Second Language Acquisition - Krashen and his Critics
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1.0 Introduction

There are at least forty "theories" of second language acquisition, according to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991). If the amount of supporting literature is considered, then the number of articles must run into hundreds if not thousands. However, often the research presented is tentative and some times the conclusions are not reproduced by other studies. Pincas (1996) says the following;
"The most comprehensive recent analysis of research into language learning (Ellis, *The Study of Second Language Acquisition, 1994* OUP), shows very clearly how much is lacking. Most chapters end on a note of indecision, pointing out that research is still inconclusive." p.10
 Larsen-Freeman and Long end their survey of second language research;
"We have learned a great deal in the last twenty years, but much work remains to be done." p.333.
In examining the relevance of this theory to teaching practice, here too there are doubts. Widdowson (1990) suggests teachers should not even try to apply the results of research but rather they should make use of the process of enquiry.

It is against this background of uncertainty that one can see the attraction for teachers of the ideas promoted by Steven Krashen. He is not only confident about his theory but also makes suggestions for teaching practice based on his theory (See Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Krashen (1982) clearly states second language acquisition theory needs to interact with applied linguistic research and the ideas and intuitions of teachers to inform teaching practice. His wide ranging work includes comments on teaching methods and testing. This comprehensiveness also adds to his appeal. A further point in his favour is that he expresses his ideas clearly and accessibly, with there being an elegant economy in his propositions. Thus Krashen says;
"What current theory implies, quite simply, is that language acquisition, first or second, occurs only when comprehension of real messages occurs, and when the acquirer is not "on the defensive" to use Stevick's apt phrase." p.6

This forms the basis of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985).

As with many writers who have been engaged in a field of study over a period of time his ideas have evolved and changed. Although his ideas have been subject to extensive criticism, the availability of his books suggests they continue to attract interest. The presentation of Krashen's ideas in this essay is based on Krashen (1981), (1982) and (1985). What follows is an outline of Krashen's theory followed by a review of the ideas forwarded by some of his critics.

2.0 Krashen's Hypotheses

Krashen's ideas about second language acquisition are contained in five hypotheses. They are;
1. The Acquisition-Learning Distinction
2. The Natural Order Hypothesis
3. The Monitor Hypothesis
4. The Input Hypothesis
5. The Affective Filter

2.1 The Acquisition-Learning Distinction

The Acquisition-Learning Distinction suggests that adults have "two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language" (Krashen, 1982 p.10). Krashen sees the process of language acquisition by adults as similar to the process by which children develop their first language. Adults continue to have access to the same "language acquisition device" as children do. He offers other terms for acquisition such as "implicit learning", "informal learning" and "natural learning". Acquisition is seen as more important than learning where learning is defined as "conscious knowledge", "knowing about the language", "grammar", "rules" or "explicit learning". Krashen considers acquisition and learning to be separate processes. He goes further and says learning cannot become acquisition. This statement is known as the "no interface" position. It is qualified by Krashen(1981);
"While classwork is directly aimed at increasing conscious linguistic knowledge of the target language, to the extent that the target language is used realistically, to that extent will acquisition occur." p.47

There are three other ways that Krashen (1985) admits learning may contribute to acquisition. The learner while performing may be producing their own comprehensible input that they then acquire through the language acquisition device. Secondly, it may aid acquisition as the knowledge of rules may increase access to comprehensible input. Thirdly, in meeting students' expectations about language study it may affect their emotional state and result in a "lower affective filter". Again this may result in more input being available for acquisition.
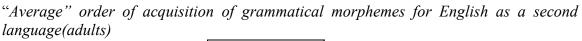
A consequence of the distinction between acquisition and learning is a limited role for grammar instruction and error correction. According to Krashen both are useful only in specific circumstances and then they only influence learning. The Monitor Hypothesis develops this idea.
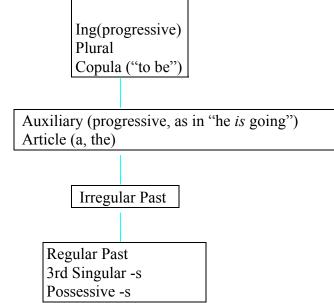
2.2 The Natural Order Hypothesis

The second hypothesis in the list is the Natural Order Hypothesis. Krashen credits Corder (1967)[1] as the source of this hypothesis. However, the evidence referred to in Krashen (1982) is mainly based on observations made in the seventies that learners tend to acquire grammatical morphemes in a particular sequence. Starting with research involving children learning English as a first language, this research was extended to children and

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[1]Corder, S.P. (1967) "The significance of learner's errors" <u>International Review of Applied Linguistics</u> 11: 13-28

adults learning English as a second language. Some of the research was carried out by Krashen himself and he provides the following table (from Krashen(1977)[2] cited in Krashen (1982)). In the table below an "average order" is shown drawn from several studies on morpheme acquisition. However, Krashen rejects grammatical sequencing as the basis of syllabi if the teaching goal is acquisition.

"Average" order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes for English as a second language(adults)

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+---------------------------+
| Ing(progressive)          |
| Plural                    |
| Copula ("to be")          |
+---------------------------+
            |
+------------------------------------------------------+
| Auxiliary (progressive, as in "he is going")         |
| Article (a, the)                                     |
+------------------------------------------------------+
            |
    +-------------------+
    | Irregular Past    |
    +-------------------+
            |
+---------------------------+
| Regular Past              |
| 3rd Singular -s           |
| Possessive -s             |
+---------------------------+
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2.3 The Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor Hypothesis originally played a more central part in Krashen's thoughts and Krashen's theory is described in McLaughlin (1987) as the "Monitor Model" emphasising the important role it had. This hypothesis builds on the acquisition-learning distinction, allocating different functions to the separate systems. While only acquisition can initiate utterances, learning can act as an editor of these utterances and affect performance (Krashen ,1982).The Monitor involves the application of formal rules or conscious learning. However, the learner can only use conscious rules as a resource under certain circumstances, and even under these circumstances may not use them. The first condition is that there must be sufficient time, which would mean in normal conversation their use is absent. Krashen suggests that to try and use conscious rules would result in hesitation and lack of attention. The second condition is that there must be a focus on form. The learner must be thinking about *how* they are performing. The third condition requires that the student should know the rule that applies. This also poses a problem, since given the difficulty linguists have in describing language how can language learners be expected to know rules? The existence of the Monitor means

[2]Krashen, S.D. (1977) "Some issues relating to the Monitor Model" in Brown, H.D., Yorio, C., & Crymes, R. (eds.) On TESOL '77: Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language: Trends in Research and Practice Washington: TESOL pp. 144-158

learners may be able to use forms they have not yet acquired and consequently their output may differ from that suggested by the "natural order".

Referring to case studies, Krashen describes individual differences in Monitor use which result in differences in performance. Thus there may be Monitor Over-users, learners with no real fluency due to hesitation and self-correction. He attributes the origin of over use to personality or methods of teaching that stressed grammar. Monitor under-users may have acquired their language and rely solely on this system either because of preference or lack of conscious knowledge. The third type and the target for teachers are optimal Monitor users who use their knowledge in appropriate circumstances such as when writing. This would be applicable to my teaching situation where the students need to use English in an academic context at university level.

2.4 The Input Hypothesis

With the publication of Krashen (1985) the input hypothesis becomes the most important part of his theory of second language acquisition. This puts forward the idea that language learners acquire language when they understand messages or receive "comprehensible input".

"All other factors thought to encourage or cause second language acquisition work only when they contribute to comprehensible input and/or a low affective filter." p.4

Learners move from their current level of competence (i) to their next stage (i + 1) by understanding input which contains (i+1) . These structures above the existing level of competence are understood by using context, knowledge of the world together with the existing competence. Krashen gives the example of the language teacher who uses pictures to assist in illustrating meaning and provide a context for examples. Teachers need not follow an (i+1) sequence as this will happen automatically if the student gets sufficient comprehensible input.

2.5 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The Affective Filter Hypothesis attempts to incorporate affective variables, such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, into the process of second language acquisition. The filter may be "high" or "low" and influences acquisition by limiting access to input. This access may be limited both quantitatively and qualitatively. Individuals with low integrative motivation may not have the same amount of contact with target language speakers and hence receive less input. Krashen(1982) also suggests they will get less benefit from the input they do receive as affective variables act to "impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device" p.32

2.6 Teaching

Despite the reduced role for grammar suggested by Krashen, accuracy is still important. Thus in Krashen and Terrell (1983);
"Our goal is for students to achieve both communicative and linguistic competence." p.167

However, grammatical accuracy will be acquired along with the increasing ability to communicate. Both the communicative and linguistic goals of a course need to be specified. There is also a suggestion that linguistic goals may be more important at advanced rather than lower levels when the emphasis should be on communication. The primacy allocated to acquisition over learning means that grammar testing has a much reduced role particularly with beginners. Krashen (1982) evaluates testing with reference to the effect it has on the classroom .Two test formats are suggested , one is reading comprehension in order to encourage further reading out of class and the second is an oral test focusing on conversational management. Testing grammar is excluded on grounds of the negative "backwash" effect it would have on the rest of the curriculum.

"Tests have a huge impact on classroom behavior, and need to be selected to encourage students to engage in activities that will help them acquire more language." p.177

Derived from his theory he proposes the following criteria for evaluating methods and materials (from Krashen, 1982 pp. 127)

Requirements for optimal input	Learning
1. Comprehensible	Restricted to ;
2. Interesting/relevant	1. Certain rules that are
3. Not grammatically sequenced	a. learnable
4. Quantity	b. portable
5. Filter level ("off the defensive")	c. not yet acquired
6. Provides tools for conversational management users")	2. Certain people("Monitor
	3. Certain situations
	a. time
	b. focus on form

Some of the items listed above would be generally accepted by most teachers but before accepting all of Krashen's ideas on teaching, we should examine the ideas of his critics.

3.0 Criticisms of Krashen

Krashen has been criticised on several grounds. Criticism covers both the way his theory is constructed and the evidence he uses to support it. The disagreement Krashen provokes is extensive and even extends to how various writers classify his theory. This difference in classification is interesting in so far it indicates the author's perception of the key element in Krashen's ideas. For example, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) classify it as a nativist theory due to the reliance of his explanation of acquisition on a biologically given language acquisition device. Cook (1991) sees it as a "mixed model" relying both on innate faculties and language processing abilities.

Returning to Larsen-Freeman and Long, they make the following comment about constructing theories;
"Thus, whereas every hypothesis much be testable, this is not true of every statement in a theory, provided it is of a causal-process form. a theory remains falsifiable as long as parts of it are testable and all untestable parts are related to testable ones". p.224

For them this causes a problem with Krashen's theory of acquisition as it relies on constructs (i, i +1 and the Affective Filter) that can not themselves be tested. They conclude;

"Monitor Theory, that is to say, is untestable, and so unfalsifiable, in its post- 1980 formulation." p.225

Ellis(1990) is perhaps less charitable in his comment;

"The input hypothesis is a bucket full of holes." p.106

Other commentators have suggested that aspects of Krashen's ideas are metaphors, however, Cook (1993) notes that metaphors and metaphorical models have a role to play in understanding the world and suggests at this level Krashen has made a contribution

3.1 Do children and adults acquire language in the same way?

One assumption that occurs in Krashen's work is the basic similarity between first and second language acquisition. This has been disputed by Bley-Vroman (1989) and Schachter (1988). Bley-Vroman proposes "The Fundamental Difference Hypotheses". He puts forward the proposal that children have a system for acquiring language that has two parts. The first part includes a possible grammar such as Universal Grammar and the second a set of language specific learning procedures. In contrast adults have their native language knowledge and general problem solving skills. For Schachter the question then becomes one of specifying what is innate and what aspects of language can be learned "by cognitive systems not designed for language" p.231. Some reasons for advocating this basic division between child first language learners and adult second language learners are explored in Schachter who bases her claim of difference on four main issues. They are

1) Completeness
2) Equipotentiality
3) Previous knowledge
4) Fossilization

By completeness she refers to the state of mastery adults normally acquire in their first language. While there may be differences in verbal behaviour between two adults speaking their first language, the differences would not be of the degree to say that one speaker was not a native speaker. However, she suggests adults learning a second language rarely if ever reach this stage.

Equipotentiality refers to the fact that a child first language learner is equally capable of learning any first language. In contrast, the ease with which adults can learn a second language is influenced by the relationship of their first language to their target language. This is taken as an indication that adults do not access the same mechanism as children do.

Previous knowledge of L1 also influences L2 production in a way that can not always be blamed on an absence of L2 knowledge. Schachter also poses the question why children do not appear to fossilize, that is retain earlier acquired developmental linguistic forms, yet adults do. It should be noted Krashen (1985) offers an explanation for fossilization in terms of his theory. This issue is not resolved but as Long (1990) points out the differing success of children and adults can be theorised in two ways. Either there are different mechanisms as argued by Bley-Vroman or different access to the same mechanisms. Krashen takes the latter option in his proposal for an affective filter. The success of his argument for an affective filter is discussed below in 3.6

3.2 The Acquisition-Learning Distinction

At this stage it is useful to ask as Gregg (1989) does "But what is it that is acquired when one has acquired a language?" p.17

According to Gregg, it is linguistic knowledge that is acquired. This is qualified by the statement that some of this knowledge would be innate. What flows from restricting acquisition to linguistic knowledge is a further distinction between competence and performance. Competence is seen as linguistic knowledge whereas performance is seen as learner behaviour. The relationship between competence and performance is problematic . One cannot be directly inferred from the other. Gregg gives the example of knowing the rules of chess without being able to play it. Thus observed behaviour is not reliable as evidence of competence. Second language acquisition, however, is not only interested in what is acquired, the product, but how it is acquired, the process.

Conceptualising language acquisition as a process of change means how learners move from being monolingual speakers to bilingual or even multi-lingual learners has to be explained. In doing so I have found the diagram below helpful. Each of the boxes represent a learner's position regarding the acquisition of particular knowledge.

Diagram 1

1 You don't know you don't know	4 You don't know you know
2 You know you don't know	3 You know you know

Box 1 represents an initial position where a learner knows nothing about what has to be learnt. Box 2 represents a position where the learner realises that something is unknown, for example, the grammar of conditional sentences. Box 3 represents a position of having both explicit and implicit knowledge of conditional sentences. Box 4 represents position where something has become acquired , a learner has knowledge available for automatic use but is not able to describe that knowledge. They may have knowledge of various conditional sentence forms but have forgotten the "types". In examining how learners move from one box to another we can return to Krashen. Box 1 is a "steady state" and could continue indefinitely. Movement to Box 4 is accomplished by input and the help of a "language acquisition device". Movement is direct with no necessity to pass through Boxes 2 or 3. Acquisition is incidental or unconscious and caused by input. This still leaves us with Boxes 2 and 3. What causes movement from Box 1 to Box 2? Or Box 2 to Box 3? In terms of logical possibilities a learner in Box 2 could a) give up b) use existing linguistic resources or strategies c) try and find out more knowledge. There is no automatic progress assumed between the boxes. Is Krashen correct in his assertion of no interface between learning and acquisition (Boxes 3 and 4 in the diagram)?

In exploring the role of input below, some of the possible causes of movement are examined.

3.3 The role of input

As previously stated the Input Hypothesis proposes that acquisition takes place through "comprehensible input". Krashen (1982) lists the following sources of evidence to support this idea.

1) Caretaker speech - People responsible for looking after children tend to talk "simpler" in order to be understood. This speech is not strictly graded but "roughly tuned" to the child's level. A further difference is that talk is generally limited to the child's surroundings which also helps make it comprehensible to the child.

2) Simple codes- By this he refers to teacher and foreigner talk where utterances are modified in order to help comprehension.

3) The silent period - Often children who go to a new country and acquire the target language there go through a period of not talking. According to Krashen (1985) it is not unusual for this period may last six months.

4) The limited contribution of L1 - Learners may "outperform" their competence by using an L1 rule before learning the appropriate L2 rule. However, the L1 rule and the L2 rule may differ resulting in error. This situation can only be resolved by further acquisition.

5) Method comparison research - He suggests methods emphasising input have been more successful (1982) and also stresses the success of immersion and sheltered language teaching (1985).

In reviewing the evidence that "comprehensible input" causes acquisition Ellis (1994) suggests the relationship may be one of correlation. There is a co-occurence of acquisition with caretaker talk, for example, but this does not demonstrate how caretaker results in acquisition. He further argues that the process of comprehension needs to be more carefully defined.

"If learners can rely extensively on top-down processing they may pay little attention to the form of the input and therefore not acquire anything new." p.279

White (1987) also criticises the input hypothesis for its lack of precision and makes proposals how it could be changed. She sees it as important to accept Krashen's emphasis of defining acquisition in learner terms. Krashen states that teachers should not try to manipulate input to the learner's level because they do not know the learner's current level. White uses this claim to criticise Krashen's assumption that simplified input is important for acquisition. She states;

"Indeed, one might argue that many forms of simplified input would result in i - 1, rather than i + 1!" p.96

In reviewing how input brings about change she suggests understanding new structures through context is not the only way change occurs. The "trigger" for change may be the result of the learner using their current linguistic knowledge to make sense of utterances. In both cases it is *incomprehensible* input that acts as a stimulus to change rather than comprehensible input. She illustrates the processes with examples of how the passive might be acquired.

Taking the sentence "The book was read by John" the learner is able to use their knowledge of the world to understand the meaning. The learner knows that books do not read and that people read books. Thus they can be expected to infer the meaning of the sentence even if initially puzzled by the structure. Referring back to Section 3.2 Diagram 1 input would have prompted a move from Box 1 to Box 2 with the learner using their linguistic sources in an attempt to move from Box 2 to Box 3. In a second example, "John was hit", the learner could use their linguistic knowledge to try and understand the utterance. White suggests;

"When a sentence like *John was hit* is heard, something must be interpreted as the obligatory theme of the verb" p.98

White assumes that in acquiring the word "hit" the learner also acquired some knowledge that it is followed by a direct object. They thus are able to infer the object has moved to the right of the verb. This show the importance of paying attention both to the semantic and grammatical properties of lexical items. (At this point while I accept the process described I think she is unduly optimistic with her use of "must". My students would probably make the mistake of relating the structure to "John was ill" and find the structure "John was hit" unremarkable. An example such as "The chair is broken" might provoke interest because "is" would be seen as "present" and "broken" would be seen as "past". If learner perceptions of grammar were explored, it might be possible to identify where guidance in grammar would be helpful.)

White sees the "trigger" for change coming from attempts by the learner to process input. Swain and Lapkin (1995) see the possibility of change coming from attempts by the learner to process output. They state "Noticing a problem "pushes" the learner to modify his/her output." p. 372 Citing Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993)[3], Swain and Lapkin refer to the need both to acquire forms and acquire the ability to use this knowledge accurately. It can be inferred from this that practice has a role to play in acquisition. Krashen (1985) denies a role for output asserting that acquisition is subconscious and does not require production. Acquisition, however, is not the only process available to the learner. The act of noticing would be a conscious process implying that it is, if Krashen's distinction is accepted, learning. Thus output may be influencing the conscious learning process rather than unconscious acquisition. As a language learner myself, I find the processes by White and Swain and Lapkin intuitively appealing. I have noticed both the process described by White and that described by Swain and Lapkin occurring.

While the descriptions above offer accounts of movement from boxes 1 to 2 and to 3, movement from 3 to 4 is still not described. According to the Anderson's (1980)[4] cognitive theory of learning cited in O'Malley and Chamot (!990), extensive practice is one way for this to happen.

3.4 The Natural Order Hypothesis

The distinction between competence and performance made earlier lies at the basis of criticisms of the morpheme studies that suggest an order of development to acquisition.

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[3]Nobuyoshi, J. & Ellis, R. (1993) "Focused communication tasks and second language acquisition." ELTJ 47: 203-210
[4]Anderson, J.R. (1980) Cognitive psychology and its implications San Francisco: Freeman

Widdowson (1990) sees the morpheme studies providing "evidence for an accuracy order in performance" p.17 He goes on to say; "Accuracy has to do with behaviour , acquisition has to with knowledge." p. 20. He rejects performance as an indicator of competence. Other people have criticised the morpheme studies on methodological grounds suggesting the method employed to elicit data (the Bilingual Syntax Measure) may have caused the correlation (Hakuta and Cancino, 1977[5]cited in Ellis, 1994:106). Larsen - Freeman and Long in their criticism add that there is no explanation offered of the morpheme orders. Writing by herself Larsen-Freeman (1978) remarks on the correlation between the order of accuracy of morpheme production by ESL learners and their frequency of occurrence in native speaker speech. From this she suggests the need to consider the possibility of a stimulus - response mechanism operating and the importance of examining the input the learner receives.

Not all researchers are so critical. Zobl (1995) lists developmental orders as occurring in other structures. These include interrogative structures, negation, relative clauses, control structures, pronouns, and word order in main and embedded clauses. He suggests this uniformity supports both the natural order hypothesis and the acquisition-learning distinction. Thus "uniformity is a key ingredient in motivating the existence of a language -specific module" p.40.

Discussion over acquisition-learning distinction and developmental sequences of acquisition has resulted in a closer examination of the role of grammar in organising a syllabus. Ellis (1993) argues that a structural syllabus has a role "as a basis for facilitating intake through the comprehension of specific grammatical items" p.105. Grammar could be taught with the aim of aiding comprehension but not immediate production. His survey of research leads him to be more optimistic about grammar instruction. He concludes that grammar instructions can increase the rate of learning and increase accuracy. The grammar instruction should be appropriate to the learners' stage of development. White (1987) comments on the limitations of input in immersion programmes and also suggests a role for grammar instruction in "fine tuning".

3.5 The Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor Hypothesis refers to the use of conscious knowledge in production in order to correct or control utterances. Suggestions when to teach for Monitor use are made in Krashen and Terrell (1983). For example, being able to check their own work is particularly relevant for my students who are learning English for academic purposes. They would have time in their written assignments to use their Monitor. Encouraging self and peer correction in class is a technique many teachers now use. This does not mean the teacher abandons error correction but rather uses occasions to train or guide students in what to correct. Teaching simple "straightforward" grammar rules is sensible advice and can limit the area the student is expected to correct as well. Checklists are also a way of guiding checking and ensuring realistic monitoring takes place. One could also argue that peer correction is a means of increasing comprehensible input as students' peers are likely to produce language at a level understandable to other students.

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[5]Hakuta, K. & Cancino, E. (1977) "Trends in Second Language Acquisition Research" Harvard Educational Review 47: 294 - 316

At the level of theory, however, there are problems with Krashen's hypothesis. McLaughlin (1987) argues that is difficult to show evidence of Monitor use and says it is untestable. He makes the point ;

"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." p.30

The restriction of the Monitor to second language users by Krashen raises the question of how the Monitor functions in first language learners. Does it exist? Are first language learners more efficient Monitor users? The restrictions Krashen places on the conditions on Monitor use for second language users might lead one to suggest second language learners need to use their Monitor more efficiently. Morrison and Low (1983) comment that the effect of Krashen's conceptualisation has been "monitoring now tends to be seen as a superficial artifact of classroom instruction rather than a deep-seated ability on which all language ability depends." p.229 . They posit a broader description of monitoring including a possible role in acquisition and explaining variable performance. Monitoring may help settle conflicts in the rules of a learner's grammar as described by White above.

3.6 Is the Affective Filter necessary?

Anxiety consumes cognitive resources according to Gardner and MacIntyre (1992). They cite their own research (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989)[6] to support this and it might be seen as being consistent with Krashen's claim (1982) that "the effect of affect is "outside" the language acquisition device proper" p.32. One of the consequences of this is the need to create a classroom atmosphere where anxiety is low. This is a practical suggestion which many teachers follow in attempting to a communicative classroom. At the level of theory, however, again there are problems. Cook (1993) points to the paradox of using the Affective Filter to explain the differences in second language acquisition. Children acquiring their first language do so with any blocks from a "filter" and he asks why adults using the same process should be affected. Krashen (1982) states there is a "strengthening of the affective filter around puberty" p.44. If this was accepted, the inference would be that starting to learning a language as a teenager would be a bad idea. But evidence cited by McLaughlin (1987) does not support the proposal. In fact it suggests early adolescence is the best time to start learning a second language. In his evaluation McLaughlin rejects the Affective Filter Hypothesis saying Krashen has "provided no coherent explanation for the development of the affective filter and no basis for relating the affective filter to individual differences in language learning" p.56.

4 Conclusion

From the review of Krashen's critics it can be seen that there are many questions about his theory. Part of any assessment of his work would have to consider that while there are questions about his theory he has challenged others to come up with better explanations

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[6]MacIntyre, P.D. & Gardner, R.C. (1989) "Anxiety and second language learning: towards a theoretical clarification" Language Learning 39, pp 251 - 75

for the phenomena he observed. His terminology, although challenged, also appears to have a wide currency. His emphasis on language acquisition and that "Acquisition takes time"(Krashen,1982:187) is also salutary for the teacher driven by the coursebook or syllabus. In my introduction I suggested that one of attractive features of Krashen's ideas was their comprehensive nature. It is possibly one source of his flaws. He tries to explain too much in a single model. Some researchers such as Gregg (1989) recognise the difficulty of trying to account for all the variables in second language acquisition and argue for a modular approach to the study of second language acquisition.

What conclusions can be drawn for teaching practice? Certainly, taking Krashen's theory I concur with Ellis (1990) that there is more to teaching than "comprehensible input". Krashen's teaching proposals, however, can be evaluated more positively MacLaughlin (1987), perhaps one of Krashen's strongest critics, comments:
"This is not to say that Krashen is wrong in his prescriptions about language teaching. Many researchers working in the field agree with him on basic assumptions, such as the need to move from grammar-based to communicatively orientated language instruction, the role of affective factors in language learning, and the importance of acquisitional sequences in second language development." p.57

The uncertainty mentioned at the beginning of the essay remains. In looking at specific classroom practice, it is instructive to return to Widdowson (1990);
"The pedagogic relevance of research outside the classroom can only be realized by research inside the classroom." p.26

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