

Krashen's Views: A Brief Look at Some SLA Problems

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Abstract – The present paper covers some theories put forward by Stephan Krashen, a great researcher in second language acquisition. Hypotheses such as the acquisition-learning, monitor hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, input hypothesis or the comprehensible output, the effective filter and the reading hypothesis. The mentioned theories are discussed in this paper and some agreements and disagreements are proposed.

Keywords: second language acquisition, comprehensible input, interaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a new field of study which has explored a lot despite its young age. A large number of studies have been carried out in this regard and numerous theories and hypotheses have been presented. All theories presented by different SLA researchers and teachers have been worthy of thought and consideration whereas the same theories only introduce new ideas without exploring the presented theory from different aspects. That is why there are a lot of hypotheses most of which take a superficial look at that issue. A researcher introduces a theory but the next day another researcher rejects that theory and says something new. If researchers tried to continue studying and searching about previously presented theories more deeply, they might have been able to present more practical and helpful ideas in this field.

2. KRASHEN'S THEORIES

Stephan Krashen has presented six famous theories which are as follows.

2.1. The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis

This theory differentiates between acquisition and learning. Krashen defines acquisition as a natural process which takes place when a person is exposed to enough language data or input. That person or language learner hears, sees and feels the language material around them when they watch TV, listen to the radio, walk on the streets, etc. Somehow that individual picks up the language naturally from the environment wherein they have been in touch with the language. However, when it comes to learning it reminds us of a class, a teacher and a lot of students who are listening to the teacher. According to Krashen,

learning happens in a limited and formal situation where students are aware of what they are being thought and how. Therefore Krashen means learning and acquisition are different because learning happens consciously but acquisition occurs unconsciously. This is a very controversial distinction. It is not that easy to separate learning from acquisition because when a student learns something deeply and very well we can say that student has acquired it and may never forget what has been learnt. Also when they acquire something perfectly it can be considered a kind of leaning. Therefore, this is the way of exposure to language materials which is different not what exactly happens in mind to store the information.

2.2. The Monitor Hypothesis

This theory also has to do with learning and acquisition but in another way. This theory introduces learning as a monitor which is always careful about what the language learner is saying. According to this theory language speakers use the language they have picked up from here and there while the learnt rules monitor the language uttered and it may lower the speed of that person's talk because they have to stop and think about what they are saying. This theory is not always true. Maybe language learners first think about what they are saying when they are at low levels of language classes but gradually this process turns into an automatic process in which the language speaker does not need to think about what they are saying. Actually they would think and speak simultaneously after practicing enough of that language. Stephen Krashen's Monitor Theory has provoked widespread interest and debate. Essentially it posits a distinction between *acquisition*, which is a natural process creating subconscious knowledge, and *learning*, which is formally learnt, conscious knowledge. No transfer is believed possible between learning and acquisition: "learning does not 'turn into' acquisition" (Krashen, 1982: p. 83). As it was mentioned by Krashen learning and acquisition are two different processes which never integrate.

2.2.1. Children and Monitoring

Children should not be Monitor users because successful learning requires the learner to have entered the formal operations stage of his cognitive development (Krashen, 1981): "significant Monitor use is only possible after the acquirer has undergone formal operations, a stage in cognitive development that generally occurs at about puberty" (Krashen, 1982: p. 44). This theory does not seem a fixed and always true theory because we cannot say all individuals are the same and need to reach the puberty age to find the ability to monitor what they say. Sometimes some children have a very high IQ which helps them have a high enough cognition to monitor their language ability which also happens simultaneously.

2.3. The Natural Order Hypothesis

This hypothesis focuses on difficulty levels of language materials in that some language parts like some grammatical rules and vocabulary are easier to learn while some others are more difficult and need more time or a higher level of cognition to be learnt. This

is confirmed by many teachers that for instance in different kinds of English course books, first of all simple present tense is thought and afterwards present continuous is focused on because it is easier to learn.

2.4. The Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis is also known as the comprehensible input. By this theory Krashen means the input or language material that the students are exposed to must be understandable enough for the students. If the language material presented in class is too easy for language learners, they would stop focusing on them or taking them serious whereas when the materials are too hard, learning would seem a burden to carry and again the students will start hating that class because they cannot understand anything. As a result Krashen believes that the language data must be prepared in a way that they are one level higher than the current students' knowledge status or as he himself calls it, they must be $i+1$. The researchers do agree with this hypothesis because all language teachers must consider a balance between hard and easy language information to be presented to the students.

2.4.1. Comprehensible Output and the Interaction Hypothesis

The comprehensible output or CO hypothesis (Swain, 1995) which is linked to what is sometimes called the "interaction hypothesis" (Long, 1996) is the hypothesis that we acquire language from interacting with others. As stated in this way, the interaction hypothesis is vague. Is interaction necessary or just helpful? Is it the only way to acquire language or one way to acquire language? Also, what occurs during interaction that causes language acquisition?

Krashen argues that a part of interaction that does not contribute to language acquisition is the output produced by the language acquirer. In addition, there is evidence that a strong version of the interaction hypothesis, one that asserts that interaction is necessary for language acquisition, is not correct. Such a hypothesis denies that acquisition can occur from reading and listening. In addition to the massive data showing that reading can promote language development, the results of Ellis et al. (1994), confirm that acquisition is possible without actually participating in the interaction. A weaker version of the interaction hypothesis is that interaction can be a good source of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982).

The interaction hypothesis cannot be rejected or ignored because exposure with comprehensible output means exposure with the target language after all. Maybe some language learners can master a language without participation with peers or people around them but those individuals who are in constant touch with native speakers of a language or other fluent speakers who speak the same language can have a more and deeper learning because those who talk to us or those who have a relationship with us have their own effects on us from different aspects both positively and negatively. They can correct us when we make a mistake or if we have an error.

2.5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

This theory focuses on language learners' emotional state and how emotions can affect language learning or acquisition process. Namely, when a student has a special memory from the past which is somehow associated with the materials which are going to be taught, that memory whether positive or negative will affect that individual's learning and sometimes if that person's feelings are negative, they can prevent learning and vice versa so teachers must be careful in class about how to present different ideas in class in a way that they do not offend any individual.

2.6. The Reading Hypothesis

This theory encourages language learners to read more and more texts because reading different texts increases the vocabulary of language learners. Although, as it seems, vocabulary learning does not happen only through reading; we can update our vocabulary by watching movies in the target language, speaking with native people, listening to different educational listening activities provided in that language. Also, even by writing and practicing what we know, we can raise our vocabulary knowledge.

3. CONCLUSION

Second language acquisition is a new field of study which has been welcomed by a large number of teachers and researchers. Also a numerous number of studies has been carried out in this area. On one hand, it is an honor to see such a large number of theories and hypotheses are presented by different researchers and on the other hand it is a little disappointing when we see different theories are presented by different individuals and just this, nothing else happens. There are loads of opinions and new ideas but just introduced and not deeply worked on. Every researcher holding an idea can follow the previous researches carried out in their field of study and reach an absolute and definite solution for their research question. Obviously theory proliferation cannot be a suitable solution for SLA issues.

Krashen is a great researcher who has served SLA area for long years and has presented very fruitful theories. However, theories are only theories. They may match one situation but not another one. As for acquisition-learning hypothesis, in the researchers' opinion there is no separation between them or for instance the monitor hypothesis is not a 100% sure strategy while speaking a language. Natural order, comprehensible input and effective filter hypotheses are in harmony with most class situations whereas the reading hypothesis is not generalizable for all individuals.

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