

Criticisms of Krashen's Five Hypotheses

'The Monitor Model' of Krashen that consists of five hypotheses" has been hotly debated and criticised

1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

- It is difficult to accept the idea of a fully operational Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in adults, since adults past the age of puberty. McLaughin(1978, 1987) and Gregg (1984)
- Acknowledging the limited accessibility of LAD in adults but not in children.

Input is the "essential environmental ingredient" for acquisition. (Krashen 1985: 2-3). The non-environmental ingredient is an "internal language processor". Krashen makes it clear that he envisages this processor to have the same qualities as Chomsky's language acquisition device (LAD). The LAD is accessible for children acquiring their L1.

The effectiveness of the LAD declines with age. The older a person gets the more limited is their access to the LAD.

It is therefore highly problematic if Krashen claims that the LAD plays a role in adult second language acquisition although this device is inseparably linked to children's first language acquisition by Chomsky's work. Gregg (1984) points out that it is very unlikely that the LAD is still functional in an adult.

- The needs of an accurate definition for the vague terminology of that Krashen used i.e. acquisition/learning, conscious/subconscious

- Difficult to perceive how acquisition and learning 'housed' in two separate linguistics systems, could be put into use by L2 learners. Gass and Selinker(1994)

Acquisition could be better understood when described as a process enriched by the learned system.

- Instead of drawing a borderline separating acquisition and learning into two discrete

disciplines, the cross-currents at both are constantly at work in SLA are to be acknowledged and explained .Zafar (2009)

2. Monitor Hypothesis

To activate the Monitor System, three conditions must be fulfilled –time, focus on form and knowledge of the rules.The implementation of the hypothesis in real-life situation is difficult. This hypothesis could be applied in case of ‘simple’ rules only, but as for ‘difficult’ rules –this hypothesis is not useful.

It is often difficult to use the monitor correctly since the rules of a language can be extremely complex.

Most normal conversation simply does not provide enough time to activate the Monitor System. As a result, learners might prevent themselves from speaking due to the fear of making mistake in their utterances.

- Krashen assume that young learners are better language learners than adolescents because they are less affected by linguistic monitors.

- But McLaughlin stated that children and adolescents are equally capable of L2 acquisition. McLaughlin (1992)

According to McLaughlin (1987)“People have rules for language use in their heads, but these rules are not those of the grammarian.

People operate on the basis of informal rules of limited scope and validity. These rules are sometimes conscious and sometimes not, but in any given utterance it is impossible to determine what the knowledge source is.”

3. Natural Order Hypothesis

- Krashenclaimed for a natural order is based mainly on English morphemes order studies which has been demonstrated unsatisfactory. (Gassand Selinker, 1994; McLaughlin, 1987).

- The natural order hypothesis fails to account for the considerable influence of the first language on the acquisition of a second language.

- In fact, the results of other studies indicate that second language learners acquire a second language in different orders depending on their native language.(Wode 1977, Zobl, 1980, 1982)

4. Input Hypothesis

Input is basically all written and spoken language a learner is exposed to. Krashen believes that the input an L2 learner can profit most from is very similar to “caretaker” talk. Whoever takes care of a child alters their utterances directed to the child in order to help the child understand the message (cf. Krashen 1981: 102). In all his works he also introduces the notion of comprehensible input or *intake*. It is defined as the part of the input that the learner can actually understand and therefore process.

As learners acquire L2 following a natural order Krashen claims that an L2 instructor only has to detect the level of competence of learners and create teaching materials accordingly. The "necessary grammar" is "automatically" provided by an instructor who wants to make sure that learners receive "comprehensible input" in "sufficient amount" and "right quantities" (Krashen, 1985: 2).

There are two problems in Krashen’s very vague wording. Firstly, the *i* of the learner has to be analyzed in order to be able to determine what will function as the + 1. In addition to that the complexity level of the +1 also has to be identifiable. According to the formula the learner will not be able to process +2 or +3. Krashen does not mention any means for an analysis of the *i* or the +1.

- McLaughlin claims that the concept of a learner’s “level” is extremely difficult to define, just as the idea of $i+1$

- How can we know which language data contains $i+1$ rather than $i+3$ •

It is difficult to determine the learners' current levels due to individual differences

If an instructor knew which level the learners have accomplished, he would be able to make an informed decision about the +1 needed for the learner.

It can be expected, however, that the learners are on different levels of acquisition in regard to the different phenomena of L2 as every individual learns at their own pace. The difficulty remains to provide comprehensible input for each learner. McLaughlin also points out these weaknesses.

At the present stage of second-language study, both tasks are impossible to for researchers, and, above all, for teachers dealing with many students at different levels of ability” (1987: 39).

Last but not least the Input Hypothesis has to be into perspective as a whole. Input and intake do play a very important role in second language acquisition. However, Krashen’s claim for the omnipotence of input has to be modified. There are also other factors that have to be considered. Ellis also challenges Krashen’s idea that it is enough to provide learners with sufficient input following the formula $i + 1$. He states that “input is necessary but not sufficient for acquisition to take place” (2003: 47).

- No clear evidence shows that increased input will result in more language acquisition, and that increased output will not

- If comprehensible input is necessary, then so is comprehensible output

5. Affective Filter Hypothesis

- First, Krashen claims that children lack the affective filter that causes most adult second language learners to never completely master their second language.

- Such a claim fails to withstand scrutiny because children also experience differences in non-linguistic variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety that supposedly account for child-adult differences in second language learning.

- Furthermore, evidence in the form of adult second language learners who acquire a second language to a native-like competence except for a single grammatical feature

- problematizes the claim that an affective filter prevents comprehensible input from reaching the language acquisition device.

- Again, if the absence of the filter can make children such effective learners, how to explain the achievement of some adults who attain native-like proficiency —what happens in their case is left unexplained.