



# A Study of the Application of the Krashen's Input Hypothesis in Middle School English Reading Teaching

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## Abstract

This study systematically demonstrates the pedagogical perspective of the Input Hypothesis proposed by Krashen, focusing on the teaching of English reading in junior middle schools. A close reading of the central tenets of the hypothesis and a thorough analysis of current English reading teaching in schools reveal common problems with reading materials and instructional techniques. The problems are that they fail to motivate students, cultivate their interest in learning English, and foster their passions in different cultures. These observational studies show that how the input hypothesis itself improves students' reading comprehension, their interests in learning English, and their passion towards different cultures. Based on these findings, a number of suggestions will help teachers improve their reading teaching, which not only develops learners' language acquisition skills, but also strengthens their life-long learning skills. It is hoped that this study can provide some implications and intonations for junior middle school English reading teaching.

## Keywords

Krashen's Input Hypothesis; middle school; reading teaching; effective teaching strategies

## 1. Introduction

In the situation of globalization, the English language becomes indispensable as the international language of communication. Superb reading skills in English will not only open up for students the vast treasure of knowledge, but also serve as a foundation for their future academic and career pursuits. But nowadays, the situation of the teaching of reading in English at the junior middle school level has lots of difficulties. Grammar and vocabulary tend to be at the center stage of traditional teaching methods, with little consideration for training students on genuine reading skills and comprehension. Such means could bring about a situation where students tend to have some language knowledge, but, on the other hand, do not know how to use it effectively in the actual process of reading. Thus, to improve quality in the teaching of reading English at the junior middle school, we need to introduce effective teaching theories and methods that will adequately address the problem.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate in detail how applicable and effective, in light of Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the teaching of English reading in junior middle school. With the insight from this hypothesis, the teachers may have

to modify their mode of English reading instruction by providing more meaningful and comprehensible language input. Such changes would hopefully not only enhance general reading comprehension but also help to instill a spirit of interest and enthusiasm for learning English among the students.

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

The impact of this research blades from the possibilities of offering practical inspiration to empowered English teachers to use the best methods in designing their instructional initiative and teaching sessions. Teachers would provide students with an environment that can foster their language acquisition and development, contributing to the entire course of reading instruction in English through the principal strategy of input hypothesis.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Krashen posited that comprehensible input is a basis for previous language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Comprehensible input means that learners can depend on their contextual prior knowledge. For middle school students, when reading English, this means texts that should not be too easy or too difficult to comprehend. Readers at this level of difficulty will be able to read with better comprehension, thus developing new vocabulary and grammatical structures and expanding their abilities to read the language. For instance, this is important because intermediate English learners might need their teachers to read texts containing new vocabulary and slightly more complex sentence structures in order to be optimally benefited with their language learning, yet with some additional model support from their peers and the teacher context.

### 2.2 The "i+1" Principle

At the center of the Input Hypothesis is the 'i+1' principle, in which 'i' denotes the student's existing knowledge of a language and 'i+1' indicates the next level of learning that he/she is prepared to attempt (Krashen, 1983). This principle stresses the need to develop lessons on a more individualized basis according to students' levels of language proficiency. In liberal English reading instructions for junior middle school, the teachers must select the reading materials and design activities a little beyond their students' levels. This maintains the balance of not allowing the children to become discouraged while feeling challenged to proceed with their learning. In case some sentence structures and some vocabulary have been mastered, the teachers can employ texts with more advanced grammar and wider specific vocabulary for teaching, offering various supports and encouragements that help the students to narrow the learning gap.

### 2.3 The Role of Affective Factors in Language Learning

Krashen highlights again the crucial and cardinal roles of affective factors in language acquisition. These affective filters are psychological barriers possibly operating to either assist or prevent language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). In other words, affective filters will lower when children are comfortable and securely living in their environments. Negative environments such as those weighing heavily on students stir up the affective filters and impede the accelerated path of language acquisition development. Teachers in middle school English reading classes have many opportunities to promote warmth, acceptance, and support through positive feedback, recognition of children's efforts, and the use of appropriate instructional materials. For instance, teachers should give students constructive comments and encouragement if they make mistakes while reading aloud or answering question-comprehension questions. Such practices reduce stress and help students become better learners.

## 3. Relevant Studies at Home and Abroad

### 3.1 Foreign Studies

Krashen's input hypothesis was attracted abroad as well as at home. Foreign scholars have also carried out a good number of investigations into the various aspects concerning this hypothesis. For example, Brevik (2014) described the practical application of appropriate reading comprehension strategies by junior middle school English teachers in language teaching strategies. Guo (2022) underlined the significant roles of background knowledge and situation in second language acquisition. Ellis (1994) made a huge contribution to the understanding of the second language acquisition theory in his writings, which ranged into language teaching. Gass (1988) also did extensive work on second language research, language input, interaction, and its resultant effect on language acquisition.

## 3.2 Domestic Studies

In China, there is also some active research related to this area. For instance, Li (2016) undertook a study for the WOS Database that comprehensively analyzed the research into Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory, thus documenting the development and state of the theory with regard to the academic world. Apart from this, Krashen's theory is applied in varied teaching situations, such as examination into its usage in junior middle school English reading teaching, through which to look into enhancing students' reading comprehension and language acquisition with appropriate input and teaching methods (Ye, 2018). This extends one's scope of understanding of Krashen's Input Hypothesis, while at the same time providing one with practical assistance in the field of foreign language teaching.

## 4. Summary and Comment Based on the Previous Research and Gap-finding

### 4.1 Summary of Previous Research

Earlier research has provided valid insights into Krashen's Input Hypothesis for teaching English reading to middle school students. These studies consistently emphasized the role of comprehensible input in fostering language acquisition and improving reading proficiency. They also focused on the effects of instructional methods and reading materials on promoting students' reading proficiency.

### 4.2 Research Gaps

Despite the existing research on the application of Krashen's Input Hypothesis to the English reading teaching in junior middle schools, there are still several significant gaps.

#### 4.2.1 Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors

While previous studies have examined this hypothesis within several different contexts, there are very few studies that offer an in-depth exploration of its adaptation to specific cultural and educational contexts in different regions of the world. For example, the learning styles and expectations of students in a Chinese cultural context must be altogether different from those that are originally developed in the Western context. Therefore, the need to further explore how the implementation of this input hypothesis can be modified so that it will mesh with the values, beliefs, and educational traditions of various cultures with the least loss of its core principles. This would help to adapt the approaches of teaching so that a teacher better understands the receptivity of students coming from different regional cultures to various types of comprehensible input.

Another area that has yet to be explored is the impact of economic differences on the application of the input hypothesis to English reading instruction in middle schools. Such resource differences might include reading materials, technology, and educational support for students because they come from different backgrounds. So, further research is needed to find out how those differences operationalize themselves in relation to middle school reading teaching in English and how to ensure that whatever implementation of the input hypothesis takes place in English reading teaching gives equal opportunity to middle class and lower-class students.

#### 4.2.2 Individual Student Variability

Some students are visual learners, some auditory learners, and yet others kinesthetic learners, and while the assumption inherent in the 'i + 1' principle of input does consider these varying abilities of the students, it does not treat the issue of individual learning styles. Nowhere in the present research is there anything on how various learning styles might be integrated into hypothetical applications aimed at offering the most efficient and comprehensible input to each respective student. For instance, how could multimedia resources be matched to suit various learning styles while complying with the input hypothesis?

#### 4.2.3 Long-term Study

While some research has provided evidence that students' reading skills can be improved in the short run within a few short months following the application of the input hypothesis, very few longitudinal studies suggest the continued sustenance of such improvements. The question remains whether such improvements in other areas, including reading comprehension and vocabulary expansion, will continue longer in the years later, namely throughout high school and college. The research gap is therefore for longitudinal studies that track students' development of reading during a more extended period of higher motivation to find out if the application of the input hypothesis has had a lasting effect on students' reading skills.

#### **4.2.4 Teachers' Training**

While teacher training is recognized as a very critical requirement for the successful implementation of input hypothesis, relevant studies on the development of a suitable and comprehensive training program for the hypothesis are virtually non-existent. Most teacher training programs are only introductory to the input hypothesis, and hence teachers are not fully familiar with the hypothesis in action. Teacher training must therefore include research to deduce a program that will cover all aspects of the hypothesis concerning the valid assessment of students' ability, selection of relevant reading materials, and effective pedagogical approaches, more so to tackle the various challenges or misconceptions teachers might have.

### **5. Current Situation of Middle School English Reading Teaching**

#### **5.1 Analysis of the Quality of Reading Materials**

##### **5.1.1 Student Perspectives on Reading Material**

Surveys of students' opinion show that few reading materials that the students are interested in. They find that current textbooks seldom give topics capable of engaging their minds. A number of students proposed increasing the integration of popular culture references, such as film, music, and news events, to make the reading material more relevant and engaging (Zhao, 2016). Also, they felt that sometimes the reading materials were too high and too low in difficulty, which made it hard to be fully connected to the selection read. They felt that it should be more personalized according to their interests and levels of proficiency (Wang, 2020).

##### **5.1.2 Teachers' Perspectives on Reading Material**

Teachers are equally aware of the necessity for quality reading materials. But, limited choices of textbooks and the rigors of the curriculum usually constrain them to face a plethora of challenges. Several teachers have indicated that existing textbooks do not generally contain enough practice or variety in the kinds of reading activities. They suggested supplementing textbooks with additional materials, such as graded readers, news articles, and even short stories, thus exposing students to a broader range of language and topics (Wang, 2020). Furthermore, teachers stressed the urgent need for more materials that would allow students to build critical thinking and reading strategies instead of simply focusing them on vocabulary and grammar.

#### **5.2 Teaching Methods and Their Effectiveness**

##### **5.2.1 Traditional Teaching Methods**

In current junior middle schools, teachers tend to use a traditional teaching method, where teacher-centered ways dominate with an overwhelming emphasis on grammar explanations and vocabulary exercises. The teacher usually reads the text aloud, with first an explanation of difficult words and a pausing of lines by paragraphs with comprehension questions to be presented to students. These methods may not provide students with an opportunity to develop their reading skills or critical thinking, as there is no active engagement with the text and the students become passive learners—a case in which the teachers provide answers to the questions rather than helping them interpret the text for themselves (Liu, 2020).

##### **5.2.2 Innovative Teaching Methods**

To increase the reading instruction effectiveness, a teacher began to employ some active and innovative techniques in their classrooms starting in recent years. Multimedia resources, such as videos, audio recordings, and online interactive platforms, have taken several fronts within classrooms in the recent past. These resources could give students good background and cultural contexts for their reading materials, thus improving their comprehension and interest (Zhu, 2023). Furthermore, some group work and cooperative learning have entered teaching and learning activities, thus promoting discussion and analysis of texts among students and facilitating peer learning and communication skills. However, the implementation of these strategies is not widespread and many teachers still grapple with the balance of traditional versus innovation.

### **6. Application of Krashen's Input Hypothesis in Middle School English Reading Teaching**

#### **6.1 Selecting Appropriate Reading Materials**

##### **6.1.1 Consistent with Student Proficiency**

To ensure that the considerations are implemented, there has to be considerable thoughtfulness in the selection of the reading texts for instruction that lie above the current proficiency level of the students. This may be done either through

a levelling scheme or via diagnostic testing to establish the status of individual students. Such reading material for beginning students could be simple picture books or short stories with elementary vocabulary and structure. However, textual complexity may increase and wider ranges of vocabulary and syntax gradually coming into play as students move ahead; These create a sense of ongoing challenge, allowing for the continued development of student reading skill (Wang, 2014).

### **6.1.2 Incorporating Interesting and Relevant Topics**

Apart from choosing materials with appropriate difficulty levels, reading materials must be positive and related to students' life experiences. Teachers could opt for topics concerning the students' hobbies, interests, and aspirations. For instance, if the students are interested in sports, articles about famous athletes or sporting events can be selected. This not only will enhance the motivation of the students to read a particular piece of material but will also provide connections between what they are being exposed to in language learning and their own experiences to help them remember and understand (Krashen, 1982).

## **6.2 Adopting Effective Teaching Methods**

### **6.2.1 Scaffolding Instruction**

Scaffolding instruction is a key strategy for implementing the input hypothesis. Teachers can provide support and guidance to students while they are reading, and gradually withdraw those supports as students become more adept. For teaching English reading to junior middle school students, scaffolding instruction may enjoy pre-reading activities. Examples include recalling and reviewing knowledge from the initial lesson and introducing the basic vocabulary. During the reading stage, guiding questions and comprehension cues could be added. Finally, teachers would summarize and discuss the text in post-reading activities. The procedure of organizing instruction provides students with an opportunity to more easily access and begin to comprehend input (Li & Peng, 2016).

### **6.2.2 Promoting Interaction and Collaboration**

The interaction and collaboration of junior middle school students in reading classes contribute to the input and experience of learning. From the teachers, preparation in organizing group discussions, pair work, and task-based activities will allow students to interact and collaborate with each other. Through these activities, students can be exposed to views and interpretations with texts that can broaden their scope of understanding and promote critical thinking. The peer feedback and support will help students to enhance their reading skills and build confidence (Krashen, 1985).

## **6.3 Cultivating a Positive Learning Environment**

### **6.3.1 Reducing Affective Filter**

The teacher should keep down the emotional filters to create a positive learning environment. Emotional filters of learners would diminish through quality relationships with the learners built on trust, positive reinforcement, and respect for individual differences. The classroom climate must be threat-free, allowing students to feel safe in making mistakes and taking risks. For example, when a student is struggling with a reading task, instead of criticizing, the teacher can extend reassurance and guidance to help take anxiety off the student and build self-confidence to accomplish a task (Krashen, 1982).

### **6.3.2 Incorporating Cultural Elements**

The infusion of cultural elements into English reading teaching contributes to the positive atmosphere for English learning by the junior middle schools. Teachers are expected to introduce the cultural background and cultural values of the reading material, which help students understand the background and meaning of the text. This not only enhances students' world view, but also their emotions of cultural awareness and competences for communication with other cultures. For example, when the teacher is teaching a piece about a foreign festival, he/she can explain some customs surrounding the festival, compare them with those of Chinese culture, as well as provide opportunities for students to share Chinese cultural customs with foreigners (Wang, 2020).

## **7. Suggestions for Further Research and Application in School**

### **7.1 Suggestions for Further Research**

#### **7.1.1 Impact on Long-term Assessment**

Longitudinal studies could possibly better be conducted. Further studies could then involve a cohort of students being followed from middle school through to middle school and possibly even university over a long period of time.

Researchers could observe changes in the development of their English reading skills through the years. This would include routine and detailed assessments of reading comprehension and vocabulary development, as well as reading rate, to weigh against the data collected afterwards. In this manner, changes over time in reading skills, as formulated through the application of some input hypothesis, could be analyzed to answer questions about whether such improved reading can be maintained throughout the next transitions in school.

### **7.1.2 Impact on Academic Performance**

Further studies could attempt to demonstrate whether the application of input hypotheses does or does not correlate with general student achievement. One could explore whether reading skills in English acquired under the input hypothesis have any effects on performance in other subjects. For example, does improving reading comprehension in English lead to better performance in history, science, or social studies, which generally require reading comprehension of English material? These studies might provide useful clues by shedding light upon the vast educational implications under the assumptions of input hypothesis.

## **7.2 Suggestions for further Application in School**

### **7.2.1 Diverse Linguistic Foundations of Students**

Given the diversity of learners today, it has become essential for us to explore ways of modifying the input hypothesis to suit students with different linguistic backgrounds. For instance, language learners whose primary language is not English will have distinct learning patterns. Research could investigate whether comprehensible input can be delivered, based on their previous linguistic knowledge. This will likely include modification of reading materials, teaching strategies, and scaffolding suited to individual characteristics of students with varying language abilities.

Another area to investigate is input hypothesis application to students with learning disabilities or other specific needs within the context of English reading teaching. Research may assist in identifying strategies for ensuring that these students have access to comprehensible input that is appropriate and effective, selecting reading materials according to specific cognitive abilities, providing additional support through assistive technologies or specialized instructional techniques, and adapting the pace of instruction to their needs.

### **7.2.2 Technological Integration**

Future instructional applications will be able to elaborate on the manner in which input assumptions are used within these digital environments as technology grows and online learning platforms become widespread. Examine whether AI and ML algorithms can be designed to identify each individual student's learning profile, thus ensuring that reading instruction is personalized. For example, big data could study a student's reading and comprehension question-answering patterns, to dynamically align the appropriateness of the reading material and the type of personalized instruction provided.

Investigate the optimal combination of multimedia and interactive resources based on input assumptions. Explore how video, audio recordings, animations, and engaging exercises can be incorporated into the teaching of English reading to promote student comprehension and stimulate learners' motivation to learn while keeping them in a position of highly comprehensible input throughout the learning process.

### **7.2.3 Teacher Perception and Implementation**

Future applied research may focus on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding their use of the input hypothesis. Surveys and interviews were conducted with tenured school teachers to investigate their perception of input assumptions in their classrooms. It discusses the variability in how teachers actually use the input assumptions in their classroom—one approach is to analyze the different strategies and techniques that teachers may use in various schools and school districts. These techniques could help in structuring more effective teacher training programs addressing teachers' doubts and misconceptions and support teachers in accepting the pillars of the input hypothesis.

## **8. Conclusion**

### **8.1 Contributions of the Research**

Krashen Input Hypothesis has various contributions. Firstly, it presents the hypothesis as it is actually used in this context, linking theory to practice. While the above aspect discusses some of the major shortcomings of current teaching, such as unattractive materials and ineffective methods, it also brings to attention issues regarding material selection and teaching techniques, such as scaffolding. Finally, gaps in research have been identified in cultural factors, individual differences, long-term effects, and teacher training that should lead the direction for future investigations. Overall, it adds to the richness of current research and opens avenues for good teaching and further research.

## 8.2 Limitations of the Research

The size of the study sample might be very small and not adequately representative, nor will it count for differences in classroom situations or among various teacher competencies. There are multiple other possible distractions, outside the realm of actual teaching, that could affect the potential reliability of any results.

## 8.3 Suggestions for Teachers

For teachers, it is useful to select a proper diagnostic test to determine students' proficient level. Teachers can find some materials with simple words, pictures, or sentences for students who have just started to learn English. Moreover, these materials should be related to students' common interests like sports, news in order to enhance students' motivation. During the pre-reading part, teachers provide some relevant knowledge and basic vocabulary within the unit, which may prepare for the latter reading activities. During reading, teachers can offer some guiding questions and indications. Teachers can also add some scaffolding instructions in the pre-reading part based on the current competence of students. For instance, manifold tasks and discussion can help students acquire superb reading skills, with the help of teachers' aids and indications. In the post-reading stage, teachers can summarize the whole test, helping students to have a better understanding of the materials. What's more, it is a good way for teachers to organize group discussions, pair work, and task-based activities, which exposes students to diverse points of view, promotes students' critical thinking, and builds confidence through peer feedback. Additionally, teachers can create a relaxing learning environment, which is a good way to build trust with students, offer positive reinforcement, and respect individual differences. Teachers will make the classroom without threatening factors, letting students have the courage to take risks and learn from mistakes. Last but not least, it is high time that teachers compared students' local cultures with other foreign cultures for the sake of broadening students' worldviews and cultural awareness.

These valuable suggestions have been carefully studied and summarized practically, which can help teachers gain various teaching methods and diversified teaching strategies to offer a better education for students. Through the effective use of these suggestions, teachers can have a more accurate insight into the individual differences and actual needs of students, and then practically adapt depth of the teaching materials and other factors in the process of English reading teaching, so as to improve the overall quality of English reading teaching in an all-round way.

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