

# The Enlightenment of Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory on English Acquisition and Teaching in Primary Schools in China

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**Abstract:** With the closer communication and cooperation among countries around the world, the importance of English as the main medium of communication is becoming increasingly prominent. At present, how to increase the acquisition and English teaching in primary schools in China is one of the key issues that the education community needs to explore. The acquisition and teaching of English in primary schools in China belong to the category of second language acquisition, and Krashen's second language acquisition theory is the most comprehensive theory among the second language acquisition theories. This article will combine Krashen's The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, The Natural Order Hypothesis, The Monitor Hypothesis, The Input Hypothesis, and The Affective Filter Hypothesis to reflect on their impact and inspiration on teachers, schools, and primary school students. Exploring how to apply Krashen's second language acquisition theory to promote primary school English acquisition and teacher teaching in the context of various issues currently faced in primary school English acquisition and education. To provide a certain reference for relevant practice and teaching.

**Keywords:** Second Language Acquisition; Primary School English; Krashen; Enlightenment.

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## 1. Introduction

The Input Hypothesis proposed by Dr. Krashen, a linguist at the University of Southern California in the United States, is considered the most comprehensive and influential theory in second language acquisition field. Since the Ministry of Education released the new curriculum standards in 2011. It provides theoretical guidance for the development of English learning and teaching in China. The understanding, application, and successful practice of Krashen related theories by English teachers and ordinary learners are directly related to the development of learners' own English proficiency. The Ministry of Education clearly stipulates that primary schools should offer relevant English courses starting from the third grade. Primary school English learning in China has become the foundation for most Chinese people to acquire a second language, so the development of primary school English acquisition teaching is receiving increasing attention. Studying Krashen's second language acquisition theory and promoting the research results to frontline English learners and educators will be beneficial for the development of English and teaching proficiency of primary school English learners in China.

## 2. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition

Since the late 1970s, Dr. Krashen has proposed a series of hypotheses in the field of second language acquisition. His theory consists of five parts: The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, The Natural Order Hypothesis, The Monitor Hypothesis, The Input Hypothesis, and The Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen's second language acquisition theory was proposed based on the critical inheritance and development of numerous second language acquisition theories.

In the Input Hypothesis, Krashen mainly explains how the phenomenon of second language acquisition occurs in learners. According to his theory, learners have two different ways to acquire a second language in language acquisition. The first type is acquisition, which is unconscious learning. Just like children who acquire a language unconsciously, they focus on meaning rather than grammatical rules when acquiring the language. Another type is learning, which means consciously engaging in language learning, just like we consciously train and learn language rules and forms in the classroom. The Monitoring Hypothesis, on the other hand, is a hypothesis based on the theory of learning and acquisition. Krashen proposed two different systems, the subconscious system and the conscious system. The acquired monitoring system drives the output of discourse in communication, while the learned monitoring system can only make minor corrections and fine-tuning of discourse. The Input Hypothesis is used by Krashen to answer the question of how humans acquire language. Krashen claims that the only way humans acquire language is through the understanding and absorption of information. By understanding and absorbing "comprehensible language input", learners will focus on the content of the input information itself, rather than the language form. Language acquisition occurs when the learner understands the input information and the input content is slightly higher than the learner's language proficiency. For learners' language input level, Krashen suggests that it should not be too difficult or too simple. Krashen defines the current language proficiency of learner's as 'i', and the next stage that learners will reach is called 'i+1'. For learners, as long as they can achieve an understanding of the "i+1" difficulty content through various means such as contextual context, their own understanding of the world, and existing language abilities. That means the input is successful.

### **3. Current Problems in Primary School English Acquisition and Education**

#### **3.1. Serious Insufficient Input Volume**

The class schedule is limited, and the vast majority of public elementary school students start learning English courses from the third grade. On average, each class has two English classes per week, which is 80 minutes. Compared to almost daily Chinese and Math classes, English only has half of their course duration. English is similar to the sub class hours of two classes per week, such as sports, art, music, etc. Under the twice weekly English curriculum arrangement, most primary school students can only learn English and complete homework twice a week. Even if there is a large amount of input in each course, the total amount of foreign language input in a week is seriously insufficient.

At present, most teachers in public schools only assign homework during class. This is unscientific. Primary school students should increase their weekly English input time and quantity, and develop a habit of ensuring quality and quantity of English output for three years of primary school. Most primary school students are under the age of 12, which is the golden age of language learning. For them, it is important to pay attention to the guidance of language output and language acquisition theory, as this can often achieve the goal of twice the result with half the effort.

#### **3.2. The Language Input Content of Students' English Acquisition does not Comply with the "I+1" Theory**

In addition to unreasonable course arrangements, the quality of English input materials used by teachers in class is often not up to standard. Krashen emphasizes that foreign language input must be based on "i+1". Therefore, teachers should provide corresponding lectures, supplements, and promotions based on the specific content of each unit. Before class, teachers should proactively search for picture books, exercises, and listening materials that match the topic of the textbook unit, and supply and expand the course accordingly. But currently, the quality of these materials used by teachers in class varies. Due to the English language settings of various schools, students' English proficiency, and teachers' teaching skills are not the same level. The input materials and teaching content of various English teachers in and out of class are not strictly monitored and checked. Therefore, many primary school English teachers have a certain degree of randomness and arbitrariness in the selection of teaching materials. After each student completes a topic unit of English learning in school, many parents lack a basic understanding of English knowledge. Therefore, many primary school students, without supervision, may not be able to meet their own children's language proficiency in terms of expanding reading after class or choosing English picture books.

#### **3.3. The Issue of Students and Teachers' Only Focus on English Exam Scores and English Grammar**

For primary school English teachers and English learners, there are generally two wrong perspectives in English learning. Firstly, only focus on the exam scores and use English score as a main criterion for English learners. Secondly, overemphasizing the importance of grammar rules.

These two erroneous views on English learning are

detrimental to the acquisition and teaching of English in primary schools in China. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the acquisition of language structures follows a certain natural order. Teachers not only need to help students master dialogue and text content, but also provide appropriate explanations and analysis of common grammar rules and English expressions. Remind learners to pay attention and monitor themselves during text reading and language practice.

But the goal of second language acquisition is to cultivate learners' communicative abilities, and achieving this goal does not require strict grammar teaching according to various outlines. Primary school students should pay attention to English pronunciation and understanding of text meaning in learning English dialogues or texts. Being able to use these English sentence structures for communication is the most important, as content is more important than form in language communication. But the teacher also should make appropriate marks and explain every common grammar rules in class. After multiple reinforcement and memorization, students will unconsciously digest as much grammar rules as they can.

### **4. The Enlightenment of Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Strategy on Chinese Primary School English Teaching**

#### **4.1. From the Perspective of Teacher Guidance**

Krashen emphasizes the importance of learners' emotion in his theory. Clearly shift the focus of second language acquisition research from teachers to students. Exploring the factors of language acquisition for learners from a humanistic perspective, The Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that we should pay attention to factors such as teacher-student relationships, teaching methods, classroom design, and teacher's role in English teaching. Elementary school students are in a period of incomplete mental development. They often fall into their own emotions, so teachers should try to create diverse classroom activities for students, such as games, painting, performances, singing, and so on. In primary school English teaching, these activities are often used as teaching strategies to reduce students' psychological shielding effect. In this way, students will shift their attention to these activities, to the meaning of language, and ignore the form of language. This will greatly enhance students' interest in learning a foreign language, while complying with the task-based teaching method and Dewey's principle of learning by doing. In teaching, teachers should try to create real scenes as much as possible. Teachers should have a certain tolerance for students' language errors. Don't rush to correct students' mistakes, but guide them towards successful target language communication. This can reduce the psychological burden on students when they are speaking, while enhancing their confidence in speaking English. When the classroom process is hindered and cannot proceed normally, teachers should act as facilitators for the class. Encourage and guide students, while actively participating in their discussions on topics and activities.

Before the class, teachers should have an overall understanding of the English proficiency of the entire class and also have an understanding of the actual English proficiency of different students (such as passing diagnostic tests). Don't make the class content too difficult or easy. Dividing students into different levels: providing special

guidance to top students to unleash their potential; Special attention should be paid to underachievers to keep them up with everyone's pace. Teachers also need to prepare corresponding props and materials in advance. Assign tasks that meet the "i+1" difficulty level to each group before class. Ensure that students from different groups can effectively preview the text and access relevant materials according to the needs of class presentations and performances.

In class, based on textbooks, interesting teaching segments and content are set up to continuously strengthen students' intrinsic motivation to learn English, we should also give praise and encouragement to different students based on their different expectations, in order to strengthen their external motivation. This will enable students to combine their external and internal motivation to learn English. After students show up on stage, they should be evaluated in a timely and fair manner. The evaluation should focus on praise, recognizing students' progress, and protecting and stimulating their interest in learning. After class, we should actively set up and carry out after-school activities. Practice is used as a second English classroom and extracurricular reading to improve and supplement the course content. This activity and content should be carefully arranged, and there should be corresponding follow-up and investigation to ensure the input of students.

After class, teachers should establish correct concepts and actively reflect on their own teaching shortcomings. In order to improve, before class and during the winter and summer vacations, it is important to hone and study hard to continuously improve one's professional skills. Teacher should actively learn the academic frontiers in the fields of computer science and second language acquisition. Utilizing emerging technological means to assist teaching, new technologies can help teachers provide physical displays, images, videos, audio, and other media that are conducive to teaching in class. The field of second language acquisition is constantly developing, and teachers should constantly pay attention to the academic forefront and comprehend the role of various educational theories in practice. It is impossible to practice without theoretical guidance.

## 4.2. From the Perspective of School Guidance

Schools should require English teachers to conduct unified lesson preparation and check whether the activities designed in the course content can fully stimulate the interest of primary school students in learning English. Besides the fun of language itself. Teachers should be checked their teaching of language and cultural factors during lesson preparation. Teachers must be required to incorporate cultural factors into their language. Learning a daily language can be used for communication.

Teaching scenarios should be diversified, and some school slogans can be set in bilingual mode. Places such as restrooms, libraries, functional classrooms, laboratory, etc. This can effectively input this basic English vocabulary to students. The teaching content should be concrete. When learning a topic, it should simulate relevant scenarios. Make full use of information technology, make students act as relevant personnel and simulate relevant scenarios. (The scene should be as realistic as possible) You can change clothes, make up, and strive to present the real scene in a realistic way. At the same time, guiding them to use English that suits their identity can also introduce some western culture. Students play the roles of waiters, flight attendants, cashiers, and so on. This

specific activity will stimulate students' great interest in English and enhance their enthusiasm for learning English.

Schools should not dampen the enthusiasm of learners in the early stages of learning. The final exam score shall not be used as the sole criterion for measuring teacher promotion. Forcing the teacher to step up and encourage them to break the simple view on students' scores. Schools should also increase the frequency of primary school students' weekly English learning. The arrangement of English courses should be the same as Chinese and mathematics, or slightly less than the main courses, and they must have more hours per week than some courses such as music and physical education.

Schools should also organize specialized English activities, such as English debate competitions, English corners, role-playing, film and television dubbing, and so on. Arrange a large number of English related TV shows, programs, theatrical activities, etc. outside of class. For example, the English version of the dubbing contest of Peppa Pig and the English version of the stage play of the SpongeBob SquarePants. The school can also regularly organize activities for all teachers and students to watch original English classic movies or English original documentaries which are closely related to the curriculum, hold English song singing competitions, English poetry reading competitions, English writing competitions, and other activities. Provide learners with an unconscious English atmosphere to absorb a large amount of understandable English input.

## 4.3. From the Perspective of Primary School Students

The students should correctly recognize their own learning style, whether he belongs to a field independence learning style or a field dependence learning style. Field independence learners are more likely to succeed in deductive learning, while field dependence learners perform better in inductive learning. To have a clear understanding of one's own style and learn English according to one's own style and characteristics. Field independence learners may have more advantages in pronunciation and grammar learning, while field dependent learners may have more advantages in communication. When we can understand the characteristics of our learning style and conduct targeted learning based on its characteristics, we may be able to do the whole work with half the effort. Don't worry too much about the possibility of imbalanced and uneven development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Under certain circumstances, it can be unbalanced development. Today, many of our 70- to 80-year-old English professors may have limited listening and speaking abilities due to the period they live in and may not perform as good as many primary school students today. But it does not affect their development in writing and reading, as well as their progress in English proficiency.

Primary school students should input more English materials and corpus that meet their own level. Primary school students should make good use of their after-school time to acquire and learn English on their own. In different classes, everyone's English proficiency is uneven. It is impossible for students to have the same level of English proficiency, and for most teachers, the content taught in class is in line with the average level of students in the class. However, students who are too poor and too excellent may not be suitable for the topic content of the teacher's class. Therefore, it is necessary to find English materials and corpus that are suitable for one's own level after class and input more.

Not only do we study in school, but we also need to make good use of the time during the week, weekends, winter and summer vacation to acquire and learn English. Whether it's excellent English original animations or English original picture books, they are all things that students are interested in. During this process, teachers and parents need to help students find certain video and audio resources. The content can be distinguished and customized. For example, English teaching videos on frying steak, baking bread, and egg tarts. Afterwards, change the theme to a travel video, such as traveling throughout the United States. Geography knowledge in Texas, Louisiana, Panama, Ohio, and other states will be subtly absorbed by students. Even if students input a large amount of English, it is not painful. In the weekly presentation class, a group can be selected to give a presentation performance on stage. Students can state what words they have learned, what skills they have mastered, and what Western culture and knowledge they have learned. Whether food culture, geographical culture, or folk customs, this is an opportunity to integrate each other's culture. When the input reaches a certain stage, the learner can gradually try to output English, imitate the English they are listening to, and establish their own corpus in their mind.

It is necessary to have a certain understanding and love for the English language and the western culture represented by English. Only when learners have them, can they learn English well. And English is a part of western culture. According to Sapir Wolf's hypothesis, English is a tool for westerners to perceive and divide the real world, People who speak different languages perceive the world differently. Only primary school students who have a better understanding of the decisive relationship between language, values, and culture will have a better grasp of English. Primary school students can read more simplified English original books, listen to more English popular songs, and watch English original movies and so on. Utilize various ways to understand and learn English and related cultures. This is also a necessary path for acquiring English. If you have a foreign friend or pen pal who can engage in daily writing and communication, this

is also a way to improve your English.

## 5. Conclusion

Krashen's second language acquisition theory plays a very important role in English acquisition and teaching in China. For elementary school students, they are in the golden age of second language acquisition. If we can analyze and apply Krashen's the Monitor Hypothesis to adjust the difficulty of comprehensible input, increase the quantity of comprehensible English input, improve its quality, and try to create a pure English style just like real life environment, actively cultivate primary school students' positive learning emotions, reduce their emotional filtering factors, and fully mobilize their subjective initiative. This will be beneficial for students to maximize their motivation, efficiency, and interest in English acquisition. This will play a promoting role in the development of English teaching in primary schools in China. This will also cultivate more excellent foreign language talents for our country.

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