

Intercultural Learning in English Listening Based on Input Hypothesis

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Abstract—In his Input Hypothesis, Krashen attaches great importance to the role of comprehensible input (CI) in second language acquisition (SLA). Listening comprehension presents a big barrier to an English learner. To help the English learner to improve listening comprehension ability, CI is optimized based on Input Hypothesis. In English listening classes, it is found that intercultural learning facilitates the students to acquire a better understanding in listening with more CI.

Keywords—the Input Hypothesis; comprehensible input (CI); listening comprehension; English listening class; intercultural learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Among the SLA theories studies in the 1970s and early 1980s, one of the best known and most influential theories of SLA is Krashen's Monitor Theory. Ellis (2004: 261) indicates that "Krashen's Monitor Model has enjoyed considerable prominence in SLA research. In so far as it is probably the most comprehensive of existing theories, this is justified." "There were as many as ten 'hypotheses' in the early 1980s (see Krashen 1981b, 1982a), reduced to five major claims in more recent formulations (e.g. Krashen 1985) (Freeman 2000: 241). The five main hypotheses of Monitor Theory are comprised of the Acquisition-learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The Input Hypothesis is the central claim of Monitor Theory. Krashen puts forward the concept of comprehensible input (CI) and emphasizes the vital role of CI in SLA. Krashen claims the second language is acquired through processing CI, which is language is heard or read and understood. Krashen offers a principle of "i+1" structure. "i" embodies the learner's present foreign language structure stage, while "1" refers to the next learning stage that should be a slightly higher than the present stage but shouldn't be equivalent to the present stage. "i+1" learning matches the learner's actual language level, therefore the learning is understood by the learner, but "i+2, or 3, or more" is far beyond the learner's language scope. Based on this principle, the preferential input should be "i+1" for the learner.

The Input Hypothesis brings about pros and cons, which has stimulated a wide range of research on SLA. Despite the

critique including those from Ellis, Freeman etc., no one doubts the Input Hypothesis's the importance and signification in the development of SLA research. Foreign language teaching is beneficial a lot from Input Hypothesis with kinds of enlightenment.

II. REVIEW OF CI APPLICATION IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Sun Yan (2018) focuses on the five hypotheses on the construction of network-based translation teaching. It is demonstrated that the application of five hypotheses can make up for the defects existing in the traditional translation classroom in the aspects of teaching content and class hour, promote the personalization of student learning, motivate student enthusiasm for learning and interest in learning, and thus improve student skills of English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation.

Li Ning (2018) studies the application of Krashen's Input Hypothesis in Business English Teaching and puts forward some enlightenment in terms of teaching methods and teaching environment. Some suggestions are given on the most suitable degree of difficulty and the ideal learning environment for the students.

Chen Fenglan (2017) tests the application of Krashen's Input Hypothesis in English listening and speaking teaching, thus put forwards that the comprehensive and interesting material is important.

Duan Lili (2015) discusses on how to take advantage of Krashen's language input hypothesis used in English newspaper reading course in order to cultivate students' comprehensive qualities with the focus on "+1" in the principle of "i+1".

Zhang Fenghua (2014) explores that the students' motivation and interest could be activated by selecting the appropriate comprehensible material and lowering the affective filters, thus it can improve the teaching effect of business English writing

Jiang Shuqin (2010) analyzes the results of listening tests, and claims that SLA theory, especially the Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis play an important role in multimedia assisted English listening instruction.

III. THE PRACTICE IN LISTENING CLASS

Listening comprehension is regarded as a big barrier to the English learner owing to its characteristics of instant information and memory. In English listening classes, the common approach is as follows: firstly the teacher explains the new words with some guides on listening skills, next comes the most important part — that is the teacher is playing the listening materials for times, finally, the teacher checks the answers and explains the difficult point while playing this part again. It seems that word study is the key to help students better understand the contents. Of course, word study is one effective way to offer CI for English learner, but it is not the whole. It demands more approaches to provide more CI for the students in an aim to promote the listening comprehension. To work out the problem, “to make ‘+1’comprehensible” is the key. Any comprehensible-oriented approach works in helping students better understand the content. In the listening course, it is found that intercultural learning is helpful to promote the listening comprehension especially when it comes to the original-version text. A teaching example from the English listening textbook “Listen to This: 1 Elementary Listening Comprehension” will be analyzed to illustrate the importance of intercultural learning. This is a classic listening textbook based on the original-version text and the original recording in a real scenario.

Lesson Nine: Exercise A in Section Two (He 2005: 81-82) (He 2002:114-115). In this part, a dialogue will be performed and it requires the students to finish 10 questions based on what is heard.

Dialogue: An Invitation to a Volleyball Match

In this dialogue, a female invites a male to watch volleyball match (the transcript of the dialogue):

Female: I’ve got two tickets for a volleyball match this evening. Why don’t you come?

...

At first, the male hesitates whether to come together for he is not very interested in volleyball. After the female’s explaining how interesting it is, the male agrees. Next comes the following (the transcript of the dialogue):

...

Male: Hmm. Well, perhaps I’ll come after all.

Female: Good! Now...uh...could you ...uh...could I have five pounds, please?

Male: Five pounds? What for?

Female: Your ticket, of course. I bought two of them in advance, hoping I’d persuade you to come with me.

Male: Oh...uh...You know. I’ve just remembered something.

Female: What?

Male: I’ve got some friends this evening.

Female: Oh...I see...I mean...you won’t be coming after all, then?

Male: Not, not unless...

Female: Unless what?

Male: Perhaps you could let me have the ticket for a bit less? Let’s say three pounds.

Female: But you said you had to meet some friends?

Male (laughing): Come on. I was only joking. Here’s your five pounds. Of course I’ll come.

The new word, the long and compound sentence, the long passages and the fast reading speed are usually regarded as the top barriers by the students. When it comes to this part, there is a short dialogue without new words, and nearly all the sentences are classified as short and simple ones, and what is more, the reading speed is not fast. But the students are not quite sure what is happening in the dialogue. They get an odd feeling.

They are wondering “What is the relation between the female and male? They are lovers? No, for they are not close. They are just friends? But this wouldn’t happen based on our actual experience.” The students are wondering the choice of this text by the writer. While listening, the students decode the text not just by the means of lexical knowledge but also life practice. The reason why they feel odd is that the practice in the dialogue runs counter to their life practice.

The focus is that the inviter asks the invitee to pay for the ticket that was bought by the inviter. In the student’s philosophy, if a person invites someone to do something such as watching a film, it is this person (the inviter) who pays for the bill. It is ridiculous that someone is invited but it turns out that this invitee should pay for his part. This unkind behavior makes the invitee feel hurt in a way. What is more unreasonable, in the text, the male pays for the ticket happily.

It is the culture shock that makes this unsuccessful communication. The analysis on the basis of pure language can’t answer the question. In this situation only the culture accounts for why it is like that. In China, if the inviter invites his friend to join in some activity, which means that the inviter would cover all the cost. However, in western countries, Going Dutch is a kind of social convention. Therefore, it is common that the invitee would pay for his part instead of the inviter’s covering the whole. The language in the text conveys an important factor of culture — value, which is totally different from that in Chinese culture.

This text indicates that intercultural learning is an effective approach which is necessary in making the input comprehensible. Intercultural learning plays an important role in promoting listening comprehension.

Before class, the teacher should sort out the text and consider what kind of approach should be taken to make the input comprehensible. New word study is explicit which is easy for the teacher to confirm and carry out. Generally speaking, the new word is listed out in front of the text. The teacher just makes clear explanation before the listening.

Intercultural learning appears implicit. If the learning just keeps on the level of the literal meaning, the intercultural point will be missed unconsciously. It requires the teacher to have an overall assessment of the text. Unlike the new word study, intercultural point is seldom listed out in front of the text, thus it requires the teacher to find it out on the teacher's own. Therefore, besides the English language knowledge, the teacher should boast enough intercultural knowledge.

Language is the important component of culture (Hu 1997: 16). Samovar (2000: 122) indicates that "It is impossible to separate our use of language from our culture". Language is served for communication. Language can be viewed as a sort of carrier of culture. Language study is equal to culture study, therefore language communication equates with culture communication. Taken into account the relation, language study shouldn't be separated from culture. Otherwise the learner couldn't really grasp the language. While delivering the foreign language, the foreign language teacher should act as a culture envoy to introduce both the local culture and the foreign culture. This text is the very illustration for the relation between language and culture. The learner could read out the culture hidden in this text. Intercultural learning can help the foreign language learner to develop an international vision. It is no doubt that more comprehensible input is offered based on an intercultural view. To delivering foreign language requires the foreign language teacher to keep an intercultural awareness.

IV. CONCLUSION

Listening comprehension belongs to language input. The more comprehensible input, the better understanding the learner gets. How to make the input comprehensible is a significant topic which deserves research. The Input Hypothesis brings up guidance for the teaching of English listening. Intercultural learning is beneficial for making the input comprehensible. It is suggested that not only the English teacher should pose the viewpoint of intercultural learning but also the student should be guided to study on the basis of intercultural learning.

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