



A Study on the Effect of *China Daily* on Improving College Students' Language Competence

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Abstract

English newspaper reading is effective, feasible and sustainable and is an indispensable carrier to improve students' language literacy. English newspapers not only conform to the laws of language teaching, learning and acquisition, but also can cultivate learners' interests and introduce them to a wonderful world beyond books and textbooks. Therefore, in the process of second language acquisition, it is particularly important to introduce newspaper reading into the classroom and cultivate students' autonomous reading of newspapers and magazines. At present, in terms of English reading, college students mainly rely on teachers' guidance and analysis in class, while extracurricular reading remains at the reading comprehension level. How to use English newspapers to improve college students' language literacy is a question that educators should further consider. *China Daily* has always been a choice by teachers and students because of its authoritativeness, interest and rich content. Therefore, based on Krashen's theory of "language acquisition-learning hypothesis" and "input hypothesis", this paper analyzes the characteristics of "*China Daily*" and further explores how to use *China Daily* to enhance students' interest in reading and promote the improvement of college students' language competence.

Subject Areas

Linguistics, Literature

Keywords

Second Language Acquisition, Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, *China Daily*, Language Competence

1. Introduction

“*The English Teaching Guide for College Students 2020*” (hereinafter referred to as Teaching Guide) puts forward specific requirements for college students’ English learning. The “Teaching Guide” is divided into three levels: foundation, improvement and development, and gives a general description of the goals of college English teaching and a single description of five basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. The Guide proposes that language is the carrier and component of culture, and students learn and master English as a communication tool. In addition to learning, and exchanging advanced science and technology and professional information, students should also understand the social culture at home and abroad, enhance the understanding of different cultures, the awareness of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and cultivate cross-cultural communication skills [1]. The skills mentioned in this guide cannot be developed in the classroom alone. What is more important is whether students are willing to read independently after class. Krashen, an American linguist, proposed that language acquisition can only be achieved when learners are exposed to a large number of comprehensible inputs. Textbooks are time-sensitive, and their design and content do not change over time. From the practical effect, English newspapers can make up for this point. English newspapers and periodicals have various types, extensive contents, strong timeliness and high practicability. With the continuous input of effective language, the knowledge received by students can also be activated and applied to other aspects of English learning, such as listening, writing, etc. Therefore, the effect of newspaper reading is sustainable and feasible.

The application and improvement of students’ language ability is a long process. It is necessary to fully understand and use the methods of second language acquisition to mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of students. Newspapers are an important source of information, and reading English newspapers is the best choice for effective language input. By reading newspapers and periodicals, students can not only increase their knowledge and improve their language ability, but also enhance their cultural identity and open their international vision. As an English newspaper with Chinese characteristics, *China Daily* is not only a medium for China to show itself to the outside world, but also a window for the world to understand China. It can provide various resources for college students’ English learning and is also an important tool to enhance their language competence.

Under the requirement of the Teaching Guide, college students’ knowledge reserve and English reading level need to be improved, so for college students, newspaper reading is essential. When students read *China Daily*, they are not only learning authentic Western expressions, but also importing authentic expressions of traditional culture. This is not reflected in other newspapers. Therefore, this paper takes college students as the research object, and according

to Krashen's language acquisition theory, chooses *China Daily*, which is closer to college students' English learning and more conducive to college students' export of Chinese and foreign culture, for analysis.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The theory of second language acquisition (SLA) came into being in the 1970s and 1980s. Its formation and development coincided with the rapid development of the world economy. During this period, people's demand for foreign languages reached an unprecedented level in history. Therefore, the theory of second language acquisition has also developed rapidly with the development of social economy. The research on second language acquisition has been relatively short, but a large number of scholars in the field of second language acquisition theory research have emerged, such as Krashen, Pinker, Ellis, Cummins, etc. They have made their respective contributions to the construction of the second language acquisition theoretical system, or to the revision and supplement of the theory, making the second language acquisition theory have a relatively complete system.

Among many scholars and theoretical schools, Krashen and his second language acquisition theory are the most influential. Krashen's lifelong research on second language acquisition has earned him a worldwide reputation. Krashen is credited with introducing various influential concepts and terms in the study of second language acquisition, including the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the affective filter, and the natural order hypothesis.

2.2. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis and the Input Hypothesis

This paper based on the acquisition-learning hypothesis and the input hypothesis.

Acquisition-learning hypothesis: "Acquisition" is a subconscious process, which is the result of the natural communication of paying attention to meaning [2]. Children's acquisition of their mother tongue is such a process. The acquired language system is located in the language area of the left hemisphere of the brain, which is the basis of spontaneous language use. The opposite is "learning", which is a conscious process, that is, through classroom teachers' teaching and supplemented by conscious practice, memory and other activities, to achieve the understanding of the language learned and the "mastery" of its grammatical concepts. Krashen proposed that only "acquisition" can directly promote the development of second language ability and is the production mechanism when people use language.

Input hypothesis: Krashen deems that Language acquisition can occur only when the learner is exposed to "comprehensive input", that is, second language input that is slightly above his current level of language skills, and he is able to

focus on the understanding of meaning or information rather than the understanding of form [3]. This is his famous $i + 1$ formula.

“ i ” represent the current level of the learner.

“ $i + 1$ ” represents language materials slightly higher than the current level of the learner.

This input of $i + 1$ does not need to be provided intentionally. If the learner can understand the input and has enough quantity, he will automatically provide this input.

We can conclude from the theory that “acquisition” is an important driving force to promote language development. To promote the acquisition, the first is to stimulate the interest of students, to achieve the purpose of independent learning, only limited to the classroom learning is far from enough. Then, a large amount of comprehensible language input will promote language acquisition. Based on above, we can find the important role that the English Newspaper can play. In the process of independent reading, students are exposed to the use of English language, the processing of language structure and the mastery of language knowledge, so as to achieve the purpose of language acquisition.

3. The Role of *China Daily* under the Guidance of Krashen’s Theory

3.1. Features of *China Daily*

In the process of second language acquisition, we emphasize more the importance of the cultural background of English-speaking countries, but it is easy to ignore the positive role of domestic culture. Krashen believes that learners need to consolidate their learning through output while receiving a lot of language input. In the face of college CET-4 and CET-6, college students are often unable to better export because of the lack of understanding of their traditional culture, resulting in the phenomenon of “Chinese cultural aphasia”. *China Daily*, founded in 1995, is the earliest national English website in China. Now it has become a national comprehensive media website and the most influential English portal in China. As the most authoritative English newspaper in China, it is committed to telling Chinese stories well, adhering to the innovation-driven concept of “content is the king”.

Taking magazine-based in-depth analysis as the cornerstone of reporting, *China Daily* has interpreted China’s Vientiane and commented on world events. After more than 30 years of development, *China Daily* has developed various media platforms such as newspaper, website, Twitter, Weibo and e-newspaper. The language of *China Daily* is authentic, and the text genres are diverse, mostly on science and technology, politics, culture and other topics. Its content has strong timeliness and is close to students’ life. Daily push with graphic explanation and fresh language is easier to stimulate students’ interest in reading. In order to meet the needs of readers, *China Daily* not only jointly established a mobile newspaper with China Mobile, but also set up a WeChat public account,

providing a new platform for English learning in the mobile information age. In this environment, students are more likely to acquisition rather than be forced to learn.

3.2. The Influence of *China Daily* on Second Language Acquisition

Krashen believes that the ideal “Input” should have the following characteristics and the case analysis of this study will be interpreted according to the following characteristics.

1) Comprehensiveness. Understanding the input language material is a necessary condition for language acquisition. Incomprehensible input is just a kind of noise for learners. Searching the *China Daily* public account, we can find that it not only sets up a full English version for students with high English level, but also sets up the *China Daily* bilingual news public account. All articles in the public account are accompanied by detailed Chinese explanations and English translations. Bilingual news can not only help learners fully understand the content and meaning of the article, but also enable college students with different English levels to better input the language. For example: The latest push was introduced “What are China’s two sessions”. The article first introduces in Chinese what the two sessions are and why China holds the two sessions. Then the English translation highlights the abbreviation and full name of the two sessions. To some extent it undoubtedly reduces the difficulty of text understanding. Bilingual journalism fully helps students to understand the material, while consolidating the expression of political themes and understanding of domestic events. As Krashen said, comprehensible input leads to language acquisition.

2) Interesting and relevant. In order to make language input beneficial to language acquisition, its meaning must be processed. The more interesting and relevant the input language materials are, the learners will acquire language unconsciously. For example, the news in *China Daily* shows “Chinese Mahjong is a Causal game and now is Popular in the United States”. Interesting topics closely related to life can attract students to read more. And a glossary of professional terms is attached at the end of the article to expand students’ vocabulary, such as: “麻将 mahjong” “花牌 flower titles” “清一色 all of one suit” and so on. These words are not accessible in daily learning but can be understood in detail in *China Daily*. Mahjong is a well-known pastime in China and is now popular abroad as well. Through reading this news students can not only understand the spread of Chinese culture, but also inspire their pride. It also allows students to learn how to express the entertainment project, and virtually increases the language knowledge. Not only that, but *China Daily* will also push a short news in each solar term, conveying the English expression of the solar term, along with a very distinctive Chinese poetry. For college students, they would be more willing to pick up their mobile phones and study these interesting topics every day, rather than constantly staring at a large English article.

3) Should be enough input. To acquire a new language structure, it is not

enough to just rely on a few exercises and a few short articles. It requires continuous and interesting extensive reading and a large number of conversations to be effective. In the current era of digital economy, digital reading has become a fashion, mobile reading has become people's first choice, reading is not only limited to text reading, but also can be a full range of audio-visual enjoyment in the form of listening to books, video explanation, VR immersion experience [4]. Compared with the access and limitations of traditional paper books, *China Daily* electronic books are more convenient, with audio and graphics, so that students can learn listening, speaking, reading and writing anytime and anywhere.

4. Results and Discussion

In General, under the theory of second language acquisition, *China Daily* can improve students' language competence in different aspects.

4.1. Increase Students' Vocabulary and Enhance Their Understanding of Vocabulary Context

In terms of vocabulary, D. A. Wikins, a famous British linguist, attaches great importance to vocabulary teaching. He said, "Without grammar, people can express very few things, and without vocabulary, they can't convey anything" (Mussen PH, 1983). For college students, it is very troublesome to search for words constantly, which will not only increase the reading time but also increase the reading pressure. The bilingual news and accompanying new word interpretation provided by *China Daily* solve this problem well. The convenience of reading on mobile phones allows people to save and consolidate screenshots at any time. However, in terms of vocabulary, it is necessary to master the amount of vocabulary, but also to master the pragmatic background of vocabulary.

China Daily has not only played a role in helping students accumulate vocabulary, but also explained the cultural background of vocabulary on the "Bilingual Encyclopedia" column of the public account. For example, "the different between Chinese long and the Western dragon". "long" is an auspicious totem for China, while in the West, the prototype of the dragon is a monster with huge wings that can breathe fire. It further explains the concept of "亚洲四小龙", which was popular in the economic circle in the 1990s. The English expression is "four tigers" rather than "four dragons."

4.2. Lay a Foundation for Students to Accumulate Translation Materials

There are two types: Component heads and text heads. In terms of translation: From the examination questions in recent years, it can be seen that the translation questions in college CET-4 and CET-6 tend to express and spread traditional Chinese culture. For example, the translation content of the CET-6 in 2023 involves such representative historical figures as "Xu Xiake", "Zhang Qian" and "Zheng He". In December 2022, the translation themes are: "Beginning of

Spring”, “Winter Solstice”, “Beginning of Autumn”; in September are “Opera”, “lucky money” and “Tai Chi”. All these translations with Chinese elements, if students do not accumulate in the usual reading, they will feel helpless in the exam. These elements are often mentioned in the news of *China Daily*. It only takes a few minutes a day of browsing to accumulate translation material. Just like the solar terms mentioned before are translated in the news.

4.3. Keep Up with Hot Topics to Improve Students' Writing Skills

Both language learning and acquisition require a certain degree of output. Therefore, the lack of output is a major problem in college students' writing [5]. Many students do not know how to write because they are afraid of writing and lack of material accumulation. Writing should pay attention not only to vocabulary, translation, but also to keep up with current events, understand the current political, economic, hot topics.

China Daily has a wide range of materials, so that college students can find their own interest in the first time to learn about the topic. It is not only a global news “encyclopedia”, but also a good partner on the road to English learning, whether it is the domestic hot movies and TV plays, social hot spots, or international music trends, it can provide you with the latest cultural trends. The writing techniques of various text types are involved. Students can use it in their own writing. Only by solving students' concerns in this respect can students be better encouraged to export.

5. Conclusion

In short, the requirement of language competence for college students today is no longer to master basic language knowledge, but to improve language ability, and have a global mind and a broad vision. It is essential for college students to understand both their own country and the culture of English-speaking countries. The choice of a foreign journal determines the effect of language input and the result of language acquisition. Therefore, when choosing foreign journal texts, we should not only pay attention to whether the content is suitable for college students, but also whether the content adheres to the correct political direction, carries forward the excellent human culture, and cultivates students' positive and healthy world outlook and values. So, we should make it clear that *China Daily* plays an active role in college students' English learning.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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