

The influence and significance of theory in second language teaching application: Taking Krashen's Input Hypothesis as an Example

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Abstract. The application of theory in second language teaching has received widespread attention, but teachers still have shortcomings in combining theory with practice. This article analyzes the application of Krashen's Input Hypothesis in second language teaching, including its positive impacts and limitations. This study found that the application of theory in second language teaching is more profound than before. Theory provides important reference value for second language teaching. However, this study also found that there are still shortcomings in the application of this theory. This article analyzes that in the process of second language teaching, teachers should integrate theory with other theories, consider the combination of input and output, and optimize teaching modes based on individual differences. Based on this, this article will take the Krashen Input Hypothesis as an example to provide relevant suggestions for the theoretical application in second language teaching.

Keywords: Krashen's Input Hypothesis, second language teaching, theory, positive impacts and limitations.

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of second language teaching methods, the application of theory in teaching is becoming increasingly widespread. At the same time, many different theories have also emerged in the field of second language teaching. These theories analyze and guide second language teaching from different perspectives. The application of the input hypothesis in second language teaching is profound and extensive. In addition, it has also been extensively researched and validated. Multiple studies have shown that students can significantly improve their language proficiency, especially in listening comprehension and grammar acquisition, by receiving 'comprehensible input. Many teaching practices have proposed methods based on this theory, such as immersive learning, task-based language teaching, and natural law teaching. These methods all emphasize enhancing learners' language abilities through a large amount of input. Research has found that students are better able to grasp language rules and usage through natural, interactive, and contextualized language input. However, Krashen's "input hypothesis" has certain limitations in the application of second language teaching. In theory, it simplified the process of foreign language learning and exaggerated the role of input. Its theory is too broad and not specific for second language teaching (Li, 2013). In addition, previous research has focused more on the practical application of theory in teaching, with less emphasis on improving the shortcomings of theoretical application. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to review and summarize relevant research results, analyze the shortcomings and limitations of existing research, explore the application of input hypotheses in different teaching environments, and provide feasible directions and practical improvement suggestions for future second language teaching. This study takes the Krashen hypothesis as an example, analyzes its application research in second language teaching in the past 20 years, identifies its main research achievements and shortcomings, further explores how to effectively apply this theory in practical teaching, and proposes possible directions for future research. Through the review of relevant literature, this study aims to provide valuable theoretical support and practical guidance for the field of second language teaching and promote the deep application of input hypothesis theory in teaching practice [1-4].

2. Theory and Application

2.1. Input Hypothesis Theory

American linguistic educator Stephen Krashen proposed a series of theories on second language acquisition in the 1970s and 1980s. The input hypothesis is the core part of Krashen's second language acquisition theory. Learners need a lot of input and understanding of the input language. His "i+1" formula provides a good explanation of what comprehensible input is. 'i' represents the current level of language learners. '1' represents that the input language is slightly higher than the learner's current level. Only when learners are exposed to second language input beyond their current level and can focus on understanding the content of the input without overly emphasizing the form of the language can they acquire it. According to Krashen's viewpoint, people do not need to deliberately provide this "i+1" input; as long as the learner can understand the content of the input and has sufficient quantity, they automatically provide this input. Krashen believes that the input has four characteristics: comprehensibility, interest and relevance, sufficient input volume, and nongrammatical program arrangement. This type of input is ideal.

2.2. The specific application of the Input Hypothesis in second language teaching

2.2.1. Input methods and contents

In the process of second language teaching, the input method and content are both very important. Teachers need to pay attention to the diversity of input, the selection of materials, and the form and channels of input. The input hypothesis provides a new direction for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, suggesting that in addition to selecting listening materials from multiple aspects, teaching should also increase the amount of input (Bai, 2009). Teachers should use language acquisition laws to combine communicative teaching with grammar teaching, creating an effective language input environment (Chen, 2011). In addition, the input should change the single language input form, increase the channels for language input, use rich teaching aids, and develop a database resource library based on theory (Deng & Guo, 2010). Teachers make full use of multimedia for language input and can play videos to provide authentic language information (Kang, 2008). Various effective extracurricular activities have been proposed to enhance students' language output ability through extracurricular activities in college English, such as organizing English cultural and artistic festivals, English corners, etc. (Li, 2013). The current analysis indicates that the input method and content are quite important in the process of second language teaching.

2.2.2. Learning environment and conditions

The input hypothesis suggests that in the process of second language teaching, how to provide learners with an immersive second language acquisition environment is also a question that teachers need to consider. Teachers should use language acquisition laws to combine communicative teaching with grammar teaching, creating an effective language input environment (Chen, 2011). Teachers improve language input conditions to enable students to fully immerse themselves in the language input environment (Kang, 2008). Various effective extracurricular activities have been proposed to enhance students' language output ability through extracurricular activities in college English, such as organizing English cultural and artistic festivals, English corners, etc. (Li, 2013). Teachers should avoid organizing their teaching according to the grammar order in textbooks, and instead, they should teach based on scholars' learning patterns or situational teaching (Kang, 2008). From the above, it can be seen that teachers need to focus on the learning environment and conditions.

2.2.3. Paying attention to individual factors of learners

The input hypothesis emphasizes establishing an input process based on students' personalized characteristics and existing foundations. Every learner is different and independent. When facing different learners, teachers need to use different teaching methods. For example, in college English teaching, students are taught according to their aptitude, and different comprehensible content is input

based on their different comprehension abilities and cognitive levels (Chen, 2011). Based on the input hypothesis, the college needs to reform its curriculum by modifying corresponding courses according to different grades and combining oral and listening skills (Deng & Guo, 2010). Listening materials should be gradually adjusted in difficulty, and the input content should be easy for students to understand and apply (Chen, 2017). Teachers are expected to develop distinctive bilingual textbooks (Wang, 2015). Teachers should find ways to stimulate learners' learning motivation and establish reward mechanisms (Li, 2009). Teachers are better at providing reading materials that students are interested in (Hu et al., 2010). Along with language input, corresponding cultural input should also be carried out, such as using movies and real-life scenarios to increase the fun of teaching (Chen, 2017). Teachers need to emphasize the role of emotions in language knowledge input and stimulate learners' interest in learning (Wei, 2020). Every individual has their differences, so in the process of second language teaching, learners should pay more attention to stimulating individual learning interests and not be stereotyped [5-9].

3. Positive impact and implementation limitations

3.1. Positive impact

Firstly, classroom teaching has been optimized. The specific manifestation of this impact is the improvement of classroom efficiency and teaching mode. Guided by the input hypothesis, the second language classroom has broken through the teaching limitations of the first classroom of college English, created a second classroom of college English, and promoted the development of college English (Li, 2013). Secondly, learners develop. Learners have more opportunities for language output. This fully motivates learners and improves their English proficiency (Li, 2013). It is beneficial for stimulating learning motivation (Li, 2009). Graded teaching can help students develop good reading habits, stimulate their enthusiasm and interest in learning, and lay the foundation for self-directed learning by providing challenging materials and related tasks that meet their English proficiency, as well as guidance from teachers (Hu et al., 2010). Researchers have found that student-centered teaching is more conducive to language acquisition due to teacher-centered teaching (Jamilah, 2024). Thirdly, it contributes to the development of teaching theory and practice. Second language teaching can enhance the quality and effectiveness of bilingual teaching, promote deeper research on the principles and methods of bilingual teaching, and establish a theoretical system and practical model that relevant to China's actual situation (Wang, 2015).

3.2. Limitations of implementation

3.2.1. Individualized teaching

Krashen's input hypothesis suggests that language is understandable, but Gass proposed the idea that language input must be understood. The comprehensibility of language input depends on the input person, who is the speaker. However, as the input person, students are the ones who complete the learning process. Different learners have varying levels of comprehension abilities. In the actual environment of large class teaching, the language teaching characteristics of second language acquisition and the personalized foundation and characteristics of learners have been neglected (Xiong & Yang, 2014). The input hypothesis suggests that "comprehensible input" is the key to language acquisition. However, this theory ignores the individual differences of learners and the influence of external factors such as emotional factors, motivation, and so on. In addition, Krashen did not fully consider learners' initiative and participation, resulting in the input hypothesis being unable to fully explain the complexity of language acquisition (Wen & Wei, 2019).

3.2.2. Teaching process and environment

The time for classroom teaching is very limited, and although there is sufficient input, there is also a problem that needs to be solved: there is not enough time for teachers to input (Xiong & Yang, 2014). Krashen's input hypothesis ignores the influence of the mother tongue on second language

acquisition, especially the influence of positive and negative transfer. Krashen's hypothesis oversimplifies the explanation of individual differences and does not fully consider the language background and environmental differences of learners (Wen & Wei, 2019).

3.2.3. Teaching evaluation

Krashen attributes language acquisition almost entirely to comprehensible input. Less attention to interaction and feedback plays a role in guiding attention and promoting language production (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021). Krashen only believes that output is the result of language acquisition, not the cause. But in fact, input and output should be considered together, and the way to test language acquisition still depends on the output. Language production can also assist learners in second language acquisition (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021) [10-13].

4. Advice

4.1. Optimizing extracurricular learning methods and focusing on personalized teaching

Teachers should fully consider the differences among learners and use different input methods based on their learning situations and abilities. Teachers should use various ways to fully stimulate students' enthusiasm, such as using multimedia, changing teaching strategies, etc., to stimulate students' initiative in learning. How to make good use of extracurricular time so that students can both accept and have fun learning is also a question that educators need to consider.

Teachers should pay attention to comprehensible input, implement graded teaching, and implement personalized teaching. Each individual has individual differences, so in the process of input, more attention should be paid to comprehensibility. Teachers should be aware of this limitation, pay more attention to graded teaching, and teach according to their aptitude. In addition, educators should also fully consider the differences among learners and use different forms of input methods based on different learning situations and abilities.

4.2. Combining theory with practice to enhance the effectiveness of teaching

Teachers should combine theory with practical grammar teaching. Theory has limitations, and language acquisition is a complex process. Teachers should fully consider the characteristics of students and the language learning environment for systematic learning (Dong & Cao, 2023). Therefore, having theory alone is not enough. Teachers also need to apply theory to practice and continuously improve and perfect theoretical guidance for teaching in practice.

4.3. Strengthening the connection between input and output

Input and output complement each other. Merely having input or output is not enough. Subsequent educators should also pay attention to the combination of input and output in the teaching process. Teachers can integrate the bidirectional learning mode of input and output, combine input and output, increase the amount of input, improve input through feedback from output, guide students to self-check, and use output to test the effectiveness of input [14-15].

5. Conclusion

This study takes the Krashen Input Hypothesis as an example to explore its impact and significance in second language teaching. During the research process, this study found that the application of theory in second language teaching is more profound than before. Teachers are also constantly adjusting their teaching strategies to adapt to different teaching environments and student needs. The theoretical basis of the input hypothesis provides an important reference value for second language teaching, emphasizing the crucial role of "comprehensible input" in language acquisition. Teachers gradually adopt richer input materials in teaching, combined with situational teaching, task-based teaching, and other methods, to improve students' language exposure and understanding.

However, this study also found that there are still shortcomings in the application of this theory. Although the input hypothesis has a strong guiding role in second language teaching, there are still certain limitations in its practical application. For example, this theory pays less attention to the role of interaction and feedback in language production, ignoring individual differences, emotional factors, and learner initiative. Therefore, this study systematically summarizes the use, impact, shortcomings, and optimization strategies of input hypotheses. In the future, second language teaching should combine the advantages of the input hypothesis and integrate other language acquisition theories, comprehensively consider the relationship between input and output, optimize teaching modes, and make second language learning more efficient.

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