



Input-Output Hypothesis: Using Animation Cartoons in The ELT Classrooms to Produce Comprehensible Outputs in English

Maqsood P

Assistant Professor
MEASS, Areacode.

&

Ashhar M Mansoor

Faculty of English.
Maldives.

ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades much has been written and theorized about ELT classroom practices. Any classroom practice is to be judged on the basis of its effectiveness. Effectiveness of any classroom practice depends on the ability of the method to meaningfully engage with the students. The question of appeal of the teaching practice on the students becomes all the more crucial when it comes to teaching younger students, whose attention span is much low as compared to that of elder people. In this paper, an attempt has been made to address the above stated problems by proposing a truly innovative method of teaching younger students of English. Input-Output Hypothesis, the proposed method is an attempted improvement of Stephan Krasahen's "Input Hypothesis". Krashen's apparent neglecting of the production of output in the classroom has been criticized by many. The proposed method considers production of comprehensible output in English as important as providing linguistic input. For this purpose, the method proposes making use of short and silent animation cartoons in the classroom. Given the interest of the young minds in animation cartoons, the method stands most chances of meaningfully engaging the learners. Using cartoons, students may be easily encouraged to comment on the cartoon, its summary, its theme and other aspects thereby preparing a platform for students to produce comprehensible outputs in English.

Keywords: Input-Output Hypothesis, animation cartoons, comprehensible outputs

No language could be effectively taught or acquired unless the learner is given ample opportunities to use the target language in purposeful situations. Meaningful and purposeful use of the language alone could make an ELT classroom effective to its core. This idea of second language teaching, indeed, calls for a constructivist, collaborative and participatory approach to the second language teaching. This paper proposes a unique constructivist method of second language teaching assisted by the use of attractive electronic mediators in the form of cartoons, preferably silent and short, that seeks to encourage the learner to make his/her own "comprehensible outputs" in the form of critical appreciation of the cartoon, in



the second language. The method, as such, could be effectively used in both schools and higher education centres. In the former it may be extremely useful in simulating an environment where the learners might feel the need to speak or write about the shown piece that would, undoubtedly, facilitate an unconscious acquisition of the target language. In the colleges and other higher educational institutions, the method can be effectively used to polish the ability of the learners to produce meaningful and logically framed outputs in the target language.

The proposed method is in congruence with the contemporary scholarship in the field of second language teaching. The method is specially designed to overcome the frequently raised criticism about the second language learning/teaching theories of Stephan Krashen who in 1980s laid out the basic principles of second language teaching/learning. Before moving ahead with the proposed method first I seek to make an account for why we have to take a conscious break from the acquisition-learning paradigm proposed by Krashen. Krashen, though laid out the basic principles of second language learning theories tended to overlook the importance of both conscious learning and vital part played by the actual use of the language to produce what Merrill Swain(1985) called comprehensible “outputs”. But this is not to overlook the importance of Krashen’s “input-hypothesis” that still remains a central concept in the theories of second language learning.

Krashen’s Input-hypothesis.

For Krashen, comprehensible input which he considers as “the necessary and sufficient condition for language learning” is all that is needed for foreign language or any other language learning. Comprehensible input is defined as the amount or level of language that the students can fully understand, plus new language that is slightly beyond their abilities but made comprehensible through context and embedding new language in previously learned language. Thus Krashen’s Input-Hypothesis is an eloquent advocate of the maximum use of the target language in the classroom as “inputs”. Instead of simply speaking about the language a teacher should speak in the language to be used both as a vehicle and content of instruction.

The Need to Go Beyond Krashen’s Input-Hypothesis

Krashen’s concept of second language teaching has considerably shaped the modern practices in the second language class rooms. But at the same time it has also been widely criticized for its apparent neglect of the practical use of the target language by the learners. Many of the contemporary scholars in the field have criticized Krashen for this reason. Merrill Swain, for example has argued that along with input, learners should be provided ample opportunities to formulate comprehensible outputs. In such an environment, argues Merrill, learners are required to imagine about what they want to convey, identify the chasm between what they can say and what they want



to say before vocalizing them—a chain of conscious actions that is necessary to improve one's linguistic competence. It is in this context that the proposed method becomes crucial as it could, possibly, bridge the identified drawback in Krashen's hypothesis.

Using Cartoons To Encourage The Learners To Produce Comprehensible “Outputs”.

Cartoons could be effectively used to encourage the learners to produce comprehensible outputs in the target language. Of all other electronic and non-electronic mediators, cartoons hold a the distinct virtue of having an immediate effect on the young learners. While choosing the cartoons, special care must be given to choose only shorter cartoons with maximum fifteen minutes length. Apart from the time, one should also try to choose only the ones that would keep the interest of the young minds, compelling enough to make the learners enthusiastically respond in the discussions that follow the screening.

Putting the Idea to Practice-Steps

- Selecting a cartoon that best suits the purpose. The cartoon animation should be so chosen that they are short, preferably silent and compelling enough to force the learners to participate in the further steps.
- Screening the cartoon on wide screen in its full length.
- Initiate discussions on the animation. One might initiate different discussions on the cartoon, on theme, on form, on the setting, etc...
- One specific method that might prove to be particularly effective might be to show the students only half the cartoon or up to the climax and then ask the learners to imagine the rest of the story. This method may be extremely useful in improving the creative use of the language.
- Throughout the session students must be given ample scaffolding and reinforcements to bring out the best in them.
- While initiating discussion, the teacher should be wise and flexible enough to shift his/her gear as the situation demands.
- Teacher should try to ensure the full participation of all students.
- To ensure free and natural flow of discussion, teacher should not allow his own opinions to set the course of discussion.
- Apart from discussions, teacher should also give activities that would enable the learners to improve their writing skills.
- Teacher should recognize the fact that students would better enjoy activities that demand creative imagination than critical enquiry and accordingly arrange the activities.



Advantages of The Method

The Input-output Hypothesis as proposed in this paper is unique in its ability to keep the learners completely engaged in the learning activities. This method seeks to take full advantage of the fact that animation cartoons as an electronic mediator has a special appeal to the young minds. Hence the method is in congruence with the modern theories of teaching practices as it ensures a constructivist, collaborative and participatory approach to the teaching and learning practices. The fun of watching interesting animation cartoons and in process learning the language is consistent with modern play-way method of learning. The relatively stress-free and play-way method of learning is also consistent with Krashen's concept of affective filtering that suggests that the learner's ability to grasp and learn is likely to be constrained when he/she is under pressure or experiencing any kind of negative emotions like embarrassment. The play-way method creates the necessary emotional and affective state that would ensure unconscious learning of the language.

Works Cited

Krashen, S.D. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Permogon: Oxford, 1981.Print.

Krashen, S.D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* . Permogon: Oxford, 1982.Print.

Swain, Merril. *Language Issues and Education Policies: Exploring Canada's Multilingual Resources*.Toronto: Janus Book Publications, 1985.