

Study on the Significance of the Input Hypothesis to English Teaching

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Abstract: Linguistics plays an immeasurable role in English teaching, as it helps us understand the essence of English. To be more conducive to English teaching, this article will explore the significance of the input hypothesis in English teaching, To improve the quality of English teaching and help students learn English better.

Keywords: The Input Hypothesis; English Teaching; Krashen.

1. Introduction

Professor S. Krashen, an American linguist, proposed the "input hypothesis", which is a theory about the methods of foreign language learning and teaching. And it has caused a widespread response in the field of language education. In the mid-1980s, with its rise, the concept of "language input" gradually emerged in China. Although scholars have different opinions on this, in a sense, it provides a theoretical basis for foreign language learning and expands people's horizons.

2. The Theoretical Basis

In the early 1980s, American linguist Krashen proposed a well-known and controversial second language acquisition model called the "monitoring model", which includes "the acquisition and learning hypothesis", "the natural order hypothesis", "the monitor hypothesis", "the input hypothesis", and "the affective filter hypothesis". And "the input hypothesis" is the essence of this theory.

Krashen's language acquisition hypothesis suggests that there are two basic methods for learning a foreign language: one is to acquire it naturally, just like young children acquire their mother tongue; the second is to exert one's subjective initiative and learn language rules by themselves. However, he believes that the former is more important than the latter. Besides, people's oral expression ability is acquired, and learning to apply language rules can supervise what they say. Therefore, we can only learn language through natural acquisition. And if we want to learn a language more smoothly, we must have a lot of language input.

Krashen refers to students' current level of language cognition as "i" and their next level in their language development as "i+1". "1" represents the gap between the current level of language knowledge and the future level of language learning. But to elevate foreign language learners to this level and play a positive role in language development, students must have access to language input at the "i+1" level. That is to say, the language materials that learners can access are slightly higher than their current level. Besides, "i+1" does not require careful design from the teacher. And to form "i+1", it only needs to provide students with sufficient and understandable language materials and let students communicate smoothly. If the language materials are not rich enough and only contain knowledge that learners are familiar with and have already mastered, these materials will not have

any impact on students' language acquisition. The function of language input is to stimulate the learning mechanism in the brain, and the prerequisite for activation is appropriate and understandable language. In addition, Krashen emphasized that language application skills, such as speaking, are learned in a large number of understandable languages over a while, not just through teachers' instruction. Furthermore, in the process of learning, students do not need to grasp the exact grammar structure. Because with a lot of comprehensible input, they will naturally acquire rather than learn the language. Therefore, language input that is understandable and beyond learners' current level is crucial for their language learning.

3. The Significance of the Input Hypothesis in Foreign Language Teaching

3.1. Ensure Sufficient Comprehensible Language Input

Krashen's input hypothesis focuses on a large amount of easily understandable language materials, which provides teachers with a good teaching plan. Krashen proposed that in classroom teaching, teachers should pay attention to teaching in the target language, to increase students' language input.

But in the traditional classroom, many teachers are excited at the beginning to teach in the target language, only to find that the students are not very motivated in their class. The students are not interested in the way the teacher teaches and are not able to understand what the teacher is talking about. Maybe the vocabulary or sentence structure used by the teacher far exceeds the students' current level, making students unable to understand the teacher's meaning within their existing knowledge background. So, they cannot make predictions, nor can they make effective learning, which leads to the failure of language input provided by the teacher to students and may make them lose confidence in learning English.

Therefore, teachers should carefully select learning materials, teaching aids, etc., and prepare lessons carefully. Second, they should use the language that is suitable for students' "i+1" level, and the best way is to choose some adequate words and sentences to enable students to understand. Last, adjusting pronunciation, intonation, and speed appropriately is also important for students' understanding. Because in this way teachers can catch

students' attention and let them focus more on their studies. Besides, during the teaching process, teachers should reflect on the feedback from students, either written feedback or facial expressions, and consider whether their teaching input is in the state of "i+1" of students. And during this process, students also intentionally or unintentionally imitate the teacher's speaking, such as their pronunciation, intonation, speed, etc., and learn some new vocabulary, phrases, and sentence structures, thereby promoting their language input.

Thus, it can be seen that teachers need to play multiple roles in the teaching process, not only as knowledge imparters but also as observers who are good at discovering. During the teaching process, they should always pay attention to students' reactions and judge whether students can understand the current learning materials through their answers, facial expressions, etc. so that teachers can change their teaching methods and adopt different teaching methods. At the same time, modern technology is also quite advanced, and teachers can also use modern science and technology, such as PPT, videos, recordings, and other auxiliary materials, to make the input learning materials as close as possible to the "i+1" level of most students.

3.2. Persist in Listening and Reading Before Speaking and Writing

From a micro perspective, Krashen's input hypothesis adheres to the principle of listening and reading before speaking and writing. Because students only have enough language input before there is some language output. The output is developed based on students' enough language input.

But in our traditional teaching, we are focused on exam-oriented education, so many teachers' focuses are only on students' scores. Whether students can be admitted to the university, or whether they can be admitted to a good university has become the focus of education. So, in exam-oriented education, how to improve students' reading and audio-visual abilities has become particularly important. But this educational model ignores students' oral communication skills. For example, most of the high school entrance exams and college entrance exams do not involve students' oral proficiency tests. Although teachers may ask students to read and memorize some learning materials in the classroom, they lack the opportunity to practice speaking in English in practical situations. Even in many English tests in universities, they only focus on students' reading and listening, with little about speaking. For example, in CET-4 and CET-6, people only pay attention to students' written scores, not oral scores. So even many college students do not sign up for the oral test. These phenomena reflect our attention to oral English is not enough, resulting in many people learning "dumb English".

Therefore, this indicates that we are not paying enough attention to the overall order of English learning. The learning sequence of listening and reading before speaking and writing is in line with the language input pattern, but we always ignore our speaking and writing skills. As Krashen said, writing ability comes from a lot of spontaneous interest in reading[1]. So, when giving students a lot of comprehensible input, teachers can't ignore their output. Because student output is also important to teach. On the one hand, teachers can grasp the student's learning level, and observe whether the input is in their "i+1". On the other hand, teachers can reflect on their teaching and adjust their teaching methods and teaching materials according to students' output. In our current teaching mode, teachers attach importance to listening

and reading for a large number of inputs to students, but after input, the output of students will be always ignored. In short, students' expression ability is indispensable, which is not only conducive to teaching but also conforms to the current situation of foreign language learning and teaching in our country.

3.3. Focus on Learner-centered and Create a Good Classroom Atmosphere

Krashen emphasized that the new teaching model should be student-centered, rather than centered around teachers, classrooms, and textbooks. The traditional teaching model is teacher-centered, with students only blindly listening to the teacher's lectures. And there is little communication between students and teachers. The teacher just instills knowledge in students. This teaching method makes students tired of learning, lose interest in learning, and then cannot achieve the expected learning effect. In addition, the traditional teacher-centered teaching model will also lead to the separation of students' theory and practice, so that students only know "what", but do not know "how". Also, students' practical ability is weak, which is not in line with the new curriculum standard to cultivate the core competence of students.

Therefore, Krashen emphasizes learner-centered and creating a good learning atmosphere. After ensuring enough comprehensible language input to students, teachers should take appropriate teaching strategies to make students happy and good at learning. For example, to start with, teachers can set up some activities to arouse students' interest in learning, such as singing, dubbing, role-playing, and so on. Furthermore, in these processes, teachers should not criticize students' answers and performance but should give them more care, help, and encouragement. Because giving positive reinforcement is often more useful than punishment. Punishment can make children feel afraid and rebellious. Children who are afraid will lose confidence in their later studies and life, and they will feel that they can do nothing well. And students with rebellious psychology may violate classroom discipline in future studies, and may hate this subject from now on, which will lead to their academic performance is not ideal, and even their college entrance performance is not ideal.

3.4. Connect to Practical Situations and Stimulate Learning Motivation

Krashen believes that in teaching, to generate learning motivation, students' language materials should be lively and interesting, and closely related to their practical situation. Because the teaching materials far away from the practical environment of students are so boring. Only the learning materials related to the practical environment of students can stimulate students' learning interest, so that they can naturally connect with the practical situation of life in the process of learning.

Therefore, teachers should learn to give full play to their wisdom to excavate language materials that are in line with and close to students' real life. First of all, teachers should be good at observation and thinking. They should carefully analyze some problems in society because many problems in our life contain a lot of philosophy. And these can be good materials for our teaching. Secondly, teachers should be good at finding problems and guiding students to analyze and solve real problems, to help students improve their language ability. Finally, teachers should be good at summing up the laws of

life, and correctly guide students to study these laws. In this learning process, students will be more motivated to learn, because the learning material comes from their real life. Students will start to learn, think, explore, and analyze to connect the new language materials with the existing knowledge in their brains, to promote their thinking ability to solve problems.

3.5. Enrich English Campus Culture and Promote Language Output

For many English learners, although they have learned English for many years, they still cannot communicate fluently in English. Therefore, on campus, we should strengthen the construction of an English learning culture, which is necessary to improve and edify English learning.

To enrich English campus culture and promote students' language output, teachers can start with the aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. First, listening. Teachers can use the school radio to play English songs for students in their spare time so that they can not only immerse themselves in the beauty of the song, relax and enjoy themselves, but also relieve their study fatigue. Second, speaking. Krashen said, the best or only way to teach spoken language is to provide comprehensible input[2]. It can be started with the communication between students and students and between students and teachers. Because as we all know, a key element of communication is to take place in a practical situation. Therefore, the school can set up more English corners, and at the same time hire foreign teachers, so that students can communicate in a real environment, to promote the output of students. Third, reading. Students should read more before they speak more. Because the more input, the more output. So, schools should strengthen students' exposure to English in various ways. For example, schools can add English newspaper columns and set up English blackboards in classrooms. This way can stimulate

students' interest and motivation of learning English. Fourth, writing. Writing is also a way to promote students' language output. Schools can hold some essay competitions to promote students' writing and improve their language expression and application ability.

4. Summary

Thus, it can be seen that Krashen's "input hypothesis" has a certain enlightening effect on foreign language teaching. We should not ignore students' speaking and writing ability after following the order of listening and reading first. In addition, we need to provide students with enough comprehensible input to guide students to gradually improve their comprehensive English ability. At the same time, in this process, real language materials should be used to stimulate students' interest in learning, so that students "learned" will be gradually turned into "acquisition" in the natural environment.

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