

Research on Teaching Strategies Based on Second Language Acquisition Theory

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Abstract: Second language acquisition(SLA) refers to the process of learning a language outside the mother tongue. Research in this area focuses not only on the acquisition of language structure, but also on the social, psychological, and cognitive aspects of language learning. In recent years, empirical studies have supported that extra-curricular English exposure through media can promote the improvement of language ability. These studies generally find that frequent out-of-class contact is associated with improved vocabulary, grammar, and language fluency. Although SLA research has provided us with many valuable insights, it still faces challenges in practical application, such as individual learner differences, limited teaching resources, and complexity of assessment methods. This research focuses on how second language acquisition theory influences the selection and implementation of foreign language teaching strategies. By analyzing language acquisition theory, language teaching strategies, and learners' individual differences, this study aims to reveal teaching methods and approaches that effectively promote ESL learners' language skills. The results of the study show that teaching strategies based on linguistic theories have significant effects in ESL teaching, especially in listening, speaking and reading skills. This study provides useful references and insights for ESL teaching practice.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, English language teaching, Linguistic theory, Teaching strategies, Individual differences.

1. Introduction

With the deep development of globalization, the importance of English as an international common language is becoming more and more prominent. More and more people choose to learn English as a second language to cope with the needs of international communication, career development and academic research. The research questions of this paper are how second language acquisition theory affects the selection and implementation of foreign language teaching strategies, what role motivation theory plays in promoting second language learners' participation and learning effectiveness, what role language input and output play in second language acquisition, and how teachers balance the two. Different cultural and educational contexts demonstrate the effectiveness of TBLT.

This study will summarize and explore different teaching methods and strategies, review and summarize existing second language acquisition theories, and gain an in-depth understanding of learners' language use, learning process and teachers' teaching practice by reviewing previous research results. ESL teaching faces many challenges according to recent research, such as differences

in learners' linguistic backgrounds, diversity of motivation, and uneven teaching resources[1]. Therefore, an in-depth study of the theory and practice of ESL teaching from the perspective of linguistics is of great significance in improving teaching effectiveness and promoting the improvement of learners' language skills[2].

2. The Overview of Language Acquisition Theory in ESL Teaching and its Application

Language acquisition theory is an important branch of linguistics research, which focuses on how language learners master and use language. In ESL teaching, language acquisition theory provides theoretical support for the development of teaching strategies.

2.1. Input Hypothesis

The Input Hypothesis emphasizes that learners acquire language through exposure to and comprehension of language input slightly above their current level. This approach is different from the traditional teacher-centered teaching method in that it focuses more on the learner's actual language use ability rather than just memorizing grammar rules or vocabulary. However, the Input hypothesis focuses on the input and does not fully consider the role of the output in language acquisition. Moreover, the Input hypothesis emphasizes that language is acquired naturally through a large number of understandable inputs, which may overlook the role of conscious learning and explicit teaching in language learning. And the learner's emotional state, such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety, may affect the validity of the input. If the learner's emotional filter is too high, effective language acquisition may not be possible even with a large amount of comprehensible input.

2.2. The Task-based Language Teaching

The Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) puts learners at the center of the teaching process, encouraging them to learn by actually using the language rather than passively receiving knowledge. Tasks are usually real-world activities, such as writing an email, ordering food, asking for directions, etc., that require the learner to complete in the target language. TBLT emphasizes the communication function of language, where learners communicate information and solve problems by completing tasks, rather than just demonstrating language knowledge. This approach encourages learners to integrate language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, rather than learning them in isolation.

TBLT encourages learners to take initiative and autonomy in the learning process, they need to plan how tasks are completed and take responsibility for their own learning. In the process of completing the task, learners receive feedback from peers or teachers, which helps them identify mistakes and self-correct. TBLT believes that language learning should take place in relevant contexts so that learners can better understand and remember the use of language. Assessment is usually based on the quality of the learner's task completion and the effectiveness of their communication, not just their mastery of the language knowledge. TBLT allows teachers to design tasks according to the needs and interests of learners, which makes teaching more flexible and personalized. By completing various tasks, learners not only learn the language, but also understand the cultural and social context behind the language.

The goal of TBLT is to develop learners' practical language skills so that they can effectively use the target language in the real world. This method has been widely used in various language teaching environments and has been proven to improve learners' language ability. In ESL teaching, Almohawes found that teachers should provide language materials of appropriate difficulty to stimulate learners' interest and motivation[3]. At the same time, teachers should focus on the diversity

and authenticity of language input so that learners can perceive and understand language in authentic contexts.

2.3. The Output Hypothesis

The Output hypothesis suggests that output activities such as speaking and writing can contribute to the depth and consolidation of language learning. The Output Hypothesis, proposed by Canadian scholar Swain in 1995, has attracted wide attention in the field of second language learning (SLA). Swain observed that in Canadian French immersion programs, although students' listening and reading skills are on par with native speakers, their language production skills, such as speaking and writing, lag significantly. Swain believes this may be due to students' lack of opportunities for language production based on understanding input. Therefore, she proposes that language production (i.e., speaking or writing) constitutes the process of SLA in specific cases, and the process of production may be quite different from the process of understanding, therefore learners must distinguish between the two. Swain further elaborates on the four main functions of the output hypothesis: the attention function, the hypothesis testing function, the metalinguistic function and the fluency function. These functions suggest that through language production, learners can notice their own language knowledge, test their own linguistic assumptions, engage in metalinguistic reflection, and improve language fluency [4].

However, the output assumption has also been questioned. According to Krashen, it is very unlikely or impossible to cultivate learners' language ability through understanding language production, and learners' language ability may even reach a higher level without language production activities. In addition, there is some evidence that students do not like being "forced" to speak the target language [5]. In China, the research on output hypothesis started relatively late, and it was not until around 2000 that Chinese scholars began to pay attention to this hypothesis and began to explore under what circumstances output can play a role in second language learning [6]. Studies by Chinese scholars have shown that output plays an important role in cultivating students' language sense, improving fluency and accuracy, and can promote learners' language learning by providing meaningful context [7][8]. Overall, although no research has been able to fully confirm that output directly leads to language acquisition, it provides evidence that output influences second language learning in at least some ways. In China, in-depth and systematic research on output is still to be carried out, and both input and output should be emphasized in teaching practice to promote learners' language ability. According to Guan Y, teachers should encourage learners to actively participate in output activities such as speaking practice and writing practice. Through output activities, learners are able to test their linguistic knowledge and expressive abilities, so that they can identify deficiencies and seek improvement [9].

2.4. The Interaction Hypothesis

The Interaction hypothesis emphasizes that language learners acquire language through negotiating meaning in communicative interactions. The Interaction hypothesis is an important theory in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), originally proposed by Long in the 1980s and revised in 1996. This hypothesis holds that interaction between learners is a key factor in language acquisition because it can promote learners' understanding and output of language input, thus promoting the development of language ability. The interaction hypothesis's core idea is that when learners encounter obstacles in their attempts to communicate, they engage in meaning negotiation, which includes communicative behaviors such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, and understanding checks. These interactions are thought to be key drivers of improved learner comprehension and second language development.

Interaction hypothesis also emphasizes the importance of learners' output in communication. Swain's "Comprehensible Output Hypothesis" holds that learners need to be pushed to produce more syntactically complex and accurate language. This helps them pay attention to language forms, test language assumptions, and promote the internalization and automation of language knowledge. Research has shown that interaction is beneficial for second language development. For example, a meta-analysis by Keck et al. found that learners who engaged in interaction had a significant increase in academic performance on an instant post-test[10]. Mackey and Goo's meta-analysis also found that learners who participated in the interaction showed significant improvement in academic performance compared with those who did not participate, especially in the delayed post-test.

The study of interaction hypothesis also involves a variety of factors, including the characteristics of the interlocutor (such as language level, mother tongue state, gender), task characteristics (such as task complexity, task type), language objectives and interaction environment (such as setting, mode). These factors influence the occurrence of interaction and its effect on second language acquisition. Overall, the interaction hypothesis provides a significant theoretical framework for understanding second language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of learners' language input, output, and meaning negotiation in interaction. This assumption has important implications for language teaching practice, especially in designing task-based language instruction and facilitating interaction between learners. Meng suggested that teachers should create a positive and interactive atmosphere in the classroom to encourage language exchange and cooperation among learners[11]. Through interactive activities, learners are able to practice their communicative language skills and improve their accuracy and fluency in language use.

3. The Practice of Language Teaching Strategies in ESL Teaching

Based on the theory of language acquisition, ESL teaching should adopt diverse teaching strategies to meet the different needs of learners[12].

First of all, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasizes the development of learners' communicative competence through completing practical tasks. Recent research suggests teachers should design language tasks with practical significance, such as role-playing, group discussion, and an investigation report[13]. By accomplishing these tasks, learners are able to use the language in real contexts and improve their practical ability of language use.

Secondly, Collaborative Learning (CL) encourages learners to learn and solve problems together in a group. In ESL teaching, teachers can organize learners to engage in group discussions, cooperative writing and joint research projects. Through cooperative learning, students are able to learn from and help each other, which improves the learning effect and motivation.

4. The impact of individual learner differences on ESL teaching and learning

Individual differences of learners cannot be ignored in ESL teaching. Different learners have different language backgrounds, motivations and learning styles, and these will have an important impact on the development and implementation of teaching strategies.

First of all, learners' language background has a significant impact on ESL teaching. Different learners may have different native language backgrounds and language experiences, which will affect their understanding and expression of English. Therefore, teachers should understand the learners' language background and develop appropriate teaching strategies in light of their characteristics[14].

Secondly, learners' motivation has played an important role in affecting the effectiveness of ESL teaching. Different learners might have different learning goals and motivations, such as interest-driven, career needs or academic requirements. Teachers should pay attention to learners' motivation, stimulate their interest and motivation, and promote their active participation in learning activities[15].

In addition, learners' learning styles may affect the effectiveness of ESL teaching. Some learners may prefer independent learning and independent thinking, while others prefer cooperative learning and interactive communication. Teachers should respect learners' learning styles and provide diverse learning styles and resources to meet the needs of different learners[16].

5. Conclusion

The present study explores the theory and practice of ESL teaching in depth from a linguistic perspective. By applying language acquisition theories and diversified teaching strategies, the study shows that ESL teaching can effectively promote the improvement of learners' language skills. At the same time, paying attention to individual learner differences is crucial to the development and implementation of effective teaching strategies. Learners with high levels of motivation are more likely to actively participate in language courses, participate in classroom activities, and put more effort into language learning. Motivation can propel students to start learning a second language and provide ongoing motivation throughout the long learning process. Learners may learn a second language because they want to be part of the target language community (integrative motivation) or for practical application (instrumental motivation). Motivation also influences the way they choose and use learning strategies. Highly motivated learners are more likely to employ effective learning strategies such as challenge seeking, using metacognitive strategies, and cooperative learning. Highly motivated learners are more emotionally open to linguistic input and therefore more likely to absorb and learn new linguistic information. Motivation theory also emphasizes the role of teachers in creating supportive and motivating learning environments.

This study has some limitations. The transition from theory to practice is difficult, and it may be difficult to apply SLA theory directly to teaching practice, because the theory is often based on an idealized learning environment, while the actual teaching environment may be complex and changeable. And different learners have different learning styles, motivations, and backgrounds, which makes it difficult to apply a uniform teaching strategy to all learners. Teachers need to adapt their teaching methods to the specific needs of individual students. Future research can further expand the scope of application of linguistic theories in ESL teaching and explore more innovative teaching strategies and methods. Meanwhile, in-depth research on learners' individual differences should be strengthened to better meet the needs of different learners and improve teaching effectiveness. In addition, with the continuous development of technology, how to utilize modern teaching techniques and tools to enhance the effectiveness of ESL teaching is also a research direction that deserves attention.

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