Second Language Acquisition

Learners acquire a second language by drawing on their background experiences and prior knowledge in their first language. They experiment with the second language by using features found in their first language which are similar to those in the second language. This dependence on the first language serves to help the learner construct an interlanguage, a transitional system consisting of the learner's current second language knowledge. Communication strategies help the learners use what they already know to overcome breakdowns in communication.

Second language learning is a complex process. Complexity means that there are so many separate but interrelated factors within one intricate entity that it is exceedingly difficult to bring order and simplicity to that "chaos" (Larsen- Freeman, 1997)

AN INNATIST MODEL: KRASHEN'S INPUT HYPOTHESIS

1- The Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis
2- The Monitor Hypothesis
3- The Natural Order Hypothesis
4- The Input Hypothesis
5- The Affective Filter Hypothesis

1- The Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis

«Language acquisition (an unconscious process developed through using language meaningfully) is different from language learning (consciously learning or discovering rules about a language) and language acquisition is the only way competence in a second language can develop».   (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

There are two independent systems of second language performance: The 'acquired system' and The 'learned system'.

Acquisition	Learning
A product of subconscious processes very similar to the process children undergoes when they acquire their first language.	A product of formal learning
	It comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge 'about' the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules.
Needs natural communication in the target language.	
Informal situations.	Formal situations.
Depends on attitude.	Depends on aptitude.
Uses grammatical 'feel'.	Uses grammatical 'rules'.

Adult second language learners have two means for internalizing the target language

a)   The first is "acquisition", a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to "pick up" a language.

b)   ☐ The second means is a conscious "learning" process in which learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own process.

"Fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired, not what we have learned."

Our conscious learning processes and our subconscious acquisition processes are mutually exclusive: learning cannot "become" acquisition.

2. The Monitor Hypothesis

The "monitor" is involved in learning, not in acquisition.

It is a device for "watchdogging" one's output, for editing and making alterations or corrections as they are consciously perceived.

We are able to use what we have learned (in Krashen's sense) about the rules of a language in monitoring (or self-correcting) our language output.

Conscious editor or monitor works.

Clearly, this is possible in the correction of written work. It is much more difficult when engaging in regular talk.

There are variations in use of the monitor that affect the language that learners produce.

Acquired language skills can lead to improved fluency but overuse of the monitor can lead to a reduction in fluency (Krashen, 1988).

Moreover, Krashen (1988) believes that there is individual variation among language learners with regard to 'monitor' use.

He claims that the learners who use the 'monitor' all the time are **'over-users'**, often producing stilted language, whereas **'under-users'** will often speak quickly but with a lot of errors.

Learners who use the monitor appropriately are considered **'optimal-users'**.

3. The Natural Order Hypothesis

Language is acquired in a predictable order by all learners. This order does not depend on the apparent simplicity or complexity of the grammatical features involved. The natural order of acquisition cannot be influenced by direct teaching of features that the learner is not yet ready to acquire.

We acquire language rules in a predictable or "natural" order.

As Krashen points out, much of the frustration experienced by teachers and their students in grammar lessons results from the attempt to inculcate a grammatical form which the learner is not yet ready to acquire.

It is claimed that the natural order of acquisition is very similar for a native-English child learning its own language and for an adult learning English as a foreign language.

For example, the '-ing' form (present continuous) will be acquired early on and almost certainly before the '-s' inflection in the third person present simple (she likes, he eats, etc.)

4. The Input Hypothesis

An important condition for language to occur is that the acquirer understand (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure "a bit beyond" his or her current level of competence.

Krashen now refers to this as the Comprehension Hypothesis.

It states that learners acquire language when they are exposed to input at i+1, where i is the current state or stage of language proficiency.

Learners use their existing acquired linguistic competence together with their general world knowledge to make sense of the messages they receive in language just beyond where they currently are (the +1).

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

"… Learner's feeling or attitude as an adjustable filter that freely pass, impedes or block input necessary to acquisition".

Learners with a low affective filter will not only be efficient language acquirers of the comprehensible input they receive. They are also more likely to interact with others, unembarrassed by making mistakes for example, and thus increase the amount of that input.

The three   (3) kinds of affective variables   that are related to SLA

Motivation:-------- high

Self-confidence:-----high

Anxiety:-------- low

- The best acquisition will occur in environments where anxiety is low and   in contexts where "affective filter" is low.

- Learners with a low affective filter: high motivation, self-confidence, a good image, and a low

level of anxiety are better equipped for success in SLA

- Learners with a high affective filter: low self-esteem and a high level of anxiety Form a mental block.

- When the filter is high, it blocks language acquisition. Accordingly, the low affective filter is desirable.

Summay of Krashen's Hypotheses

Krashen proposed five hypotheses for second language acquisition. He explored the notion that acquisition is different from learning because one takes place in a natural environment while the other takes place in an academic setting. He further claimed that we learn language in a predictable order. Some language structures are learned earlier than others. The monitor is the self-correcting mechanism that learners use to edit what they say before they speak or write. The learner can overuse the monitor and stifle communication.

Krashen states that when learners are provided with comprehensible input they acquire more. When the learner's affective filter is up, this means that information is not reaching the learner. This may be because of fear, anxiety or low self-confidence in language learning. The ideal situation is for the filter to be down so that the language acquisition device can receive the input necessary for language acquisition.

Implications for Language Teaching

➢ Students activities should be based on meaningful communication rather than on form.

➢ Input should be interesting and student needs based.

➢ Input should contribute to a relaxed classroom atmosphere.

How do Krashen's Hypotheses apply to the SL/FL classroom?

Explanation of Hypothesis	*Application for Teaching*
The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis According to Krashen, there are two ways of developing language ability. Acquisition involves the subconscious acceptance of knowledge where information is stored in the brain through the use of communication; this is the process used for developing native languages. Learning, on the other hand, is the conscious acceptance of knowledge 'about' a language (i.e. the grammar or form). Krashen states that this is often the product of formal language instruction.	According to this theory, the optimal way a language is learned is through natural communication. As a second language teacher, the ideal is to create a situation wherein language is used in order to fulfill authentic purposes. This is turn, will help students to 'acquire' the language instead of just 'learning' it.

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The Monitor hypothesis	As an SL teacher it will always be a challenge to strike a balance between encouraging accuracy and fluency in your students. This balance will depend on numerous variables including the language level of the students, the context of language use and the personal goals of each student. This balance is also known as Communicative competency.
This hypothesis further explains how acquisition and learning are used; the acquisition system, initiates an utterance and the learning system 'monitors' the utterance to inspect and correct errors. Krashen states that monitoring can make some contribution to the accuracy of an utterance but its use should be limited. He suggests that the 'monitor' can sometimes act as a barrier as it forces the learner to slow down and focus more on accuracy as opposed to fluency.	
The Natural Order hypothesis	According to this hypothesis, teachers should be aware that certain structures of a language are easier to acquire than others and therefore language structures should be taught in an order that is conducive to learning. Teachers should start by introducing language concepts that are relatively easy for learners to acquire and then use scaffolding to introduce more difficult concepts.
According to Krashen, learners acquire parts of language in a predictable order. For any given language, certain grammatical structures are acquired early while others are acquired later in the process. This hypothesis suggests that this natural order of acquisition occurs independently of deliberate teaching and therefore teachers cannot change the order of a grammatical teaching sequence.	
The Input hypothesis	This hypothesis highlights the importance of using the Target Language in the classroom. The goal of any language program is for learners to be able to communicate effectively. By providing as much comprehensible input as possible, especially in situations when learners are not exposed to the TL outside of the classroom, the teacher is able to create a more effective opportunity for language acquisition.
This hypothesis suggests that language acquisition occurs when learners receive messages that they can understand, a concept also known as comprehensible input. However, Krashen also suggests that this comprehensible input should be one step beyond the learner's current language ability, represented as $i + 1$, in order to allow learners to continue to progress with their language development.	
The Affective Filter hypothesis	In any aspect of education it is always important to create a safe, welcoming environment in which students can learn. In language education this may be especially important since in order to take in and produce language, learners need to feel that they are able to make mistakes and take risks. This relates to directly to Krashen's hypothesis of the affective filter. To learn more about creating a positive classroom environment,
According to Krashen one obstacle that manifests itself during language acquisition is the affective filter; that is a 'screen' that is influenced by emotional variables that can prevent learning. This hypothetical filter does not impact acquisition directly but rather prevents input from reaching the language acquisition part of the brain. According to Krashen the affective filter can be prompted by many different variables including anxiety, self-confidence, motivation and stress.	

(Adapted from https://bestofbilash.ualberta.ca/krashen.html)