

SEC524: Reading Guide for Krashen's "Principles of Language Acquisition" chapter excerpt.

If you are unfamiliar with the distinction between *learning* and *acquiring* a language, this paper will help. You can accelerate your understanding of the distinction between the two if, as you read, you make sure that you note whenever and how Krashen uses one term or the other; the two terms are NOT interchangeable, and have important implications for your teaching. Try using a T-chart and listing their characteristics separately to help you grasp the distinction. Answering the questions below will get you started as well.

*Caveat:* The information on Krashen's Monitor Model seems simple enough after a first-pass read, but 524 students who only read it once, and perhaps superficially, often mix up the Hypotheses, and have trouble explaining this theoretical foundation in terms that lay people (students, parents) can understand. Practice explaining each Hypothesis to someone who isn't in education to see how clearly you can make these Hypotheses understood. I strongly recommend you provide answers in writing to all of the following as well.

a. How might teaching students about the distinction between *Acquisition* and *Learning* help them perform for you in class?

b. When people read about the Natural Order Hypothesis, they often jump to the conclusion that the Hypothesis implies that we should teach early-acquired features of a language first, and late-acquired features later. What alternative implications for teaching can you derive from this Hypothesis?

c. In the section on the Monitor Hypothesis, Krashen posits that focusing on form and meaning at the same time is very hard. Later on, you will read research that states that beginners, especially, cannot do both. Jot down a personal experience that either supports or refutes that position.

d. In his segment on the Input (Comprehension) Hypothesis, Krashen makes the following statement:

In a theoretical sense, language teaching is easy: All we have to do is give students comprehensible messages that they will pay attention to, and they will pay attention to them if the messages are interesting.

What "issues" do we have to address in real high school classrooms in order to be able to support his assertion that language teaching is easy? Hint: think not only in terms of what teachers must do, but what students must be taught how to do.

e. In his corollary, *Talking is not practicing*, Krashen writes: *What counts in conversation, however, is what the other person says to you, not what you say to them.* If the goal of a language class is to learn how to speak, jot down your ideas of the implications of this corollary for your ideal classroom. In addition, can you find a weakness in his assertion that what counts is what the other person says to you, not what you say to a conversational partner?

f. In his corollary, *Given enough comprehensible input,  $i + 1$  is present*, Krashen asserts that a grammatical syllabus is not only unnecessary, but is an ineffective foundation for teaching students to speak. Assume for the moment that Krashen is correct. Clearly, many foreign language departments and textbook companies that want to sell books have not caught up to the research yet, because grammar syllabi still predominate. If the goal of a language class is to learn how to speak, jot down your ideas of the implications of this corollary for your ideal classroom.

g. The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that certain affective variables do have an impact on students' ability to acquire the L2. Think about the issues that worry students of the age you wish to teach, and jot them down below. What implications for your teaching and classroom management can you derive from the Affective Filter Hypothesis? Hint: think of how this Hypothesis might inform your decision-making about class guidelines for conduct.

h. Starting on page 6, titled *The Beginning Level*, Krashen presents five methods and techniques for promoting acquisition in the classroom. Test your understanding of the Hypotheses by noting which Hypothesis provides the rationale for each method/technique. Jot them in the margin if you wish.

i. Starting on p. 7, in the section titled *Methods comparisons*, Krashen states:

When tests are communicative, students in [comprehensible input-based] classes typically do considerably better than those in traditional, grammar-based classes. When grammar tests are used, there is either no difference, or comprehensible input students are slightly better.

Examine the data in his sample studies; what does this data suggest to you about language teachers or world language curriculum vis-à-vis your own experiences as a language student and/or as an observer of other language teachers?

j. In the section starting on p. 10 titled *The Intermediate Level: Sheltered Subject Matter Teaching*, **Krashen asserts:**

When all students are more or less in the same linguistic boat, it is easier for the teacher to make sure the input is comprehensible.

How might the information in this section help you guide curriculum writing in a department in which a significant number of students—either real or potential-- are Heritage Language Speakers\* of the target language? (\*Heritage Language Speakers include immigrant, refugee, and indigenous groups and their offspring. Their oral proficiency and literacy in the target language may range from zero to educated native level. A given population of such students may have uneven skills in listening comprehension of the language, but often the distinction is most notable in speaking, reading, and writing.)

k. In the section beginning on p. 11 titled *Continuation Studies*, Krashen outlines figures for enrolled changes that occur as a result of implementing comprehensible input-based teaching. What conclusions can you draw from his figures? List four or five factors that you believe influence student decision-making on the choice of language to study, and rank them, 1 = most important reason why I would take this language (as opposed to a different language) and 5 = the least important reason why I would take this language (as opposed to a different language.) Would Krashen's data help you make up your mind if you were to begin studying another language at this point in your career?