

### Chapter 3: Three hypothesis of language acquisition

Stephen Krashen speaks of  $i + 1$ , when it comes to learning a new language. This means that we learn a new language by listening and reading to the language.

The  $+1$  means that a learner cannot learn the new language if the language is served on a too difficult level. (Man lærer ikke kinesisk af bare at lytte til kinesisk radio i flere måneder.) The input has to be only a bit more difficult than the level the learner is on.

When teaching with the  $+1$  in mind, it is necessary for the teacher to use different techniques such as pictures, demonstrations and models to simplify the text, which I think that many language teachers do today. It is nice to see that a theoretician has had such a big influence on how the language lessons are built up and how he has inspired so many teachers.

Michael Long is the man behind the interaction hypothesis.

This states that an understandable input is essential if the learner should acquire the new language. This hypothesis also states that a "negotiation of meaning" should be in place if the new language is to be learned. This happens when a language user shows his co-talker that he doesn't understand what is being said. In this way the co-talker gets the chance to adapt his language and make it more understandable.

With this negotiation the learner gets more time to process the linguistic input.

It also gives the possibility of a linguistic scaffolding, which means that the most competent language user offers linguistic help in form of alternative sayings that the new learner can use.

Long is against the input hypothesis of Krashen, but he believes that the input is an essential function in the language learning. And I agree with Long, because I think it is very important that you get the students to talk or write and to use the language they are working with.

Merrill Swain claims that linguistic production can lead to adaption in the second the learner is being pushed into it. This means that the learner tries to express something above his linguistic level. When doing this, the output has different functions:

- Attention Function: The learner knows that there is a cleft between what he would like to say and what he is capable of.
- Hypothesis test function: The learner gets to try his hypothesis and through the response of what he says he gets to know if the hypothesis is correct or not.  
The process of make and try out hypothesis is also a central part of the interaction hypothesis.
- Metalinguistic function: The learner has to produce a form to the language, and because of the forced situation the learner has to reflect of the form.

Swain is against Krashen's input hypothesis, but she believes that the input has an essential function in the language learning.

And I think that a combination between all three is the most effectively way for a language teacher in order to teach your students a new language.

#### **Chapter 4: The linguistic approach**

Chapter 4 states that all people have languages, which have been developed for the purpose to communicate with others. And the closer two languages are to each other in the structures, the easier it is to learn them because the native language is the one that the learner draw patterns from, when he/she tries out new hypothesis. But when the differences between the native and new language are big, the hypothesis might be wrong, which is why the learner should be aware of the way the languages are structured.

This applies well with the output hypothesis by Swain, who claims that learners should be forced into a so-called pushed output to make them aware of the mistakes they are making.

But the learning view from this chapter could also be inspired by Stephen Krashens input hypothesis, because he states that the more the learner listens and reads the new language, the more he/she will learn about the structures of the language.

#### **Chapter 5: The cognitive approach**

Cognitive theory combines input, output and interaction on its view on language acquisition.

The question is whether learning a new language is done consciously or unconsciously?

Krashen states that language acquisition is done unconsciously and that if a learner is “bathed” in the language, he/she will adapt the language the best possible way. He also believes that if the learner is aware of the content in an understandable input, he will adapt the linguistic form.

Richard Schmidt on the other hand argues that there has to be a certain form of attention towards the form of the language in order for the learner to adapt the language. This also includes a knowledge of the grammar, because this will help the learner in becoming aware of the linguistic rules in other contexts.

This chapter also refers to Ulrika Thornbergs view on who “the good language learner” is. He/she should be interested in the structure and the form of the language, he/she should be interested in the communicative functions of the language, he/she should work with exercises and tasks, he/she should be aware of the acquisition process, and he/she should be flexible when it comes to changing attention between form and content and adapt the strategies to the specific task.

I think that if you combine Krashens and Schmidts thoughts, you will as a teacher get a great understanding of the difficulties students can face when learning a new language. I agree with Krashen that the more the students listen to the language the better he/she will become, but also with Schmidts point of view that a knowledge of the grammatical rules is important to know and understand the structures and form of the language.

### **Chapter 6: The social approach**

Language is communication, and because communication is always done between two or more people, learning a language is most effectively done in a social context. If the teacher facilitate some rules on how to use the language either orally or grammatically it is more like that the students learn the language. When the teacher scaffolds the learning situation the students gets aware of his/her lacks of knowledge, which will pushed him/her into a thinking-out-loud-situation or a hypothesis-try, just like Swain claimed with her output theory. With this scaffolding the students needs to try his/her hypothesis of the language, which is why the learning situation should be social.

Learning a new language is also a part of learning a new culture, which means that if the learner is open to the culture, he/she will also be open to the language. Language can be divided into 3 functions: Communicative, integrative and expressive. If the learner is only interested in being communicatively able to say a few lines in the new language, he/she is not like interested in the culture. But if the culture is of a great interest of the learner, he will also in a more natural way get more interested in knowing the language quite well.

This makes sense, at least to me. I have always thought that Spanish is a beautiful language, and when I was in high school I wanted to study the language, but after a while I realized, that I wasn't interested in the country, the culture or even to work with the language on a professional level, and bit by bit my interest in the language grew smaller and smaller. Why? Because I couldn't see the purpose of being good in a language that I was never going to use. So the cultural interest is very important to have for the student to learn the new language.