

Research on Full English Input in College English Teaching

Min Guo^{1*} Zhao Wang²

¹School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Petroleum University, Daqing, Heilongjiang 163318, China

²School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Petroleum University, Daqing, Heilongjiang 163318, China

*Corresponding author. Email: puzhao@nepu.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

College English Curriculum requirements states that College English, which make full use of information technology based on computer and classroom, is a teaching system guided by foreign language teaching theories. In the information age, classroom teaching is still a very important way of achieving the goal of language proficiencies. Based on computer and internet, in experimental classroom teaching, full English input mode, Bilingual input mode and Chinese native language as teaching tools were used, the experimental result somewhat in comply with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the result we got is that the better the learners' level, the higher of the proportion is better, full English input teaching mode needs the teacher's dedication to create the true context.

Keywords: *Second language acquisition, Full English input, Teaching mode*

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of college English teaching is to cultivate students' comprehensive ability in English, especially their listening and speaking ability, so that they can communicate effectively in their future study, work and social interaction. The teaching mode should reflect the principle of combining practicability, knowledge and interest in English teaching. College English teaching in China is quite different from that in the native atmosphere, not only should students learn the language itself, but also should know the context and culture in language learning. During the period of college English teaching, we found that students in different level all hope they can get more teaching materials in English and teachers can speak more English. So in the experiment, we did instructional design carefully and divided students in three groups and adopted three teaching mode. The first one is full English input, the second is bilingual teaching mode, and the third is tradition Chinese native language as teaching tools. The results show that even if Chinese English teachers or English native instructors express English smoothly and perfectly, there are still some items or expressions that students could not understand completely and clearly. Full English input does not mean all English, but one or two key words explanation sometimes yield twice the result with half the effort.

2. OVERVIEW ON SOME THEORIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

There are some theories about foreign language teaching and learning. One of the important theories is the Second Language (L2) Acquisition. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom, and Second Language Acquisition as the study of this ^[1]. Rod Ellis states that language learning cannot occur without some input. The input hypothesis, is the core of Krashen's second language acquisition theory, also known as the monitor model, was first published in 1977. The Input hypothesis is Stephen Krashen's attempt to explain how the learner acquires a second language. In other words, this hypothesis is his explanation of how second language acquisition takes place. So, the Input hypothesis is only concerned with "acquisition", not "learning". The second language(L2) acquisition takes place when a learner understands input that contains grammatical forms that are at 'i+1', L2 acquisition depends on comprehension input^{[1][2]}. Only when the learner is exposed to the most "comprehensible input" of his/her second language, which is slightly above the level of his/her existing language skills, can the materials of knowledge be interesting and interesting for

him/her to focus on the understanding of the meaning rather than the form [3].

Bernard Spolsky states in his book *Conditions for Second Language Learning*, that is, the achievement of the various possible outcomes in second language learning depends on meeting a number of conditions [4]. Claire Kramsch states that in foreign language education, the belief that one language is essentially translatable into another has been most fruitful in promoting functional and pragmatic approaches to the teaching and learning of foreign languages around the world [5].

No matter how the second language theory evolves, language input is the core of learning a second language. So the experiment focused on the classroom English teaching.

3. FULL ENGLISH TEACHING MODE

3.1. The Background of an Empirical Study

In non-native English speaking countries, college students are L2 learners, if we regard Chinese as their mother tongue. Most of the times they are in Chinese atmosphere, so to acquire knowledge from classroom teaching is the most import way of learning, meanwhile students could make full use of the internet.

“University English Curriculum Teaching Request” (issued by Department of Higher Education of China, 2007) stipulated explicitly that the purpose of university English teaching is to cultivate students’ ability to use English, especial in listening and speaking, so that they can use English effectively in their future study, work, while enhancing their self-study ability and literacy level to adapt to China’s social development and international communication; to cultivate students’ ability to read, write and translate so that they can use English to exchange information [6]. There are three-level requirements, elementary level, intermediate level and the advanced level requirements. These three requirements include English language knowledge and practical skills, learning strategies and cross-cultural communication and other aspects. Students are required to improve their listening comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, writing ability and translation [6].

Take our university, specializing in engineering, a provincial university in China as an example. Most of the students had already learned the basic grammar and a certain amount of vocabulary in primary and high schools before their entering university. But it was kind of test-oriented English teaching in high school just for getting the college admission. The result was that students could read and write well, but not speak well. Students were not in real language proficiencies.

3.2 Questionnaire Survey

In 2012, we did a questionnaire on considering the frequency of teachers’ teaching language. We would like to know students’ expectation on teachers’ frequency of speaking English and Chinese and the teaching results. In questionnaires, five responses from A to E, “never”, “occasionally”, “sometimes”, “often” and “always” are used. Three hundred thirty students participated in the questionnaire survey. And the valid number of boys is 210(65.83%), and the valid number of girls is 109(34.17%). We handed out 52 questionnaires for teachers, and get back 50 pieces (96.1%) in valid.

Q1: The Students’ Expectations to teachers’ speaking English

Q2: The Students’ Expectations to teachers’ speaking Chinese

By comparison, we did another questionnaire in 2020(on line), and the questions were almost the same.

Table 1. Students’ expectations to teachers’ speaking English (2012)

	Frequency	%	Valid%	Cumulative%
Never	7	2.2	2.2	2.2
Occasionally	16	5	5	7.2
Sometimes	45	14.1	14.1	21.3
often	181	56.7	56.7	78.1
always	70	21.9	21.9	100
Total	319	100	100	

Table 2. Students’ expectations to teachers’ speaking English (2020 on line)

	Frequency	%	Valid%
never	0	0	0
occasionally	1	0.35	0.35
sometimes	5	1.77	1.77
often	145	51.24	51.24
always	132	46.64	46.64
Total	283	100	100

Comparing the year of 2012 with 2020, the total participant number is slightly different. Variable frequency in Table 1 (2012) shows that 181 students hope the teacher “often” use English in class, accounted for 56.7%, “Always” using Chinese has 70students, accounts for 21.9%. Table 2 (2020) shows “Often” and “Always” speaking Chinese accounted for 51.24% and 46.64%, that is a big increase. It means more and more students like to learn English in an English context.

We conducted an independent sample T-test double-tailed test for English majors and non-English majors to compare whether there were significant differences between the two groups of students in the single choice of the questionnaire.

The results show that there are significant differences ($P < .05$) in the frequency of language the frequency of use. $M=3.70$ for English majors and $M=3.36$ for non-English majors. The English majors chose “English only”, while the non-English majors chose mixed language. In addition, students and teachers all spoke in English and explained something in Chinese when students were confused. In later review, Students said that English teaching could not completely exclude Chinese, otherwise it make English learning knowledge more difficult and also reduce the efficiency of learning, the teacher should explain it in Chinese when necessary.

Table 3. Independent Sample T-test between English Majors and Non-English majors

	Majors	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean
Frequency of L	Non-English	.003	3.3642
	English		3.6975
Frequency of use	Non-English	.000	3.0494
	English		3.4753
Attitude	Non-English	.060	3.3333
	English		3.1728
English Level	Non-English	.060	3.5926
	English		3.3827

On English Level (proficiency): is it helpful for English teachers to use English-Chinese mixed language in the classroom to improve your English?

In this choice, the difference between English majors and non-English majors is big ($P=.060$). The mean value for English majors is $M=3.38$, and for non-English majors is $M=3.59$. It means that non-English major students (low level) expect teachers to speak mixed language and the English major (high level) students expect full English input.

3.3. Experimental and Explanatory Description

Even students passed the College Entrance Examination and got admission to our college, a local common higher education institution, the English level of students from every part of China is big difference. So we divided into four levels from A to D according to the first test (CET band 4 as a test paper) after their entering the university. Students from different level were scattered into the three experimental classes. The average score in three Classes were about the same. Table 3 showed exactly the percentage of English input during the classroom teaching.

Table 4. Percentage of Teacher’s English Input

Class	Num.	T-input	S-output	FB
Experimental A	28	Full	100%	Full
Experimental B	28	70%	100%	70%
Experimental C	28	50%	100%	50%

*T-input: Teacher’s Input *S-output: Student’s Output *FB: Teacher’s Feedback

In this experiment, the students’ number in three classes was the same. Three teachers almost had same educational background of learning aboard and they can speak English fluently as native speakers. Teaching materials of Class B and C were the same, Class A used full English teaching materials.

College English teaching runs through four academic terms within the first year and the second year. Students took 4 academic hours of English learning for each week according to the syllabus, which actually was not enough for students of language learning. So we made full use of assignments (s-output), which should be completely in English.

The material we used was “New Horizon College English (the third Edition)”, in which only the vocabulary part had Chinese explanation, published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. In English listening class, the material was “21st Century College English (the Fourth Edition)” which is full English teaching material published by Fudan University Press.

The percentage of English input in three classes was full input, seventy percent and fifty percent respectively. Formative valuation and terminal teaching evaluation were adopted during the span of the experiment. In different classes, teacher’s feedback was also designed in corresponding proportion of English input. After two terms, a striking difference was found between the feedback positive or negative given to the students according to their perceived adjustment. The feedback, even in full English input, students could understand better that understanding teaching materials, no matter the feedback is positive or negative.

Figure1 was the academic test statistics of students in Class A, Class Band Class C after studying in college for two terms. The curve in Figure 1 was the result of seven tests, the average scores ranged from 60 to 80. The results showed the average score of Class A got the positive curve after the first three-month low period of adjustment. The scores of Class B and Class C were better at the very beginning for their understanding better at most of Chinese input. But in their following learning, the scores were not as good as the beginning for their insufficient English input.

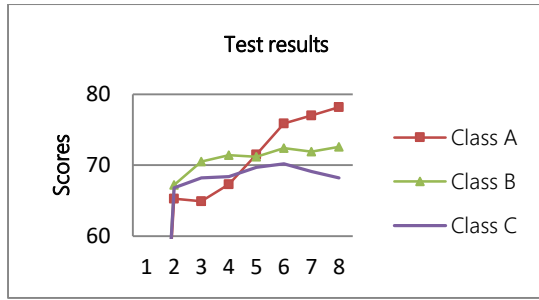


Figure 1. The test statistics

From above, we found full English input class got the best result in second language learning, but it needs a bit longer to fulfil the result. Most college students had little chance to be immersed in an English situational atmosphere, except in English class, so they hoped teachers could speak more English but explain some difficult professional terms in Chinese through interviews.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the second language(L2) acquisition theory of Stephen Krashen, L2 acquisition depends on comprehension input ('i+1'), Only when our students is exposed to the most "comprehensible input" of English, which should slightly above the level of their existing language skills, can they be interested in learning.

Comparing with the results of 2012, we found that the learning atmosphere is very important in second language learning. Providing appropriate input can promote output in time and achieve better learning effect. Full English input in college English teaching doesn't mean that the teacher speak English totally without Chinese. Full English teaching mode should apply to the following conditions.

The first is that a teacher should know clearly about the theories of second language teaching and learning, and keeps up with the times as language doesn't stay the same, it is changing especially in an information age. The students taught by teachers with strong language skills performed better than those taught by teachers weak in language skills. Being an English teacher, he or she should improve his or her own language proficiencies.

The second is that teachers should make clear of their teaching aims, what goals they want to be achieved in classroom teaching and made instructive design according to the level of students.

The third for teachers is to use appropriate language input and monitor one's own lectures for accuracy, provide an appropriate degree of difficulty for different level students. And the most important is that providing language input (i+1) for students. Teachers should create real contexts for students to understand foreign cultures and communication. But pay attention to one point, full English doesn't mean that the teacher uses one hundred

percent English, some professional terms or difficult words could be more easily understood in Chinese than in English, why the teacher spend so much time to make students confused and puzzled in English.

The fourth is to understand students' real needs and problems during their learning, and evaluate students' learning correctly.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by Northeast Petroleum University Innovation Fund for Art, Physical Education & Foreign Language Education (2019YTW-W-02).

REFERENCES

- [1] Rod Ellis, Second Language Acquisition. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Languages Education Press, 2000, p3-4.
- [2] Stephen D. Krashen, Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1981.
- [3] Stephen D. Krashen, Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, University of Southern California, Oxford/New York: Pergamon, 1982, p.11-15.
- [4] Bernard Spolsky, Conditions for Second Language Learning. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Languages Education Press, 2000.
- [5] Claire Kramsch, Context and Culture in Language Teaching. Shanghai Foreign Languages Education Press 1999, p1.
- [6] Ministry of Education, College English Teaching Requirements, 2007. NO3. http://old.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_1846/200711/28924.html