
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pedagogic Strategies for Stimulating Long's (1980) Interaction Hypothesis in the Second Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

From classical to contemporary periods, the teaching and learning of a second language have conscientiously been guided by pedagogical theories, ideologies, methods, rules, and regulations. The Interaction Hypothesis (IH) is one theory that advocates face-to-face contact between the learner and the facilitator. Although some media for physical contact and communication were mentioned in the Interaction Hypothesis, with time and the advent of technology, many better strategies have emerged. Therefore, this paper assesses some traditional and modern pedagogical strategies for oral language development that were not captured in the Interaction Hypothesis. The paper aims to expose second language teachers and learners to some new techniques and guidelines for oral language development and to reinforce the classical techniques cited in earlier research works. Our paper is segmented into four parts – introduction, empirical evidence of IH, pedagogical strategies for stimulating IH in second language classrooms, and conclusion.

KEYWORDS

Interaction hypothesis, pedagogic strategies, corrective feedback, second language teaching, oral presentation

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1. Introduction

Over the years, many theories in the fields of Second Language Teaching (SLT), Second Language Learning (SLL), and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that argue for physical contact of the facilitator and other language input agents have evolved. The Interaction Hypothesis (IH) by Long (1980) is one of the theories in second language studies that argue that the growth of language ability is inspired by face-to-face contact and communication.

The hypothesis advances two main declarations: (1) Comprehensible input is a vital instrument for language acquisition and learning; and (2) differences to the interactional structure of communications that take place in the process of negotiating a communication difficult assists in making input understandable to the second language learner. Thus, Long (1980) believes that the basis of IH could be drawn from the work of Stephen Krashen and judiciously from the work of Evelyn Hatch. Thus, Krashen (1977, 1980) argues that the subconscious method of acquisition happens when the learner is focused on meaning and receives comprehensible input. Here, the question is, what is comprehensible input? Krashen (1977, 1980) points out how vital 'simple codes' are for the creation of comprehensible input. He cites examples of these simple codes as foreigner and interlanguage talk and extralinguistic context (these include non-verbal communicative elements). Krashen (1980) also claims that language construction does not take play in the acquisition of language. Thus, the role of language production in the acquisition of language is marginal.

On the issue of alterations to the interactional structure of conversations, a 'discourse analysis' approach was used by Hatch (1978) to study the interactions involving naturalistic child and adult L2 learners. The research revealed that the regularities which have been shown to exist in the way in which learners acquire the grammar of an L2 were the direct results of the kinds of interaction in which they participated. Some of the examples of the interactional modifications involved in the negotiation of meaning include:

Table 1: Some Interactional Hypothesis Modification Approaches

Communication Type	Description	Illustration
1. Explanation requirements	This includes any pronouncement that stimulates an explanation of the previous expression.	Learner: He is an Internet catfish. Teacher: What do you mean by Internet catfish in this context?
2. Persona-reiterations	With this one, the speaker recaps or rephrases some sections of his or her word just to aid the recipient in subdue a communication gap	A: I am a ... B: Student? A: Yes, a university student.

Source: adopted and modified from Pica and Doughty (1985a) as cited in Ellis (1991)

In Table 1, two interactional modification approaches are employed in a conversation to aid in making input comprehensible to the L2 learner. According to Long (1980), while input characteristics comprise numerous linguistic pieces of foreigner talk, interactional characteristics contain communicative features of foreigner talk. However, when Long (1980) discovered that foreigner talk involved some input alterations, but many interactional adjustments, Long (1983) embraced Krashen's (1980) opinions (about the function of comprehensible input); and this led to some modifications of the IH.

Accordingly, Long (1983) argued that (1) gaining comprehensible input is a feature of all cases of efficacious first and second acquisition, (2) superior amounts of comprehensive input appear to result in a quicker acquisition, and (3) a lack of access to comprehensive input leads to little or no acquisition. Thus, comprehensive input has been seen to be an imperious approach for a novice who is acquiring a second language. Long (1983) also noticed the changes to the interactional framework of conversation as the most important and extensively used approach to making input comprehensible. Here, the notion is about the quantity and not the quality of the alterations that are required for acquisition.

Again, the interaction hypothesis is associated with the study of Pica (1987). However, Pica's (1987) study rather emphasises the imperativeness of the social relationship between the participants as a determinant of interactional modifications. According to Pica (1987), learners and their interlocutors are aware of their unequal linguistic proficiencies in the second language but see themselves as having equivalent status concerning meeting their needs and fulfilling their obligations as conversational participants (Pica 1987, p. 4).

Consequently, it is obvious that when the participants in any social discourse share a balanced role relationship, more chances are provided for interactional restructuring. When communicative participants are the same in age, status, rank, class, and educational level, understanding and acquisition of a second language are effortlessly facilitated. A challenge in comprehension and acquisition only comes in when there are variations in the variables mentioned. As a result of the variations that the IH has gone through, Long (1989) made some proposals that are imperative for pedagogic studies. Some of them are group works, closed tasks (i.e., a task with a finite set of correct solutions), and two-way tasks. According to him, these activities produce more beneficial negotiation work. Thus, Long (1989) refers to the psycholinguistic justification for his proposal, which is the interactional hypothesis (IH).

However, with time, the activities in Long's (1989) proposal have proved to be inexhaustible, especially with the advent of technology and its rapid development. This is a gap. This current study, therefore, aims at exposing SL learners and teachers to other (classical and contemporary) activities that can facilitate IH in both SL classrooms and outside the classroom situation. Our current study is segmented into four parts: introduction, empirical evidence of IH, pedagogical strategies for stimulating IH activities, and conclusion.

2. Empirical Evidence of IH

The interactional hypothesis has some empirical pieces of evidence. One, although comprehensible input has been established as an essential means for acquisition, there is no straight proof to substantiate the input hypothesis as this has not been proven. Thus, no undeviating experiment has been conducted from its commencement to date. This condition of lack of proof of the input hypothesis, conversely, does not permit the refutation of it; this is because there are numbers of indirect evidence, though not sufficient. For example, no study connects foreigner talk to L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1991).

Two, concerning the second claim of the interactional hypothesis, the research that has been done advocates that basic input helps comprehension. There are several theoretical objections and some counter-evidence that have been raised against the hypothesis.

Some of them are explained: To start with, one interrogation that has been asked is: "*is comprehensible input necessary for acquisition?*" Most of them have looked at this question from two viewpoints – weak and strong perspectives. The weak protestation is based on the argument that though comprehensible input is essential for acquisition, it is not adequate. Thus, Sharwood-Smith (1986) argues that the processes of comprehension and acquisition are two opposed phenomena. He has put forward that there is input that will assist the learner in deducing meaning, and there is input that the learner will use to progress his or her interlanguage. This, she has christened 'dual relevance.' Sharwood-Smith (1986) again considered the diverse nature of the processes involved as follows:

In the case of comprehension, surface input is only briefly registered since the learner rapidly recodes into 'deeper semantic and pragmatic codes' in which the message is then stored; and in the case of acquisition, the learner needs to undertake both a surface structure analysis and a semantic representation of the input (p.241).

Faerch and Kasper (1986), to some extent, have taken an analogous position. They argue that acquisition only happens when there is a 'gap' between the input and the learner's recent knowledge and, crucially, when the learner perceives the gap as a weakness in knowledge. So, if the learner does not observe this gap as knowledge, the acquisition does not take place. This position of Faerch and Kasper (1986) is, however, debatable. The age of the learner matters when it comes to him or her noticing gaps. Most young children may not have the capacity to observe gaps; they just acquire language(s) as and when they are exposed to them. This, however, depends on how strong their Language Acquisition Devices (LADs) are.

The strong objection has some influential arguments though its empirical evidence is weak. It says there are shreds of evidence to support the capacity of the learner to project beyond the input he or she receives. However, this evidence is open to a lot of challenges since it has not demonstrated that learners generalize what they have learnt to new grammatical features. Another question that has been asked is: '*do interactional adjustments make input comprehensible?*' In answering this question, Pica *et al.* (1986) and Pica (1989) have supported the claim that, indeed, internationally modified input assists comprehension. Loschky (1989) has also argued that chances for negotiating meaning are especially helpful where comprehension is concerned.

However, the claim that the interactional changes aid comprehension has faced opposition. One, there is confirmation to propose that what seems to be the negotiation of meaning may not be anything of the kind (Hawkins 1985). Two, it has been pointed out that interactional changes happen for purposes other than for negotiating meaning (Aston 1986). Three, Ehrlich *et al.* (1989), in challenging the claim (that argues it is the number of interactional modifications that matters), argue that the mere number of meaningful negotiations within an interaction may not be a good predictor of the quality of comprehensible input. Lastly, the research which has investigated interactional studies has been seen as enormously limited.

3. Pedagogic Strategies for Stimulating IH in the Second Language Classroom

There are a lot of strategies that can facilitate IH activities in Second Language Learners' (SLLs') classrooms. Most of these strategies have their support from some theoretical underpinnings. We have expounded on some of these techniques in section 3 of our paper.

3.1 Active Question and Answer Sessions

In language teaching and learning, one cannot deny the fact that effective question-and-answer session facilitates oral language development. Over the past years, several studies have focused on the use of questioning as an effective and universally-accepted pedagogical approach (McComas & Abraham, 2004). It is a powerful tool that can aid in the elicitation of ideas from learners. It is a vital means for the facilitator to output information and also to acquire feedback, and an imperative medium to interchange thoughts between the facilitator and learners (Ma, 2008). Several studies have shown that active question and answer sessions in SLL classrooms have a lot of merits, including oral language development and effective communication in the target language. For example, in Ramírez (2010), it was realised that students see participation in an Oral Skills Course (i.e., through questions and answers) as a tool for the development of oral skills; this influence, they think, is a positive one. For question and answer sessions to be effective, these are some strategies the facilitator could observe:

1. Ask the question, and then pause for a while. This gives the learners ample time to formulate their answers.
2. After pausing for a while and no learner is voluntarily responding to the question asked, the facilitator can elicit the responses by mentioning specific names of learners.
3. Do not mention a learner's name first before asking the question; (when this is done, the other learners assume that the question is directed to the learner whose name is mentioned only).
4. Do not develop the habit of initiating a question with the clause 'who can...?' (Avoiding this style will send a signal to all the learners that the facilitator could fall on any of them for options to the question asked at any given time).

5. Do not ask intimidating questions. Questions that border on sensitive issues like religion, culture, sexual orientation, and one's worldview could be intimidating.
6. Maintain a positive approach when asking questions (smiling, toning down, and refusing to put fear in learners are some positive approaches a facilitator could use in the L2 classroom).

3.2 Child-Centred Teaching and Learning Approach

Child-centered teaching is where the teacher places the learner at the focus of the learning process in the classroom (Gravoso et al., 2008). Thus, in a child or learner-centred teaching, the abilities, needs, interests, and learning styles of the learner are usually considered in decisions about teaching and learning. This approach has some empirical backing. For example, In Gagné (2011) it was shown that children may be afforded more liberty to move between levels of accomplishment and to break free of the "age-grade lockstep" if child-centred teaching and learning is implemented.

Nelly and Kisilu (2016) conducted a study on the utilisation of child-centred approaches in teaching and learning language activities in preschool centres in Kenya. The study was conducted in primary schools in West Pokot County Public ECDE centres. The sample size for the study was 41 head teachers and 209 teachers. Since they used a mixed-method design, the researchers collected data using questionnaires, interviews, and an observation checklist. The study result showed that there was a moderate application of child-centred approaches in teaching and learning of language activities in pre-schools and that teachers' uninterrupted usage of this approach would completely influence learners' language development. Also, in Matsau (2007), it was revealed that regular use of child-centred approach assisted learners in acquiring the knowledge of word order, phrasing, and punctuation that contribute to the meaning of a written sentence. For child-centred teaching and learning approach to be effective, the facilitator should observe the following points:

1. Establish the temperament type (i.e., melancholic, choleric, sanguine, or phlegmatic) of the learner, and know how to design oral development tasks that will suit them.
2. Know the personality trait (i.e., introvert or extrovert) of the learner, and plan your learner to suit the needs of the learner.
3. The needs, desires, interests, abilities, and learning styles of learners should be taken into consideration when planning the syllabus or the course outline.
4. A multiplicity of teaching and learning strategies and assessments should be explored. This will help the teacher to know the ones that best suit individual students.
5. Learners should be motivated to give out their best.

3.3 Individual/Group Oral Presentations

Effective use of oral presentation is another strategy that has the propensity of stimulating interactions among L2 learners. This is especially true if it is well executed by both the teacher and the learner. In an oral presentation, students are required to prepare their materials and present some information in the presence of other people. These people can be their colleagues, an assessor, a panel of examiners, or a facilitator. Oral presentation activity requires critical thinking, excellent oral delivery, tact, motivation, superior listening skills, effective use of non-verbal communication gestures, and effective stage control.

Oral presentations have some empirical backing. For example, they have also been shown to advance students' abilities in ways that can be useful for their future job engagement (Živković, 2014). Nowadays, several organisations are looking for applicants who can deliver formal presentations, and the skills that learners study when they are presenting in English are transferable to their L1 (Pittenger, 2004). Girard et al. (2011) saw that using oral presentations in their classroom led to greater class conversation and participation, an increased interest in learning, and conspicuous improvements in their students' communication and presentation skills. King (2002) added that oral presentations had been shown to help link the gap between language study and language use. Again, oral presentations oblige learners to employ all four language skills in a naturally combined manner; and they have been shown to inspire learners to be active and independent learners (King, 2002).

Generally, oral presentations serve several purposes; however, whether individual or group, their four basic functions are giving information, convincing, inspiring, and entertaining the audience. In a classroom situation, it is the responsibility of the teacher to determine the purpose of the oral presentation before planning the entire process and strategies to use. Effectively executed oral presentation requires some strategies by both the teacher and the learner. Giving students sample presentations conducted by the teacher or other students can help to introduce them to the genres that they are anticipated to present in (Hovane, 2009). This mock or sample presentation can be a useful strategy for students to emulate. After determining the purpose of the presentation, and giving a mock or sample presentation, other introductory strategies that both teachers and learners can employ before the day of the presentation are:

1. Investigate the basic biography of the audience (this can help to select the diction and design the content as well).

2. Prepare, outline, and structure the content.
3. Review arrangements, and practise the presentation content before the due time.

On the day of the presentation, these strategies could be executed to arouse and sustain the interest of the audience in the presentation:

1. Establish pleasantries (i.e., greeting the audience) before introducing yourself.
2. Give the title and the format of your presentation.
3. Use an ice-breaker to keep the attention of your audience.

During the real oral presentation phase, the presenter should utilise these strategies to make the process very effective:

1. Use concrete words to achieve clarity of expressions.
2. Decorate your presentation with examples.
3. Check for audience feedback by asking rhetorical questions and distributing eye contact evenly.
4. Use your body, voice, and the right gestures to send strong and meaningful non-verbal communication to the audience.
5. Conclude your oral presentation by allowing the audience to ask questions.
6. Use visual aids and demonstrations to make the presentation active and lively.

In this 21st century, individual or group oral presentations should always be aided by technology. Projecting some slides with the contents of graphics or words for the consumption of the audience is a great idea for oral development and comprehension. Here are some tips for using PowerPoint slides:

1. The slides should have an outline.
2. The initial slide should contain the topic of the oral presentation and information about the presenter.
3. The final slide should contain the sentence: Thank you or its equivalence in the target language used.
4. Maintain consistency in the use of font size, style, and colour.
5. Avoid verbosity, and proofread the slides for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
6. Animations should be marginal (this, however, depends on the purpose of the presentation).
7. The selected background and the font colour should match.

Presentation tasks could be mini-project, project work, thesis, term papers, case studies, filed reports, critical review reports, and findings of committee work. In the classroom, the framework for assessing learners' oral presentation should be made known before the process. For example, we usually grade our students' oral presentations on the basis of these rubrics:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Dress code and appearance | – 5% |
| 2. Adequacy of content | – 30% |
| 3. Delivery (i.e., language, pronunciation, voice, and gestures) | – 40% |
| 4. Approach to questions asked by the audience | – 10% |
| 5. Organisation and logical sequence of the presentation | – 10% |
| 6. Organisation of PowerPoint slides | – 5% |

3.4 Corrective Feedback Techniques

Since Truscott (1996) condemned grammar correction in L2 writing classes, and Ferris (1999) issued a rebuttal justifying the need for grammar correction in L2 writing classes, corrective feedback has generated several controversies with researchers conducting empirical studies to corroborate either Truscott's (1996) assertion or Ferris' (1999) rebuttal. A classical definition by Chaudron (1977, p. 31) indicates that corrective feedback is any reaction of the teacher that changes, disapprovingly refers to, or demands enhancement of the learner's utterance. Corrective Feedback is the response of the teacher to students' written or verbal structures that seek to review students' structures (Owusu, 2017). Thus, it is any behaviour of the teacher about an error that marginally attempts to inform the learner of the fact of the error (Chaudron, 1988).

Generally, corrective feedback (CF) has a positive impact on students' written texts. For instance, in Owusu (2017 & 2019), direct feedback (DF) and indirect feedback (IF) interventions corrected memorandum and business letter errors better than the no-feedback (NF) intervention; however, the potency of the DF intervention was stronger than that of the IF. The findings of Owusu (2017 & 2019) align with Owusu (2020), where the results from a post-test displayed that students performed better at the post-test level when the DF technique was applied to their pre-test texts.

Again, in Alsolam (2019), it was seen that oral corrective feedback (OCF) is a vital element in language classrooms in that it provides a stage through which teachers can interact with students in a way that improves their language skills. Apart from the classroom, OCF can be influential in improving employees' performance (Owusu et al., 2022). Also, the findings of Mahmoud and Ali el Deen (2018) proved that OCF is a vital element of classroom feedback as it enables students to develop their EL acquisition by motivating them to take control of their EL progress. For OCF to be used effectively as a tool for stimulating IH in learners, the teacher should decide on the type that suits the context and can address the needs of the participants effectually. The second language teacher may explore any of these OCF strategies suggested by Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 46):

1. *explicit correction*, which has to do with the provision of direct correction of learners' errors;
2. *recasts*, where the teacher rewords all or some of the incorrect structure of the learner;
3. *clarification requests*, where the facilitator informs the learner that their statement has not been understood or that the statement is not conforming to grammar rules and that repetition is needed;
4. *metalinguistic*, which contains either notes, data, or queries related to the quality of the student's expression without plainly giving the correct form;
5. *elicitation*, where the teacher deliberately pauses to allow the learner complete the teacher's expression; and
6. *repetition*, where the facilitator recaps the student's flawed expression in seclusion by regulating his or her (the facilitator's) intonation to highpoint the error.

3.5 Language Learning Games

Using language games is another strategy for stimulating IH. A game that can develop the vocabulary and communication skills of students is a language game. Games can lead to an increase in motivation to learn the language as learners feel a real sense of accomplishment when they operate a game (Hubbard 1987). In principle, games are interactional, so using games in English teaching and learning can help facilitate the speaking abilities of learners (Zhu, 2012).

The influence of language games on students' oral language development has several empirical underpinnings. In Ibrahim (2017), it was revealed that teachers strongly agreed that language games are essential to be used by teachers since they positively stimulate the teacher-student connection and assist the teacher in giving contexts in which the language is useful. A study conducted by Iaremenco (2017) with 120 student- participants, revealed that students cherish the rules of games, and to them, online games help to develop a calm learning environment. Again, 90% of the students recommended games as a learning tool. In Dalvinder and Abdul Aziz (2020), language games were seen to have a positive impact on students' language development. This impact was especially strong in enhancing their speaking skills.

There are different types of language games. Therefore, the selection of the language game should be based on the needs of the learners and the kind of gap the teacher seeks to address. Hadfield (1998) groups language games into ten classifications:

1. Sorting, ordering, or arranging games.
2. Information gap games
3. Guessing games
4. Search games
5. Matching games
6. Labelling games
7. Exchange games
8. Board games
9. Role play games
10. Computer games

Scrabble, for example, is a computer, board, search, guessing, sorting, and information gap game. Depending on the availability of time, the teacher can use it to develop the vocabulary and pronunciation gaps of learners.

4. Conclusion

Comprehensible input seems to be neither imperative nor adequate for acquisition, and there seem to be circumstances governing whether and when interactional variations make input comprehensible (Ellis, 1991). This paper reviewed the Interactional Hypothesis and some pedagogical strategies for stimulating IH in second language classrooms. Five strategies of questions and answers, child-centred teaching and learning, group/individual oral presentation, corrective feedback techniques, and language learning games were reviewed from both theoretical and empirical foundations. The review of these classical and contemporary strategies does not suggest that our paper is absolute. There may be several IH stimulating strategies that our paper could not discuss. For example, strategies such as drama, role-play, simulations, debate, discussion, brainstorming, internship activities, and

experiential learning activities are essential avenues for stimulating IH. The operationalization of the strategies discussed in this current paper, and the other strategies we could not expand, of course, is highly dependent on the educational level of the second language learner. For example, internships and experiential learning activities should be utilised at high levels of education.

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