

The Role and Mechanisms of the Input Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory in Enhancing ESL Learners' Language Proficiency

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Abstract. This paper has explored the influence of recommendation systems driven by algorithms on short video apparel such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu on the creation of content, visual culture, and smart interactions between users. Through the analysis of how these platforms are organized and how people are reacting to them, the study reveals that the algorithm is a major determinant of content environment creation. Although personalized recommendations enhance user experience and product delivery, they are a source of concerns too. These are bias in algorithms, cultural homogeneity and insufficient room to express creativity. This control over particular content by high-ranking styles and formats may displace unique or alternative content. Also, the development of AI-generated videos, despite its convenience, is more likely to repeat some trendy trends and potentially further narrow the range of creativity on platforms. Regardless of these observations, this study does not lack restrictions. To begin with, it is based mostly on qualitative and platform analysis, and it does not involve the vast amounts of empirical user data or interviews with creators. This limits the level of insight into user perception, as well as, personal creative strategies. Subsequent studies might offer a better mixed approach to this by utilizing both qualitative (interviews with content creators and platform engineers) and quantitative (user engagement data) data.

Keywords: input hypothesis, output hypothesis, sociocultural theory, ESL

1. Introduction

As the pace of globalization has increased, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has gained more relevance in the teaching and learning field. The English language acquisition has turned out to be a gateway to the other into the global world and intercultural communication, specifically, to the English as a Second Language (ESL) population. Although there is a high demand to ensure that ESL learners study English, they are usually in need of assistance with the process including their cultural adjustment, poor learning settings and the disparity in language acquisition systems that generally render the accomplishment of learning the language not as efficient as anticipated [1]. As such, the enhancement of the impact of language learning on ESL students has become a significant concern of the recent studies of second language acquisition.

The feedback hypothesis and the error rejection or the corrective feedback hypothesis are two traditional theoretical frameworks in the second language acquisition theory. The Input Hypothesis

is the model suggested by Stephen Krashen according to which learning a language is fueled by so-called Comprehensible Input so that learners can promote their language proficiency by being exposed to a slightly higher language [2]. The language learning process happens slowly with learners receiving and processing the linguistic input passively according to this theory. The other alternative that has been proposed is the Output Hypothesis by Merrill Swain which points to the significance of output in learning. Swain claims that language production enables learning students to gain better insights into linguistic constructions and increase the competence level due to their ability to self-correct and obtain feedback [3]. In addition to these aspects of theoretical views, we should address the issue of the relevance of sociocultural perspectives in SLA. Sociocultural theory, which is presented, in particular, by Lev Vygotsky, states that learning a language is strongly rooted in social and cultural situations [4]. The paper will discuss the contribution of input and output hypothesis and its functionality in enhancing the language performance of the ESL learners by examining theory and also include sociocultural lens to gain a deeper insight into the plight of the ESL learners in language acquisition. This paper will also offer practical recommendations to teachers on how they can flexibly use these theories to address the needs of various learners taking into account their cultural backgrounds, social identity and the dynamic aspect of the learning of language in multicultural context.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The input and output hypothesis

The Output Hypothesis, proposed by Merrill Swain in 1985, emphasizes the critical role of language output in second language acquisition. According to Swain, although input provides the necessary materials for language learning, it is only through output that learners can better consolidate what they have learned, and discover and correct their language errors in the process of language production. In other words, linguistic output is not only a manifestation of language production, it also directly affects the language acquisition process [3]. Swain suggests that linguistic output can help learners discover the blind spots of linguistic rules, especially when they are not able to express a certain idea accurately. The output will motivate the learners to think about how to correctly organize and express the language, which in turn will trigger the awareness and adjustment of linguistic rules. When learners encounter expressive difficulties in oral communication, they will try to use different vocabulary and sentence patterns to achieve their expressive purposes, then realize their unfamiliarity with certain linguistic structures, and ultimately master these structures through revision and reflection.

Swain's theory is supported by empirical studies that show that language output has a significant role in improving language learners' grammatical awareness and expressive ability, and one of Swain's own studies found that learners are able to correct grammatical errors in the process of language production through output tasks and deepen their understanding of linguistic rules through continuous practice [3]. The study also showed that output promotes learners' linguistic fluency and accuracy because output requires learners to mobilize more linguistic resources in actual use. While the output hypothesis emphasizes the importance of language output, some scholars have pointed out that relying on output alone may lead to errors in learners' grammatical knowledge. Therefore, the validity of the output assumption needs to be used in conjunction with the input assumption to ensure that learners are supported by adequate linguistic input while producing language.

Both the input hypothesis and the output hypothesis occupy an important position in the theory of second language acquisition. The input hypothesis emphasizes the acquisition of language by understanding language input, while the output hypothesis believes that language output is necessary to promote acquisition. Although the two have different views, they are complementary in the process

of language learning. The advantage of the input hypothesis is that it emphasizes the basic role of comprehensible input in language acquisition, which is helpful to establish a sense of language. However, input alone may eventually achieve fluent language expression. The output hypothesis highlights the role of language generation in improving expression ability and self-correction, which helps to deepen the understanding of language rules and improve practical application ability. However, if there is a lack of sufficient input support, output results will also be formed. Therefore, combining input and output can more effectively promote language acquisition.

2.2. Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural Theory (SCT), originally proposed by Vygotsky, emphasizes the social nature of learning and views cognitive development as a socially mediated process[4]. Unlike traditional cognitive theories that focus on individual mental functions, SCT posits that interaction with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers and peers, plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's cognitive and linguistic development. One of the core concepts in SCT is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between a learner's current abilities and their potential development with guidance[4]. The ZPD is critical in understanding how teachers support language learners through scaffolding techniques that gradually reduce assistance as students gain proficiency.

3. Characteristics of language learning in ESL groups

3.1. Definition and characteristics of ESL groups

The ESL community can be defined as learners in non-English-speaking locations who speak and study English. In most cases ESL students reside in societies or nations that speak English which they require in order to acquire knowledge in and they speak a language other than English. It is likely that ESL learners have diverse backgrounds since they are immigrants, international students, and non-native speakers of English, who have to use English due to one reason or another (work, family, etc.) [5]. Within these communities, English language is a significant means through which they are able to fit into the new societies, cross cultures, and come to achieve their own career growth. The diversity of the motivation and goals of ESL groups and the variety in the desired outcomes of language knowledge is one of their features. Different backgrounds of learners may imply different intentions of using English: some of them need to learn English and be able to adjust to new cultures and places in which they are going to live, others need to master English because it helps them better get into the world of their careers or even enter the educational system of the country in which they have to live. This motivational disparity influences their degree of devotion to language learning and the strategy of learning adopted.

During the language learning process, ESL groups tend to experience huge cultural and linguistic separation, rendering their language learning process and learning process complex [6]. Although learners in an English language environment are expected to make pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary errors, they can also experience an interference of the native language. The other unique characteristic is that the process of language acquisition among ESL learners is typically more complicated since they do not only need to learn grammatical rules but also conform to the cultural peculiarities and communication patterns of English. Their ways of language learning and strategies primarily depend on the characteristics of the community of ESL and learners of other areas of the world like Asia or Latin America might experience various problems in grammatical frameworks and pronunciation, whilst the learners of neighboring cultures with English speakers might have other issues with grammatical structures and pronunciation. In the meantime, the learners who belong to culturally proximate English-speaking oblique might have an increased chance of breakthroughs in

the vocabulary acquisition. In general, the language acquisition of ESL population is individualized and very complicated since this population is diverse.

3.2. Main challenges faced by ESL learners

ELSL classroom learners undergo numerous challenges during the language learning process out of which the most widespread challenges are the language barriers, culture adaption, and the choice of learning strategies. To start with, one of the most immediate problems in the ESL learners is the language barrier. It is possible that they were taught English in the classroom, and the divide between what they know in the classroom and what they know in real practice of language use is frequently huge. As an illustration, under the influence of native language, a number of ESL students are likely to commit pronunciation and even irregular application of English grammar patterns [6]. Such language barrier is not only impacting their everyday communication but can also limit them in their further academic and professional career. Along with language barriers, cultural adjustment is also one of the biggest setbacks of ESL learners. Most of the learners, who enter a country or a place to enjoy English or English-speaking have to adjust to new cultural and social standards along with learning the language. Even their cultural differences can be exhibited by how they communicate on a daily basis, about their non-verbal communication patterns, and by their educational systems. Students usually take time before they learn how to live the new cultural practices. Otherwise it can bring frustrations to language learning, and may even cause self doubt. Secondly, the issue of cultural adaptation is also reflected in the reality of the usage of the language. Students of ESL might not communicate with native English speakers because of their cultural differences [7].

The ESL learners also have their language acquisition influenced by the selection of learning strategies. Learners possess varied inputs, and approach to learning a language, particularly in motivation and setting up of goals. There are learners who might be highly motivated to use English and gain language skills by providing the students with high levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as those who completely spend on the traditional grammar and memorization and may not have any experiences of using the language in reality. Those who do not have effective strategies in learning find it hard to make tremendous gains in learning a language. The motivation of learners also directly influences their capacity to transcend the language barriers and to adjust to the culture using more motivated learners better able to cope with challenges and less motivated learners are likely to stagnate in learning the language. The linguistic and cultural obstacles of ESL learners in language acquisition are various, including the learning strategies and motivation as well. Educators and teachers should be able to identify these difficulties and offer a more personalized and holistic assistance to learners to get around these hurdles and enhance their language acquisition.

4. Practical application of language theories to ESL learners

4.1. Advantages and disadvantages

There are notable strengths and weaknesses of using the language input and output theory in the practical use with ESL learners. The input hypothesis highlights such promotion of language acquisition based on the comprehensible input of language. Its key benefit is that the students learn the structure of language slower but absorb it by referencing to an immersive method of learning [8]. ESL students are also able to arouse their linguistic capacity through constant exposure and comprehension of the language. This teaching method that is based on input can offer the students a rich language environment and motivate them to learn language unconsciously. Nonetheless, only input cannot assist learners to generate and utilize language productively particularly in spoken language and writing. Conversely, the output hypothesis has the ability of assisting ESL learners to use output in form of speaking or writing and compensate the weaknesses by means of self-correction.

The merit of output lies in the fact that it may encourage the learners to actively employ language, as well as to enhance their knowledge of the language structure. But the drawback with the output hypothesis is that at the time of having enough input, learners could produce incorrect forms of a language and develop a false impression of how language acquisition took place. Thus, output should be coupled with an input that will guarantee that learners will not work on errors as they are producing language.

Internalization is another essential principle in SCT and internalization in the context of language acquisition implies that, as the learner advances, the initial dependency of the teacher guidance becomes less and less than that of the learner. As an example, an ESL classroom can be started with students imitating phrases taught by a teacher. They get to know, through practice and with time, to make use of such phrases without relying on a partner in a communication situation. This development is consistent with the theory of input-output, which emphasizes on the passive to active transfer of the use of the language among the learners. Notably, this change does not happen instantly but one goes through various steps as they progressively develop their ability to comprehend and generate language independently. This will demand that learners will be actively involved in imitative behavior and reorganize it in new formats. This can be seen in English as a second language classrooms where students after being instilled in grammatical structures by teachers adapt it to suit their own concept which is later altered to convey original ideas.

4.2. Application suggestions

In ESL teaching, integrating input and output theories with SCT provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing language acquisition. Teachers should provide rich and relevant input materials to ensure that the input is both at the student's level of understanding and challenging. This can be achieved by selecting listening and reading materials that are appropriate to the level of the students and avoiding content that is too simple or too complex to ensure that the students are able to build on their understanding and progressively improve their language skills. Teachers should also enhance the sources of language input through diversified means such as extra-curricular activities and media resources to help students come into contact with English in a variety of contexts so as to deepen their language immersion. Language output tasks should be designed to complement the input tasks. Teachers can let students engage in language output in real-life situations through activities such as role-playing, debates and discussions. These activities can not only help students express their thoughts better, but also motivate them to correct language errors and improve language fluency in the output process. In addition, teachers should provide timely feedback to correct students' pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary use during the output process, so as to help them improve their language proficiency in real-life situations.

In addition, to teach ESL, it is necessary to adjust instruction to different needs of students. Learners who have poor grammatical understanding might gain better grammar and writing exercises whereas those who require to gain confidence in speaking should have more listening and speaking exercises. The integration of the techniques of input-output theory and sociocultural perspectives help us understand that language learning is a socially mediated, developmental process, and when the specific input materials are properly designed, purposeful output of language is performed by the learners and constant interaction and feedback as in between the two parties, language learners gradually absorb the target language to not only learn to communicate the intended messages but also learn to use English language without the external stimuli of an immediate environment.

5. Conclusion

This study has looked into the theoretical foundations and practical applications of the Input Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, and SCT within the context of ESL learning. The analysis shows that while understandable input is crucial for building basic language knowledge, it is the combination with meaningful output that really helps with deeper language awareness, self-correction, and getting better at grammar. The research also points out key difficulties faced by ESL learners, including problems with language itself, adapting to new cultures, and also how motivation and learning strategies can vary a lot. These difficulties mean that a balanced teaching method is needed, one that brings together plenty of language input, chances for structured output, and support from the social environment that fits what each learner needs. Effective ESL teaching shouldn't just depend on input or output alone, but should mix both within a helpful social framework. By making a learning situation where learners get understandable input, are pushed to produce output, and get help through talking and interacting with others, teachers can really improve how ESL learners pick up the language and their ability to communicate. This study does not test out the long-term effects of mixing input and output on learning the language through actual experiments, which limits how useful it is for real teaching situations. Future research could look into how putting input and output strategies together affects ESL learners at different skill levels and in different learning settings, using long-term studies to gather evidence.

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