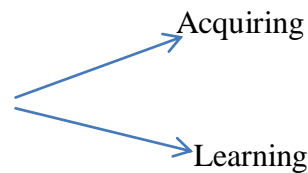


(M1- LS- CA) Lecture 4 SLA and Krashen’s Five Hypotheses

Krashen (1981, 1982, 2013) reiterates his five hypotheses on **Language Acquisition Theory**

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Two ways of developing ability in another language



Language acquisition occurs subconsciously > No conscious awareness in the process.
Language learning is a conscious process with grammar rules to be learned / practiced.

2. The Natural Order Hypothesis

Language is acquired in a predictable order though there might be individual variation.
Not necessarily simple rules come first: e.g. present progressive (to be + V^{ing}) more easily acquired than present simple (V____(s)): ‘I’m listening’ vs. ‘I listen’ . This might be an issue for curriculum designers if natural, meaningful interaction is not taken into account.

3. The Monitor Hypothesis

Krashen (1981:2) says “*The fundamental claim of Monitor Theory is that conscious learning is available to the performer only as a Monitor.*” The language we learn consciously is only available to us as a sort of ‘control’ (editor), that is, learned grammar rules have one function: monitoring or controlling, used consciously to correct errors (self-correction). Fluent and easy production of language, on the other hand, comes from acquisition. Using monitor is difficult as three rigorous conditions must be met: to know the rules, to think about correctness; to have time; this only occurs when language learners are taking a grammar test.

4. The Comprehension Hypothesis

Previously termed ‘Input Hypothesis’, the Comprehension Hypothesis addresses the question: ‘How do we acquire language?’ Krashen (2003:81) reminds us that “*Language acquisition is a subconscious process; while it is happening we are not aware that it is happening, and the competence developed this way is stored in the brain subconsciously.*” In other words, we acquire language simply when we understand (spoken but written as well). Krashen means that this hypothesis “*refers to subconscious acquisition, not conscious learning.*” (Krashen, 2004).

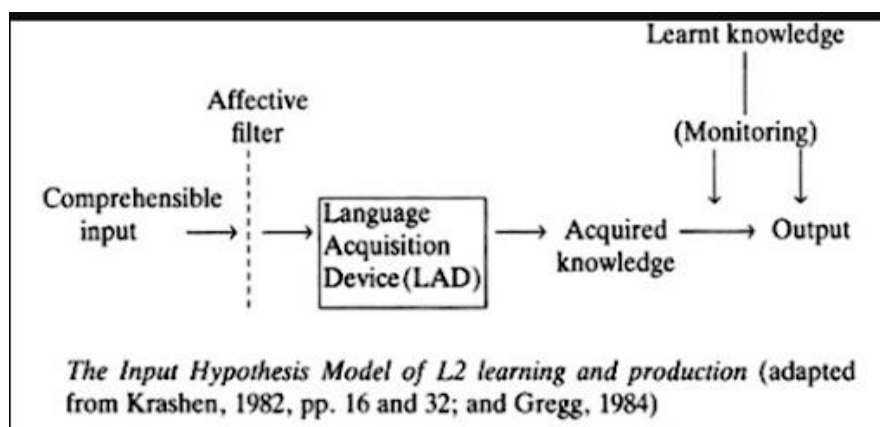
Another question that Krashen poses relates to how we move along the natural order of acquiring and understanding a language. According to the Input Hypothesis, L2 learners progress along the ‘natural order’ when they receive ‘input’ which is one-step beyond their current stage of linguistic competence; i.e., further acquisition will take place when a learner at stage ‘i’ is exposed to comprehensive input belonging to ‘i+1’. So, ‘comprehensible input’ is to be slightly beyond the current level of the learner’s competence. Krashen (2003) insists that “*we acquire language by input, not by output.*” and “*all that is necessary for language acquisition is input that is interesting and comprehensible.*”

But though Krashen believed there is no need for grammar-based lessons, he later on admitted that conscious learning of grammar rules may enhance acquisition and fill in some gaps in

the natural process of acquiring a language, even among native speakers. But again, he insists that such gaps are “are typically in aspects of language that do not affect communication of messages.”(Krashen 2004). On the other hand, the Comprehension Hypothesis, necessary for progress in second language acquisition, is tightly related to the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

5. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis*

This hypothesis was put forward by Krashen (1981, 1982) to account for the influence of affective factors on second language acquisition. These include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Low-esteem and high-level anxiousness coupled with lack of motivation will certainly act as hurdles, blocking learner’s potentiality in acquiring a second language. As Krashen says “*Affective variables prevent input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device.*” The acquisition will be smoother and quicker with high integrative motivation, high-esteem and a low degree of anxiety. Thus, not all learners are equally ‘open’ to the input!



Notes: Criticism - a few academic reactions to Krashen’s Monitor Model

Lightbown (1984, p.246): a combination of 'a linguistic theory (through its "natural order" hypothesis), social psychological theory (through its "affective filter" hypothesis), psychological learning theory (through its acquisition-learning hypothesis), discourse analysis and sociolinguistic theory (through both the comprehensible input hypothesis and the "monitor" hypothesis)'.

Mitchell & Myles (1998, p.126): 'The concepts of 'understanding' and 'noticing a gap' are not clearly operationalised, or consistently proposed; it is not clear how the learner's present state of knowledge ('i') is to be characterised, or indeed whether the 'i+1' formulation is intended to apply to all aspects of language, from lexis to phonology and syntax.'

Gregg (1984, p.94): 'each of Krashen's hypotheses is marked by serious flaws: undefinable or ill-defined terms, unmotivated constructs, lack of empirical content and thus of falsifiability, lack of explanatory power'

McLaughlin (1987, p.56): 'Krashen's theory fails at every juncture ... Krashen has not defined his terms with enough precision, the empirical basis of the theory is weak, and the theory is not clear in its predictions)

Ellis (1985, p.266): the Monitor Model 'poses serious theoretical problems regarding the validity of the 'acquisition-learning' distinction, the operation of Monitoring, and the explanation of variability in language-learner language'.

 * In 1983, Krashen published with Tracy Terrell *The Natural Approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*, which combined a comprehensive second language acquisition theory with a curriculum for language classrooms.

* Krashen, S.D. & Terrell, T.D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. London: Prentice Hall Europe.