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**Chinese number words, culture, and mathematics learning.**

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Summary: This review evaluates the role of language - specifically, the Chinese-based system of number words and the simplicity of Chinese mathematical terms - in explaining the relatively superior performance of Chinese and other East Asian students in cross-national studies of mathematics achievement. Relevant research is critically reviewed focusing on linguistic and cultural influences. The review (a) provides equivocal findings about the extent to which number words in the Chinese language afford benefits for mathematics learning; (b) indicates that cultural and contextual factors are gaining prominence in accounting for the superior performance of East Asian students in cross-national studies; and (c) yields emerging evidence from neuroscience that highlights interrelationships among language, cultural beliefs, and mathematics learning. Although it is not possible to disentangle the influences of linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors on mathematics performance, language is still seen as contributing to early cross-national differences in mathematics attainment.

*Classification:* D20 E40 D30

*Keywords:* language; Chinese number words; linguistics; cultural influences

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