning and emphasized the important role of the teacher during interaction, however, they held mixed perceptions about participation in interaction, which was related to different factors such as the quality of the teacher's instruction, student group dynamics, individual learner differences, and the topic of interaction. Moreover, improvements for interaction were suggested in terms of providing learners with more opportunities to speak, transforming the role of the teacher, and diversifying classroom interactive activities. Implications for CSL teaching and learning were also discussed.

Keywords

Learners' perceptions, interaction, Chinese as a second language

1 Introduction

Interaction is fundamental to classroom pedagogy (Allwright, 1984) and its role in L2 teaching and learning has attracted many researchers' interest over the past three decades. A growing body of research has identified the positive effect of interaction on L2 learning (see review in Mackey & Goo, 2007). This effect has been found to be related to various contextual factors (Bao & Du, 2015; Burrows, 2008; Carless, 2007). In recent years, with the increasing recognition of the role of learner-internal variables in L2 learning, learner perceptions has been brought to the fore in interaction research. Learner perceptions was defined as "evaluative judgments of and attitudes toward interaction in the classroom, and they can affect learners' intentions to negotiate meaning, their interaction behaviors, and even the level of competence they ultimately achieve in the target language" (Wang, Tseng, Chen, & Cheng, 2020, p.394). Also, it has been pointed out that learner perceptions of general or specific aspects of L2 classroom teaching and learning vary from one context to another (Hawkey, 2006; Kuo, 2011; Schulz, 2001). Moreover, these perceptions relate directly to L2 learning and have pedagogical implications for L2

teaching (Brown, 2009; Tse, 2000). As such, observing learner perceptions merits a constant exploration of new contexts. This is particularly true in the context of Chinese as a second language (CSL), as knowledge within this context is negligible.

To date, CSL research has mainly been devoted to the linguistic features of the Chinese language, while only a few researchers have started to address issues pertaining to classroom interaction by focusing on the importance of promoting interaction in CSL classes from a macro perspective (Zheng, 2010; Zu, 2009). However, considering the vital role of interaction in the language learning process and the fact that “the language classroom is likely to be among the most important learning contexts providing opportunities for learners to interact in the L2” (Wang et al., 2020, p.394), there is a need to examine learners’ perceptions of interaction. In response to this need, the current study seeks to examine CSL learners’ perceptions of interaction by using an open-ended survey, the results are expected to inform CSL teachers of how to make classroom interaction more favorable for CSL teaching and learning.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Learners’ perceptions of interaction in L2 learning

Research on learners’ perceptions of interaction has been conducted in various contexts; however, the results have been inconsistent. For instance, Mackey (2002) revealed that adult ESL learners’ perceptions of interaction were very positive, which resonated well with those from other researchers. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) showed that EFL learners in a Thai context embraced the interaction emerging from their tasks-based course, as it encouraged them to become independent thinkers and satisfied their real-world academic needs. Similarly, in Bao and Du’s (2015) study, beginner learners of Chinese as a foreign language highly enjoyed task-based interaction because it provided more opportunities for them to speak Chinese and also made them feel motivated and relaxed during class. At the same time, learners expected independent study in order to absorb what they had learned since too much interaction had inhibited them from doing so. However, the literature has also voiced some negative perceptions of interaction. For instance, Thai learners of ESL in McDonough (2004) viewed their interaction during tasks activities as a waste of time and preferred more explicit instruction from their teacher. Tse (2000) found that ESL learners were dissatisfied with the interaction between them and their pair interlocutor due to its limitation in developing their communicative ability and providing realistic vocabulary. Similarly, Kuo (2011) discovered that learners in a British EFL setting were also dissatisfied with the student-student interactions mainly due to the teacher’s authoritative position. As such, some research seems to indicate that learners’ perceptions of interaction are context-related.

Indeed, previous research has revealed the effect of contextual factors on learner perceptions. Some research focused on heritage learners and found that when learners perceived themselves as heritage learners, they were more likely to put effort into developing their linguistic and cultural expertise (Bears & de Jong, 2008; Dressler, 2010). Others indicated that learners’ perceptions of what happened in L2 classrooms were subject to learning environment such as the status of the target language (Rivera & Matsuzawa, 2007), the nature of the class (Brown, 2009), as well as the characteristics of the target language, especially in terms of interactive feedback (Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000). Wang (2017) showed that learners’ perceptions of classroom interaction were also affected by learners’ communication motivation.

In addition, the literature has also explored the relationship between learners’ perceptions and their L2 learning outcomes. For instance, Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) found that learners’ positive view of interaction induced them to be more willing to communicate. Moreover, the more positive learners’ perceptions are, the more positive the learning outcomes (Bernaus & Gardner 2008). On the contrary,

Schulz (2001) reported that the language learning process was more likely to be hindered if learners' perceptions of classroom activities did not match their expectations.

Taken together, this research indicates that learners' perceptions play an important role in their learning process. Meanwhile, it highlights the context-dependent nature of learners' perceptions. This nature makes it implausible to generalize learners' perceptions of interaction across contexts. Therefore, more research is warranted in different contexts such as Chinese as a second language (CSL), as little attention has been paid to this area.

2.2 Research on Chinese as a second language

There have been two primary lines of research on CSL both within and outside China. One line has addressed the morphological and syntactical aspects of the Chinese language from a linguistic perspective (see review in Zhao, 2011), whereas another has focused on Chinese teaching from a pedagogical perspective. A few recent studies have called for an urgent need to explore how students learn Chinese during classes. This need, together with the prevalence of interaction-driven learning theory, has brought interaction to the fore in CSL research agendas.

Earlier research focused mainly on discussing the importance of interaction in L2 teaching and learning from a theoretical perspective (Sun & Li, 2009). Recently, increasing attention has been paid to empirical research on interaction in CSL classes. For instance, Zheng (2010) examined the interaction in a primary-level oral CSL class and found that interaction by means of intensive input, recast, and pushed output not only enhanced learners' understanding of Chinese grammatical forms but also facilitated the acquisition of these forms. Zhao (2015) suggested that CSL learners should be trained to pay more attention to their linguistic forms during interaction. Bao (2020) found that beginning learners of Chinese benefited from their interactive dialogue but requires teacher as a gatekeeper to monitor the knowledge generated from their dialogue. Nevertheless, little is known about CSL learners' perceptions of interaction, which suggests a need for more research on this area. This need is further highlighted as far as the characteristics of Chinese language are concerned. As noted by Orton (2008), Chinese language is different from other languages due to its unique sound, grammar, and orthography systems, which have presented challenges for foreign learners, especially in relation to its pronunciation and tone. These linguistic differences have also raised question about whether the existing findings resulting mainly from European languages can be applied to the Chinese language (Duff & Li, 2004). With these in mind, the current study seeks to explore learners' perceptions of interaction by pursuing the answers to three questions:

- (1) How do learners perceive interaction when learning CSL?
- (2) What factors affect learners' participation in interaction?
- (3) What efforts can be made to improve interaction in CSL classes?

3. Methodology

3.1 Instructional context

This study took place in an intensive language program in a Chinese university. This program was two-semester long and aimed at helping learners develop their Chinese proficiency. The participants were from a variety of countries, but the majorities were from Africa and the Middle East. They were studying in China for different reasons such as job-hunting, traveling, cultural experiences, business, and preparation for further study. According to learners' placement tests, five levels of modules with two subcategories each (e.g., lower and upper) were established to accommodate learners' individual proficiency in Chinese. There were 40 learners in each of the two lower-elementary classes, while the

number of participants in the remaining classes was 20 each. All classes had five courses: comprehensive Chinese, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Among them, only the comprehensive Chinese course was delivered by formal employees hired by the university, while the rest were all delivered by part-time teachers and second-year graduate students majoring in Chinese International Education. A series of textbooks *Developing Chinese* were used for all courses. At the end of each semester an exam was provided for all courses, which was designed by the corresponding teachers. Also, cultural activities were available to learners along with the formal study of the program.

3.2 Participants

Thirty-six participants in the program volunteered to take part in this study. Of the 36 participants, twelve were lower-advanced learners and the rest were from the upper-intermediate classes. Their ages ranged from 19 to 34 years old. They had various L1 backgrounds. Sixteen of them were from Asia, including Thailand, Korea, Indonesia, and India; fourteen from Africa, mainly Ghana and Cameroon; and five from Europe as well as one from America. Twenty-six participants were supported by Chinese government scholarships, while ten were self-supported. As for their Chinese proficiency, they were at either HSK4 or HSK5 level (*HSK is an official assessment for foreigner proficiency in Chinese*), and were all considered intermediate learners. They met for five hours on average every weekday. In addition, a two-hour tutorial lesson was available, which was provided by undergraduate Chinese volunteers once a week. The participants here were treated as one group in view of their shared learning context. Their detailed information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Participant Learners (n=36)

National background	Gender	Chinese proficiency	Class level	Years of learning	With/out Scholarship
Africa=14	Male=11	HSK6=1	Lower-advanced=12	0-1year=5	Scholarship=26
Europe=5	Female=25	HSK5=16	Upper-intermediate=24	1-3years=20	Self-supported=10
Asia=16		HSK4=19		3-5years=9	
America=1				5-7years=2	

3.3 Data collection

Convenience sampling was used for data collection as the researcher was also the teacher in this program. Concerning ethical issues, permission from the faculty was obtained. Participants were informed that taking part would be anonymous and all data would be treated confidentially. The data was collected by means of an open-ended survey. The survey was designed by referring to relevant literature, it consisted of two sections. Section 1 focused on learner background information and Section 2 was intended to elicit learners' perceptions of interaction; it included nine questions. All questions were open-ended, which enabled participants to articulate their opinions in detail (Dörnyei, 2007). Given the role of piloting in the validity of the survey (Wagner, 2010), its initial draft was distributed to a sample of 15 participants. The insights gained from these piloting samples were considered when modifications were made to the draft. Specifically, the number of questions in Section 2 was reduced to nine and two of them were reformulated to be clearer. The final survey (see Appendix 1) was administered during the last week of the semester.

3.4 Data analysis

The responses of the surveys were analyzed qualitatively by thematic content analysis using the techniques of opening and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). First, all the surveys were numbered so the researcher could track the analysis. Second, by iteratively reading learners' responses in the surveys, codes were assigned to these responses by open-coding. Then, through recursive reading on these assigned codes, axial coding was performed to merge the recurring codes into related groups, which were then conceptualized as ultimate themes. Regarding the reliability of the coding, other perceptions were considered (Stake, 2000), that is, the researcher shared their interpretations with one colleague, who was allowed to comment on the analysis. These comments were subsequently incorporated into the final analysis.

4. Findings

4.1 Learners' perceptions of interaction when learning CSL

In response to the first research question, the qualitative analysis of the survey data was summarized into four themes: (1) the positive effects of interaction on L2 learning process; (2) emphasis on teacher's role during interaction; (3) mixed views about participating in interaction; and (4) preference for diverse interactive activities. Each theme was discussed separately.

4.1.1 The positive effects of interaction on the L2 learning process

In the surveys, participants were asked to describe the role of interaction in their learning, almost all of them (n=31) considered interaction valuable for their learning, the reasons for which are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

CSL Learners' Perceptions of the Role of Interaction

Theme	Learners' perceptions
The positive effects of interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating their learning • creating an active learning climate • enabling teacher to know how to teach • boosting learner confidence

As can be seen in Table 2, twenty-five participants argued that interaction is beneficial for their learning, with four participants commenting that interaction helped them easily understand the teaching and one participant highlighting the role of interaction in facilitating them to remember the vocabulary during class, while twelve participants maintained that interaction provided learners with opportunities to speak, and also helped them become more willing to communicate.

In addition, eight participants embraced the learning environment which resulted from interaction, as it not only strengthened the bond between teacher and students and among students, but also helped learners to concentrate and feel engaged during class, while another three participants stated that interaction enhanced their confidence in speaking Chinese. Seven participants perceived interaction as important, as it assisted teachers to better understand their students' strengths and weaknesses, which enabled them to provide learners with appropriate support. However, four out of thirty-six participants perceived the role of interaction as being neutral due to individual learner differences, in particular learning style. Furthermore, two participants wrote that the importance of interaction depends on course types.

4.1.2 Emphasis on teacher's role during interaction

When asked about preferred interactive patterns, most of the participants (n=26) were well disposed towards teacher-student interaction by highlighting the role of the teacher during interaction. Table 3 lists the specific reasons for this preference.

Table 3

CSL Learners' Perceptions of Interactional Pattern

Theme	Learners' perceptions
Emphasis on teacher's role during interaction (n=26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher is more knowledgeable • teacher knows how to guide the interaction • teacher helps identify and correct learner errors

Note. One participant preferred teacher-student interaction but without comments

As shown in Table 3, thirteen participants perceived the teacher as a knowledge authority who was able to ensure the quality of interaction, while eight participants attached importance to the teacher's role in orchestrating interaction. Another six highlighted the role of the teacher in correcting errors.

However, a small number of participants (n=9) showed their preferences for student-student interaction, the reasons for which were diverse. For instance, five of them argued that student-student interaction provided students with affective support and created a relaxed learning atmosphere, while another two attributed their preferences for this kind of interaction to the fact that it enabled students to learn from each other. Four participants wrote that student-student interaction endowed them with a more active role in the learning process and more opportunities to express themselves.

Also, another two participants were disposed towards the affective support when interacting with their classmates. In addition, there was one participant, who highlighted the positive effects of student-student interaction on their learning outcomes as the classmates had a similar proficiency in Chinese and this was helpful in activating what she have learned when interacting with her peer interlocutor.

4.1.3 Mixed views about participating in interaction

As for participation in interaction, learners' perceptions were mixed due to their various concerns, which were summarized into three sub-themes as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

CSL Learners' Perceptions of Their Participation in Interaction

Theme	Sub-theme	Learners' perceptions
Participation in interaction	Really like participating (n=18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating their Chinese learning • making learning relaxed
	Neutral (n=15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual learner differences • depending on the topic of interaction
	Dislike participating (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual learner differences

Note. One participant chose 'very like to participate' but without comments

As can be seen, eighteen out of thirty-six participants strongly favored participation in interaction, as this enabled them to learn from other persons and to practice their Chinese skills, while two of them further highlighted the decreased anxiousness and pressure generated from this participation. Interestingly, one participant maintained that participation in interaction helped them to remember what they had learned.

However, almost half of the participants (n=15) held neutral perceptions about participating in interaction in relation to their various concerns. Among them, nine attributed their levels of participation to individual differences such as learning style, affective concerns, and personality. In addition, six participants maintained that their participation depended very much on their interest in the topic of interaction. In other words, when the topic is interesting, they are willing to engage in interaction, otherwise, they would rather stay silent. Moreover, this interest was subject to learner preference, as after all, not all topics are attractive to everyone.

In addition, three participants expressed their dislike at participating in interaction, the reasons being related mainly to their concerns about affect and individual learning style. Specifically, one participant was concerned about embarrassing themselves when participating in interaction because of their limited proficiency in Chinese, while another two related this dislike to their personal learning styles; one of them mentioned that it is enough when there is one student providing the answer to the question proposed by the teacher.

4.1.4 Preference for diverse interactive activities

The analysis of the responses in the surveys showed CSL learners' desire for their most-enjoyed interactional activities, which were grouped into three thematic aspects as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

CSL Learners' Perceptions of Interactive Activities

Theme	Learners' perceptions
Most-enjoyed interactional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner-centered activities • teacher-student interaction • cultural exchanges and entertaining activities

Learners varied in their perceptions of most-enjoyed interactive activities. Of the thirty-six participants, sixteen of them most enjoyed learner-centered interactive activities such as discussion or debate by arguing that these activities provided adequate opportunities for them to speak Chinese and enabled them to learn from each other. In addition, twelve participants were favorable towards teacher-student interaction by focusing on the important role of the teacher in controlling the entire interactional process from which students can benefit most. Interestingly, another six appreciated the interaction emerging from entertaining activities or cultural exchanges. Among them, three expressed their preferences for incorporating educational games into classroom learning.

4.2 Factors impacting learner participation

The second research question addressed the factors affecting learner participation. The analysis of the surveys data revealed a variety of factors affecting learners' participation in interaction, which were categorized into four aspects as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

CSL Learners' Perceptions of Factors Impacting Their Participation in Interaction

Theme	Learners' perceptions
Factors impacting learner participation in interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of teacher's instruction • student group dynamics • individual learner issues • the topic of interaction

4.2.1 The quality of the teacher's instruction

As shown in the data, twenty-eight out of thirty-six participants maintained that the way the teacher managed the classroom process and delivered their teaching, to a great extent, determined learner participation in interaction. Specifically, ten participants preferred to participate when the teacher acknowledged or rewarded their progress. Another eight commented that their participation related to the teacher's teaching style. Among them, four mentioned that they were reluctant to participate in interaction when the teacher made comparisons on their performance with other classmates, while another four stated that they felt discouraged to participate when the teacher ignored their initiatives, especially for those who attempted to engage in interaction voluntarily. When the teacher's teaching method is intriguing and the teaching manner is amenable and considerate, learners are more willing to participate in interaction.

4.2.2 Student group dynamics

The results showed that eighteen participants related their participation in interaction to the quality of the classroom environment. Among them, ten ascribed this quality to the attitude of the interlocutor in interaction; namely, a good interlocutor might pass positive energy to the other learner and even to the entire class. Similarly, three participants commented that they felt demotivated to participate in interaction when their interlocutor did not focus and take the class seriously.

4.2.3 Individual learner issues

Almost half of the participants (n=15) stated that their participation in interaction was affected by individual learner concerns. For instance, ten of them were concerned about the embarrassment if they were unable to accomplish the given tasks. Three participants considered their individual learning style, while another two expressed concern about individual personality.

4.2.4 The topic of interaction

In the data, twelve participants commented that their participation was in part subject to the topic of interaction. In other words, they felt highly encouraged to participate in interaction if the topic of interaction was interesting, and discouraged if they felt the topic was not interesting. Apart from being interesting, the topic must satisfy individual learner needs

4.3 Improvements for interaction in CSL classes

For the third research question, learners were asked for their suggestions for improvements on interaction in CSL classes. These suggestions were summarized into three themes as displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

CSL Learners' Suggestions for Improvements on Interaction

Themes	Learners' perceptions
Improvements on interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing more opportunities for learners to speak Chinese • transforming the role of teacher • diversifying classroom interactive activities

Note. Four participants did not respond this question in the survey

4.3.1 Providing more opportunities for learners to speak Chinese

From the responses in the surveys, twenty-eight participants mentioned that classroom interaction should create more opportunities for learners to use Chinese through various kinds of activities. For instance, one of the participants suggested incorporating some new teaching methods into Chinese classes, specifically that the teacher act as a facilitator instead of as a lecturer, which not only could make class more interactive but also more interesting.

4.3.2 Transforming the role of teacher

The survey data showed that almost half of the participants (n=16) placed emphasis on the role the teacher played in improving classroom interaction. To be precise, ten participants highlighted the role of the teacher in orienting the interactional process. Another two attached importance to the teacher's role in teaching design and arrangements to make classroom interaction more interesting and realistic. Moreover, three participants stressed the teacher's responsibility in building up an interactive and pleasant learning environment. One participant further suggested that the teacher should take care of all learners rather than only those with a high proficiency, as this might cause discomfort and potentially cause other learners to feel ignored and discouraged.

4.3.3 Diversifying classroom interactive activities

The data analysis indicated that eleven participants highlighted the need to diversify the form of activities to increase interaction during classes. Among them, five expressed a preference for entertaining activities such as Chinese songs and movies watching and two participants showed interest in examination and text reading respectively. In addition, there were four participants who were interested in incorporating games such as guessing word games, which they felt helped them to learn and remember language items more effectively.

5 Discussion

The results indicated that CSL learners appeared to be very positive about the role of interaction in their learning. This supports the findings from previous studies (Bao & Du, 2015; Mackey, 2002) and suggests the need for enhancing learner participation in CSL classes. As shown in the data, most of the learners embraced interaction in which they were given adequate opportunities to speak Chinese, especially in teacher-student interaction. What this implies is that the teacher-centered method might still maintain a dominant position in CSL classrooms. This method, however, has a negative impact on learners' participation and sustaining learners' interest (Moloney, 2013), the results of which might be detrimental to learning (Mackey, 1999). In this sense, there is a pressing need for a shift to a learner-centered teaching method in CSL classes. It should also be noted that this shift does not just simply require an

implementation of pair or group activities (McDonough, 2004; Tse, 2000), but instead it needs to be genuinely learner-centered by transforming the teacher's role, especially in relation to teacher-student interaction (Antón, 1999). This leads to the following discussion about the reconceptualization of the role of the teacher in CSL classrooms.

As shown in the data, the majority of CSL learners showed their preference for teacher-student interaction with regard to the teacher's role in correction, guidance, and knowledge explanation during classroom interaction. This seems to suggest that learners may not consider their peers to be useful resources for language learning and prefer to rely upon their teachers for L2 knowledge (Mackey, Philp, Egi, Fujii, & Tatsumi, 2002). Notwithstanding, this reliance on the teacher does not mean that they should dominate interaction. On the contrary, CSL learners placed great emphasis on their own participation in interaction, especially in teacher-student interaction. This highlights the need to transform the role of teacher in CSL classrooms, namely, to be a facilitator or a mediator, who constantly creates space for learners to participate in interaction and mediates them to make sense of their own L2 understandings and utterances instead of being a knowledge transmitter shaped by traditional Chinese education schema (Hu, 2002).

This transformation, however, does not mean that the learner has nothing to do with the quality of classroom interaction. In effect, the results revealed that learners' participation in interaction was somewhat affected by their peer classmates. Said another way, when their peers were active and serious in the learning process, learners were more willing to engage in interaction and vice versa. As such, it can be assumed that the quality of classroom interaction represents a complex interplay of its participants, as argued by Allwright (1984), "a mere presence of a participant constitutes a contribution to the management of interaction, since it will affect the behavior of others" (p. 159). As such, interaction should be treated not simply as "something unilaterally in the hands of the teacher" (Allwright, 1984, p. 159) but instead as an activity that considers all its participants.

Additionally, this study highlights the need for taking individual learner difference into account when implementing interactive activities. As noted above, CSL learners related their perceptions of interaction to personal concerns, especially in relation to participation in interaction. This seems to suggest that the teacher should have awareness of learners' different learning needs and attempt to meet their expectations in the learning process to create an effective interactive environment. Schulz (1996) argued that to establish pedagogical credibility and increase students' participation in learning, teachers have to make an effort to explore what students think to be the best way to learn a language. Finally, the topic of interaction cannot afford to be ignored; as it needs to be congruous with individual learner needs otherwise it may demotivate learners to engage themselves in interaction. This, on the other hand, highlights the importance of considering the design of interactive activity to maximize the value of interaction for learning.

The results show CSL learners' pedagogical, social, and psychological concerns when it comes to issues related to classroom interaction. These concerns indicate the complexity of CSL learners' perceptions of interaction, which produce pedagogical implications for CSL teachers to consider.

6 Pedagogical Implication

First, the teacher should provide learners with abundant opportunities to participate in classroom interaction. Considering this, the teacher-centered approach should be avoided; instead, the teacher should make use of diverse types of interactive or collaborative activities which encourage learners to engage themselves to increase their skills in Chinese.

Second, the teacher should create a balance between their authoritative position and their role in establishing learner-centered interaction. On one hand, few would argue the authoritative and professional role a teacher plays in presenting and explaining linguistic knowledge; on the other hand,

this role does not mean the teacher should dominate the interaction, thus leaving little space for learner involvement. On the contrary, the teacher should act as a facilitator or organizer, prompting learners to make maximal contributions to the interactional process.

Last, the teacher should take learner needs into account when implementing interactive activities. Classroom interaction is co-constructed by teachers and learners together. Because of this, the teacher should consider whether the way they teach aligns with learner needs. Doing so could lead to more effective and efficient learning experiences.

7 Conclusion

This study examined learners' perceptions of interaction when learning CSL. The results indicated that CSL learners perceived the positive effects of interaction on their learning and focused on the important role of the teacher during interaction and the diversity in form of interactive activities, however, they had mixed views about participation in interaction, which was attributed to different factors such as the quality of the teacher's instruction, student group dynamics, individual learner issues, and the topic of interaction. Additionally, improvements for interaction were suggested, for example, providing more opportunities for learners to speak, transforming the role of the teacher, and diversifying classroom interactive activities. This study is insightful for CSL teachers in terms of how to make classroom interaction more favorable for CSL teaching and learning.

A few limitations should be noted. First, the small-scale sampling in this study may have limited the generalizability and interpretability of its results. Second, with respect to the instrument for data collection, although the items on the survey were carefully worded, piloted, and reformulated to ensure reliability, there is a possibility that some items remained ambiguous or difficult for individual participants (Brown, 2009). As a result, participants may not have adequately explained their perceptions. Finally, only one data resource used in this study may restrict us from having a more complete picture of learners' perceptions of interaction. As such, future research should draw on more sampling and other data resources to allow for a better understanding of CSL learners' perceptions of interaction. Such understanding could help inform CSL teachers on how to make their teaching practices more effective and efficient.

Note

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire of Learners' Perceptions of Interaction

Part 1: Background Information

Your nationality: _____

Your age: _____

Your gender: Male , Female

Years of learning Chinese: _____

Which level class are you in now?

Your self-assessed HSK level: A. 3 B. 4 C.5 D.6 E. Under 3

Do you have scholarship for your study in China or pay by yourself? _____

Your motivation in learning Chinese

Part 2: Your perceptions of interaction in your Chinese language class

1. What does the word ‘interaction’ mean for you in classes?

2. What do you think of the role of interaction in your Chinese learning during classes? Please explain why.

3. Do you prefer teacher-directed interaction or student-student interaction in class? Please explain your answer.

4. Do you like to participate in interaction during your Chinese classes? Please explain your answer.

5. What can encourage you to participate in classroom interaction?

6. What can discourage you to participate in classroom interaction?

7. What kinds of interactional activities do you enjoy **most** in your Chinese classes? Please explain your answer.

8. What kinds of interactional activities do you enjoy **least** in your Chinese classes? Please explain your answer.

9. What kind of interaction do you like to have more in your Chinese classes? Please explain your answer.

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Bao Rui is an associate professor of College of International Culture and Education at Zhejiang Normal University, China. Her research interests include Chinese as a second/foreign language teaching and learning, classroom interaction, language teacher and learner belief, and language teacher development.

汉语作为第二语言课堂互动：学习者视角

鲍蕊

浙江师范大学，中国

摘要

本研究通过问卷调查考察了汉语作为第二语言学习者对课堂互动的看法。研究结果显示汉语二语学习者对互动持有积极态度，强调老师在互动中的重要作用，但对参与互动过程意见不一，认为参与互动受多种因素影响，如老师教学质量、小组合作情况、学生个体差异、互动主题等，提出应该给学生创造更多表达机会、改变教师角色、丰富课堂互动活动以提高课堂互动。本研究对汉语作为第二语言课堂教与学具有一定的启示意义。

关键词

学习者视角，互动，汉语作为第二语言

鲍蕊，浙江师范大学副教授，文学博士，研究方向为国际中文教育、第二语言教学与习得。