The Role of Classroom Interaction in Second Language Oral Acquisition: A Case Study of Primary English Education

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Abstract:

With the new standards of the English curriculum, primary school English teaching places greater emphasis on developing students' oral expression and communicative competence. According to the Input-Interaction-Output Hypothesis in classroom contexts, it is the interaction in the classroom that is essential in driving the language input, the meaning negotiation and the language output, which is the output of the students.This study focuses on primary school English classrooms and examines how classroom interaction influences students' oral English development within the framework of second language acquisition (SLA) theory. The study conducts a systematic literature review and synthesis of research on classroom interaction in primary school English within domains of domestic and international studies based on the literature analysis and case study of the past decade summarising the principal characteristics of interactions, as well as the factors that influence these interactions. This study explores the theoretical and practical roles and significance of classroom interaction in second language acquisition. The results show that the effective use of high-quality teacher-students interaction and peer-student collaboration can improve oral proficiency and motivation towards learning among students; this provides valuable insights for optimizing primary school English teaching models.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction; Second Language Acquisition (SLA); English Oral Learning; Primary English Education; Instructional Optimization Strategies

1. Introduction

Under the new English curriculum standards, developing students' oral expression and communicative competence has become the primary goal of primary school English teaching. As one of the most significant connections in language learning, which allows input, negotiation, and output, classroom interaction

has an irreplaceable role in the process of acquiring a second language. Over the past few years, researchers in the field have widely recognized that high-quality classroom interaction effectively facilitates learners' internalization of language knowledge and oral skills [1,2]. Nevertheless, the review of the literature [3,4] constantly mentions that the communication in the primary school English classroom tends to be formal without any meaningful negotiation and natural communication, this restricts the in-depth development of students' oral skills.

To examine the role of classroom interaction in second language acquisition and its impact on students' oral English learning, this study takes primary school English classrooms as a case. It integrates literature review and case analysis and synthesizing domestic and international research findings from the past decade to outline the core characteristics of classroom interaction and directions for its optimization. In the results, it was found that instructional designs using the Interaction Hypothesis and the Output Hypothesis can play a significant role in improving the language production and motivation to learn among students. The research has practical and theoretical importance in enhancing the quality of teaching models and the quality of the English instruction in primary schools and oral language teaching. With the support of classroom observation cases from several primary schools, this research identifies the key factors influencing classroom interaction. Despite the fact that classroom interaction has been widely explored by scholars all over the world, there remains a lack of systematic understanding of the English classes in the Chinese primary schools. Hence, this paper aims to fill this gap in research.

2. Analysis of the Current Situation and Problems of Classroom Interaction in Primary English Education

2.1 Characteristics of Current Classroom Interaction

Currently, classroom interaction in primary school English settings predominantly follows a teacher-dominated pattern. Teacher descriptions, questioning and feedback remain the main forms of classroom instruction so that students have comparatively constrained language output. According to the research carried out by Lu [3], teacher discourse is the most frequent teaching activity in Chinese EFL classrooms with discussions usually being closed-ended questions and a single-IRF (Initiation Response Feedback) pattern. While this model offers advantages in knowledge transmission and classroom manage-

ment, it fails to effectively promote meaning negotiation and authentic oral expression among students.

Additionally, communication in some primary school English classes is characterized by form over content, lacking real contextual support. In his empirical studies, Xin Yurong [5] found out that in some rural and underdeveloped areas, teachers prioritize completing teaching tasks over the linguistic significance of interaction, therefore, students lack opportunities for authentic communication and independent expression in classroom interactions. In particular, in recent works, the theoretical framework of input-interaction-output has been applied to the design of a classroom based on tasks to facilitate the level of authenticity and effectiveness of interaction [2]. This indicates that primary school English classrooms are gradually shifting from a teacher-centered model toward a learner-centered approach, with classroom interactions evolving toward diversification, collaboration, and real-world relevance.

2.2 Major Problems in Classroom Interaction

Having outlined the general peculiarities of the interaction of the English classroom in primary school, the key issues inherent in it require further analysis to clarify the direction of the future optimization of teaching. While primary school English classroom interaction has achieved formalization to some extent, its effectiveness remains problematic. To begin with, the interaction in the classroom is teacher-dominated, and the participation of students remains rather low. As Lu [3] noted, teacher discourse dominates classrooms, and students tend to respond passively to questions, lacking opportunities for independent expression and meaning negotiation. Secondly, the interactive contents are usually tied at the language form level and do not have real communicative situations. In his study, Lan Tianlong [4] asserts that, teacher questioning is predominantly closed ended thereby restricting the free use of oral language as well as expansion of thinking in students. Moreover, many teachers do not pay attention to emotional support and positive feedback in interpersonal relations, making students deprived of confidence and enthusiasm in expressing themselves. Liu et al. [6] also noted that low-quality interaction may undermine students' oral English self-efficacy, which in turn affects their oral learning motivation. Lastly, many classroom interactions are shallow due to the limitations of teaching time and evaluation system, and there is no continuity and depth. According to Xin Yurong [5], the interactive strategies of teachers that are being applied in the rural setting are quite single and challenging to measure the differentiated learning needs of students. In summary, primary school

English classrooms require further optimization in terms of interaction objectives, forms, and quality.

3. Strategies for Optimizing Classroom Interaction Based on Second Language Acquisition Theories

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

Classical research on classroom interaction in primary school English education is largely informed by The Input Hypothesis, Interaction Hypothesis, and Output Hypothesis in second language acquisition. According to the input hypothesis, the comprehensible input is the condition of language acquisition, and in the classroom, teachers should provide language stimuli of the right difficulty to enable the students to master new information through comprehension. The interactive hypothesis emphasizes that language is internalized by the learners as a result of the feedback and modification in the process of meaning negotiation. Loewen and Sato [1] indicated that classroom interaction may facilitate the attention and comprehension of the forms of language by learners thus enhancing language processing. The Output Hypothesis underscores the critical role of language production in acquisition: learners identify gaps in their language use through output and engage in self-correction. The study by Scotland [7] also proves that cooperative conversation can assist learners in rebuilding language structures in actual communication. It is suggested by Yu Anting [2] that the combination of input, interaction, and output may be an effective way to enhance the quality of the language production in primary school students. In summary, SLA theory provides a solid theoretical foundation for optimizing classroom interaction.

3.2 Practical Strategies for Implementation

According to the theory of second language acquisition and findings in the research regarding classroom interaction, the optimization of primary school English classroom interaction should focus on task design, teacher-student interaction, and peer collaboration. Kos [8], discovered that mixed-age peer collaborative learning could provide more opportunities for meaningful negotiation and language practice by the learner, hence improving their oral fluency and confidence in communication. Lan Tianlong [4] argues that teachers should use open-ended questions and positive feedback to encourage students to express their ideas, making classroom interaction more generative in nature. The study by Sha Weijie [9] also indicates that role-play activities and real-time evaluation methods for

oral practice may be used to raise the participation and fluency rates of students in the expressional activity. It was suggested that the three connections of input interaction output need to be incorporated in the whole classroom process and a continuous cycle of language development should be built to enhance the quality of the language output of students [2]. In the meantime, Liu et al. [6] discovered that interaction of high quality can improve oral self-efficacy of students and stimulate motivation to learn. In summary, task-driven teaching, teacher-student interaction and peer collaboration are the key approaches to the improvement of English classroom interaction in primary school.

3.3 Pedagogical Implications

Despite the above findings, it is clear that classroom interaction is invaluable for oral English teaching in primary schools. Loewen and Sato [1] indicated that the interactive process does not only encourage the input and feedback of language, but also enhances learners' language awareness and attention to linguistic forms. The study by Lu [3] also notes that educators must create a more balanced communicative environment through questioning and evaluation, which will allow students to become more active participants in the process. It was established that oral self-efficacy and learning motivation of students could be improved with the help of the high-quality interaction, thus supporting their long-term development of the language [6]. The input interaction output integrated teaching model suggested by Yu Anting [2] serves as a feasible avenue that teachers can utilize to optimize classroom design. Furthermore, Xin [5] indicated that teachers in different regions should flexibly adapt to students' individual differences to achieve teaching equity and provide personalized support. On the whole, efficient classroom interaction would not only help students to improve their knowledge of the language, but also prompts teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and innovate in the classroom. This provides new insights for promoting the high-quality development of primary school English education.

4. Conclusion

This study takes primary school English classrooms as its research focus and explores the role of classroom interaction in students' oral proficiency development during second language acquisition. The findings of the research show that the high-quality classroom interaction effectively promotes students' language input, meaning negotiation, and language output of the students, which increases their ability to orally express and motivation to learn. The instructional design that relies on input hy-

pothesis, interaction hypothesis, and output hypothesis has good theoretical foundation of classroom interaction. In the meantime, it has been demonstrated in practice that strategies like task-based teaching, peer collaboration, and teacher positive feedback have been proven effective. It is impossible to only enhance the quality of language production through classroom interaction, but also enhances their self-efficacy and communication confidence, which is extremely important to maximize the teaching mode of primary school English.

Nonetheless, this research also has some shortcomings. To begin with, it only takes the primary school stage as a sample, so the results may not be fully applicable to middle school, high school, or other learner groups. Secondly, the works are primarily based on literature and case study and cannot be empirically proven. Future studies can conduct large-scale classroom observations and quantitative analyses across different educational stages and regions to further explore the long-term impact of classroom interaction on language development. In brief, interaction in classrooms can be continuously enriched and widely extended in teaching English at primary school. Its maximization does not only help to enrich the general enhancement of language skills of students, but it also points to a sustainable direction for teaching reforms in the future.

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