

# Interaction Hypothesis and its Application in Second Language Acquisition

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## Abstract:

The 1980s was a period of rapid economic development. In such a context, people had attached greater importance to educational research. Long's theory of the interaction hypothesis is one of these marvelous examples of that time. It also went through the stages of proposal, continuous improvement, and development and gave a clearer direction and structure to second language teaching. This paper discusses the content and significance of the Interaction Hypothesis theory, discusses the specific application of the current hypothesis in second language teaching, and explores the future development direction of the Interaction Hypothesis theory to obtain more teaching insights and experiences for English teaching in China. The significance and practicality of the Interaction Hypothesis to English teaching cannot be ignored. The interactive teaching model significantly enhances students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, improves the traditional dull and serious classroom atmosphere, and optimizes inefficient learning outcomes. This paper also suggests English teachers promote students' English learning through authentic and effective interactions in the English classroom.

**Keywords:** Interaction Hypothesis; interaction modification; input; output; second language acquisition.

## 1. Introduction

The most significant social function of language is interaction, which is both the purpose and the means of language learning [1]. Michael Long explicitly presented the Interaction Hypothesis by understanding input with interaction, building on Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The Interaction Hypothesis went through three stages of formulation, refinement, and updating, culminating in the current theory of the Interaction Hypothesis [1]. Michael Long highlights the importance of interactive adjustment in the meaning-negotiation process.

Michael Long's Interaction Hypothesis aims to explore the connection between interaction modification, language input, and language acquisition. He proposes that grammatical and conversational modifications dramatically increase the comprehensibility of the input language and that comprehensible input enlightens students to acquire a large amount of input slightly above their language level, ultimately making grammatical and conversational adjustments in communication facilitate language acquisition [2, 3]. Meaning negotiation is the core of the Interaction Hy-

pothesis, which reveals that instructors should use interactive adjustment and negotiation of meaning to promote comprehensible input and output, which will enable students to generate new ideas and perspectives on the class content [3]. Learners who use interactive adjustment and meaning negotiation in language learning can better speak more complex sentence patterns and language forms [3]. Comprehensible output enlightens students that they can increase their comprehensible output through abundant group activities in and out of class, thus internalizing the input knowledge or revising or negotiating the output knowledge to improve their language proficiency [3]. Through comprehensible output, learners can examine the process of absorbing their linguistic input and recognize their shortcomings so that they can improve.

Learners may realize that what they just said is not understood after making an unhelpful utterance and getting feedback about how incomprehensible it was. In this situation, they must force themselves to rephrase the initial utterance to make themselves recognized by creating a more target-like output. In addition to encouraging effortlessness or repetitiveness of language use, output can be

used to evaluate theories regarding the target language. Using psychological concepts like noticing, working memory, and attention, the Interaction Hypothesis also aims to explain why interaction and learning are related. The Interaction Hypothesis focuses teachers on the language of the classroom as a space where opportunities for interaction are intentionally created, in addition to being a place where students of different backgrounds, skill levels, and styles interact. Additionally, it concentrates curriculum designers and material creators on designing the best activities and settings for input and engagement to encourage students to generate their own language through a socially created process.

## 2. Literature Review

The Interaction Hypothesis by Michael Long is a theory that supports the idea of second language learning through face-to-face communication between learners and facilitators, which specifies that people acquire the language through continuous interaction with native speakers [4]. In the hypothesis, Long recognizes the importance of Krashen's intelligible linguistic input but considers it a means by which the speakers understand the learners' language [2, 5]. He argues that a sufficient amount of comprehensible input is important but only a phase of acquiring language. Long emphasizes that communication enables learners to acquire the language. When there is a language breakdown in the process of communication, the native speaker will find out learners' mistakes and present them with the correct expressions so that learners can know the gap between what they want to express and what they express. Then, they can spend more time making up for their deficiencies, which will help them acquire the language. Therefore, interactive behavior in language acquisition plays a decisive role in second language acquisition.

The Interaction Hypothesis is crucial to learning second languages and focuses more on solving current problems. Combining and utilizing input, interaction, and output can achieve the ultimate objective of learning a second language to the greatest extent. This Interaction Hypothesis theory provides a new research approach and method for second language acquisition.

Through experiments to explore the development and understanding of the Interaction Hypothesis and the role of the Interaction Hypothesis in the classroom practice of second language acquisition [6]. In phase 1, both groups were asked to read and underline the input material. After collecting the materials, the participants were required to produce the first reconstruction. After being exposed to the same input material again, the participants produced

the reconstruction the second time. In phase 2, participants wrote a short passage on a given topic and were presented with a sample of the writing provided by the participating teacher. The results of this study suggest that classroom interaction and the language output may trigger learners to notice the target form and positively affect the learning of a foreign language [7].

On the one hand, Long's Interaction Hypothesis is one of the most significant systematic theoretical formulations in second language learning [8, 9]. On the other hand, it has influenced the development of the interactionist method. According to the research carried out by Aleksandër Moisiu University, it can facilitate communication by reinforcing content memorization, bridging the gap between input and output, and aiding in learner comprehension in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) [10]. Feedback can be used as a connection between inputs and outputs [11]. In the process of negotiated interaction, learners could train and improve their vocabulary skills more quickly [12]. However, it also has weaknesses. Cognitive development becomes individual behavior and is no longer related to language skills and learning from social contact. At the same time, the setting was reduced to independent factors influencing the cognitive process [13]. Moreover, the complexities arising from inter-individual differences in the interaction process require extra attention.

## 3. Application

Classroom applications of the Interaction Hypothesis are reflected in teacher-student and student-student interactions. The teacher-student role relationship in the classroom is no longer mono-directional but a form of two-way interaction. Teachers act as facilitators to allow students to truly participate in the classroom. Meanwhile, teachers are the disseminators of knowledge in teaching and are also managers, motivators, participants, supervisors, and interpreters of the classroom. The interaction between students is mainly divided into pair interaction and group interaction. Two-person interaction is suitable for teaching activities with a few people, such as exchanging information, conducting interviews and surveys, and correcting each other's examination papers. It helps to improve the efficiency of activities and promote reasonable and orderly teaching. When students interact with each other, teachers should pay attention to the personalities and mastery of knowledge of the two people and try to ensure that both people can complement each other so that such interaction is meaningful [14].

Precisely, teachers can effectively support students in developing communicative competence in English by imple-

menting the Interaction Hypothesis into their classroom practices., as concluded in studies by Auquilla, D. P. O., Camacho, C. S. H., & Heras, G. E. [15]. Authentic language use may help English as a Second Language (ESL) learners develop these English literacy skills [15]. Therefore, students must interact and communicate using their reading and writing skills in the classroom.

In applying the interaction hypothesis theory, Zhang's study argues that teachers can use multiple simple sentences to formulate this question, guiding students to use what they have learned to describe and express themselves rather than using complex subordinate clause structures. This is because only when the teacher's content penetration is comprehensible input to the students can the students interact further with the content and internalize it into their own body of knowledge [16].

#### 4. Future Direction

With the continuous development of the language-teaching concept and the information society, language-teaching technology and means have also undergone radical changes, resulting in great innovations and breakthroughs compared with the past [17]. Apart from traditional communication functions, mobile devices can also help people obtain information and knowledge through wireless networks. Since then, mobile learning (M-Learning) - a brand new learning mode- has been born. M-learningM-learning refers to using mobile devices, wireless communication, and other technologies to provide learners with learning resources and facilitate bidirectional communication between educators and learners in a learning mode whenever and wherever possible [18]. The essence of M-Learning, which emphasizes learning in communication and interaction, is consistent with the Interaction Hypothesis. The M-Learning model should also be suitable for language learning, for language is the primary communication channel and interaction. From the perspective of the Interaction Hypothesis, M-Learning as a learning modality is highly feasible.

On the one hand, M-Learning provides diverse ways for language input. For example, the teacher can reinforce any board in the input according to the teaching needs and then release his or her own programmed content to students through public communication platforms such as WeChat and QQ [17]. In mobile learning, the teacher can easily realize different target structures using different reinforcement means [17], effectively improving the comprehensibility of the input. On the other hand, the teacher can utilize the characteristics of mobile learning to allow learners to review each other's assignments after inde-

pendently completing output-based tasks such as writing. As a result, both parties can have two-way interactions and negotiations through the M-Learning platform, just like group discussions in an offline classroom. In this way, oral output and formal stylistic output can be combined so that the output ability of both styles can be practiced. This efficient and convenient way of learning languages will likely become massively popular in the future.

Future technology-related SLAs must take into consideration the negative feedback required to thoroughly record real-world discussions between students and native speakers in a variety of settings. This will allow researchers to determine whether and to what extent negative feedback is representative enough to support SLA. The function of negative feedback as a facilitator has to be thoroughly reevaluated if it does not show up immediately. Furthermore, because it must be simple for students to perceive, negative feedback must also be easy to notice, which makes its place in the classroom rather contentious. Consequently, the main topic of discussion might be how to provide constructive criticism to students in a way that doesn't shame, intimidate, or demotivate them [19].

In summary, for SLA to be successful in any learning environment, three requirements must be met: input, output, and interaction. The interaction between the three variables is what initiates the acquisition process and results in the interplay between input and output. The variables are intrinsically linked. Input can come from external sources, such as reading and listening, or directly from interaction [20]. Furthermore, additional empirical research is required to thoroughly record authentic dialogues between non-native speakers and learners in many settings to determine whether or not negative feedback is sufficiently representative to promote second language acquisition (SLA) and, if so, to what extent. Negative feedback's facilitating role should be carefully revised if it does not appear clearly [21]. Recasts may be too invisible for learners who are highly focused on conveying their meaning to notice the unhelpful elements of their utterances, so if they are thought to be unfavorable feedback, an additional issue that needs to be thoroughly investigated is if they are helpful and simple for the learners to notice enough to correct or modify their utterances.

Moreover, something that could appear difficult for one learner might not be for another, as some will choose to overlook their errors even when pointed out, provided that the lesson is thoroughly understood. Additionally, individual differences can have a major impact on negative feedback because different learners may find different forms of negative feedback more appropriate and personally

preferred depending on their level of education, intellectual capacity, education choice, style, and tactics. There is a need for more thorough and well-designed research studies to clarify the claims made by the negative feedback, even though some studies supported the hypothesis and some could not [19]. This will hopefully allow the negative feedback to be used more directly in second-language classroom settings. The globalization of the English language in this era of computer technology will help us understand how to generate learning opportunities in an unfavorable learning environment, which will eventually help people acquire second languages [22].

### 5. Conclusion

Long further enhances people's understanding of the role of interaction in second language acquisition research. The academic community generally believes that Long's Interaction Hypothesis theory is one of the more comprehensive hypotheses in SLA. Long's Interaction Hypothesis states that interaction plays an important role in the process of language acquisition and also affirms the importance of input and output. However, some scholars still believe that the Interaction Hypothesis cannot fully prove the promoting effect of conversation adjustment on language acquisition. Firstly, the input hypothesis cannot be directly supported, and the interactional hypothesis is debatable. In addition, the significance of understandable input cannot be disregarded. Numerous oblique indications indicate that the likelihood of a student achieving a high level of proficiency increases with the frequency with which they are exposed to certain aspects of the language they are studying. Secondly, it is difficult to prove that interactive modification is easier to understand. In some cases, simplification can inhibit understanding rather than promote it.

The significance and practicality of the Interaction Hypothesis to English teaching cannot be ignored. Teachers apply the theory of interactive hypothesis in teaching to mobilize students' participation in the classroom, increase students' language input and output, and promote students' language acquisition. The interactive teaching mode can greatly make students interested in language acquisition and enthusiastic about learning, improve the dull and serious atmosphere of the one-way lecture classroom, and optimize the inefficient learning effect in the past. The results of the pedagogical ramifications indicated the necessity of using communicative language teaching resources, which support language learners in practicing their language skills to improve their language talents through classroom interactions. Teachers should create a language learning

environment in the classroom to enhance learners' contact with English features, then choose to minimize the use of simplified language in communication, especially when the semantics cannot be fully understood.

#### Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally, and their names were listed alphabetically.

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