Critical Thinking Assignment #1
ENG200
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Stephen Krashen's Five Hypotheses of L2 acquisition is a collection of his claims about how language is acquired. It is composed of the five hypotheses: acquisition-learning distinction, monitor model, natural order hypothesis, input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. Krashen briefly summarized the big ideas in his theory as, "we acquire language in one way and only one way, when we get input in a low anxiety environment".

The acquisition-learning distinction seeks to define the difference between learning and acquisition. Krashen states that learning is a conscious effort made by the learner, similar to how a student learns geometry in math class or learns to ride a bicycle. On the other hand, acquisition is a subconscious process that is made by someone, like learning to walk or as Krashen claims, learning a language.

The monitor model, Krashen claims that the learner's repository of knowledge serves only as a monitor to the output produced by the learner. It's the difference between the learners competence and performance and how the learner is aware of these difference of their own production. However, for this hypothesis to apply, the learner must already be at a certain level of language competence to be able to measure the difference between what they believe are the correct rules of the language and the actual language they produce.

The natural order hypothesis asserts that there is a 'universal sequence' in exactly which features of language are developed. In other words, the process of language acquisition is predictive and regular. This may suggest that the learner's L1 has not very much affect on how they pick up the L2. In addition, it seems that this natural order of acquisition is actually similar between a L1 learner and a L2 learner. Some potential issues with this hypothesis is that the phenomenon that is observed

can also be attributed to other factors like difficulty of the grammar point being measured, as well as it's frequency in the input. For example, the order a learner picks up the negative form may depend on how often the language uses negative form (perhaps a language prefers saying 'not hot' as opposed to 'cold'). In addition some grammar structures are dependent on the understanding of other grammar points so based on the construction of the language. Thus, natural order may not be due to innate language acquisition ability, but by features of the language.

Input hypothesis talks about how language learning occurs only when the learner is receiving input of the target language. Specifically, learning occurs when the learner understands and processes the meaning of the input in the target language. In his lecture, he provides the example of speaking German to an audience and contrasting that with speaking German and also supplying it with drawing a picture. To a person that doesn't know any German, the second method is much more helpful since we can associate some of his words with the pictures he is drawing and may correlate some of the sequences of sounds he is making to those in his picture.

Finally, the affective filter hypothesis explains that negative emotions towards the language can act as a barrier, blocking the useful input. Some examples of these emotions may include anxiety, motivation and self esteem. For example, in a classroom where the learner may be called on at random by the teacher, and the student feels embarrassed when they make a mistake can be example of a deterrent in the language acquisition process. Krashen's theory is often criticized for being untestable and vague, and I feel that this hypothesis is especially he case. It is very difficult to define exactly what are negative emotions, and there are far too many factors that depend on the learner's personality, beliefs, background etc. It is also very difficult to test this hypothesis, as one would have to forcibly create a negative learning experience for the learner and measure if it is deterrent to their development. In the end, although we may find some correlation, the entire theory is far too hand wavy.