Derleme Makale / Review Article

A Critical Review on the Equivocal Definition of Comprehensible Input and the Misleading Use of the Term "Acquisition"

Anlaşılabilir Girdinin Muğlak Tanımı ve "Edinme" Teriminin Yanıltıcı Kullanımı Üzerine Eleştirel Bir İnceleme

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ABSTRACT: Stephen Krashen has been one of the prominent figures in the field of second language acquisition. His Input Hypothesis and Monitor Model can be considered as his most noteworthy work. Specifically, his principal proposition that emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input for language acquisition sheds light on linguistic competence. Krashen claimed that languages could be easily acquired as long as the acquirer is provided with natural bits of language. Despite the high acclaim they have received, Krashen's ideas have also been harshly criticized by certain linguists as his claims failed to clarify certain issues related to the second language acquisition. In this respect, the authors of this paper critically review his Input Hypothesis and Monitor Model focusing on the insufficiency of the input for language acquisition, absence of an operational definition of comprehensible input, and misleading use of the term acquisition. In addition, the authors also adopt a satirical language to pinpoint the aforementioned insufficiencies and misleading components, while supporting their claims with recent empirical studies that were rarely conducted in the field.

Keywords: second language acquisition, comprehensible input, language acquisition, language development, critical period.

ÖZ: Stephen Krashen, ikinci dil edinimi alanında önde gelen isimlerden biri olmuştur. Girdi Hipotezi ve Monitör Modeli en dikkat çekici eseri olarak düşünülebilir. Özellikle, dil edinimi için anlaşılabilir girdinin önemini vurgulayan temel önerisi dil yeterliliğine önemli oranda ışık tutmuştur. Krashen, dil edinen kişiye doğal dil parçaları sağlandığı sürece dillerin kolayca edinilebileceğini iddia etmiştir. Aldığı büyük beğeniye rağmen, Krashen'in fikirleri, bazı dilbilimciler tarafından sert bir şekilde eleştirilmiştir, çünkü Krashen'in iddiaları ikinci dil edinimi ile ilgili belli başlı bazı konuları netleştirememiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin yazarları, Girdi Hipotezi ve Monitör Modelini dil edinimi için girdinin yetersizliği, anlaşılabilir girdinin operasyonel bir tanımının bulunmaması ve edinim teriminin yanıltıcı kullanımı gibi konulara odaklanan eleştirel bir şekilde gözden geçirmektedir. Buna ek olarak, yazarlar, yukarıda belirtilen yetersizlikleri ve yanıltıcı unsurlara dikkat çekmek için iddialarını dil bilimi alanında günümüzde nadir olarak yapılmış deneysel ve bilimsel çalışmalarla desteklerken hicivli bir dili benimsemişlerdir.

Anahtar sözcükler: ikinci dil edinimi, anlaşılır girdi, dil edinimi, dil gelişimi, kritik dönem.

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Introduction

Behaviorism focuses on behavior affected by external factors rather than mental processes. In accordance with this, learning, which is triggered by environmental factors, takes place through classical conditioning. It is a procedure in which an exact response occurs with the existence of a particular stimulus. As stimulus appears at certain intervals sufficiently and frequently, the response is practiced, and it becomes a habit. However, if the stimulus disappears, as a result of the diminishment in the association between the stimulus and the response, extinction is anticipated (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). Therefore, it is possible to observe the implications of classical conditioning in the educational context. For instance, if an English language learner is picked on by his/her classmates because of his/her level of English or teased due to the mistakes he/she makes in English, he/she tends to associate English language or learning English with dread. In other words, learning English and the fear triggered by English become a habit for the learner.

On the other hand, according to operant conditioning, along with the sufficient inducement of reinforcement and punishment, the individual still engages in automatic behavior even though "no stimulus can be found that will elicit it" (Skinner, 1938, p. 21). To illustrate, if a child is rewarded on a certain behavior repeatedly, he/she is likely to do so again in spite of the nonexistence of any positive reinforcement. Similarly, in second language acquisition (SLA), through positive reinforcement of accurate utterances (likely to occur thanks to positive transfer from L1) and the correction of inaccurate utterances (might be caused by negative transfer from L1), learning can be eased. In this sense, providing learners with feedback on their performance can be considered as a way to promote desired behavior. When learners are reinforced upon displaying the desired behavior (i.e., giving the correct answer), they are likely to display it again. However, when the undesired behavior is punished or ignored, it is possible for the learners to stop doing it.

Basically, Behaviorism explains human behavior only by observable factors. Repeated exposure is used to develop a behavior, and the environment is the most important factor in learning. It is claimed that repeated exposure causes association of events (stimulus-response) and the desired behavior could be developed through positive and negative reinforcements, as exemplified. However, it excludes mental processes. According to Behaviorism, SLA occurs through massive repetition, avoiding error and getting constant and consistent feedback. Learning is conditioned and implicit. Due to behaviorism's disregard for cognitive processes and its purely focusing on observable behavior, it has been discredited by many critics (e.g., Castagnaro, 2006; Dulay & Burt, 1975; Ellis, 2015). However, it is inevitable to appreciate its useful implications at language classes such as modeling, drilling, along with observable outcomes in productive skills, namely writing and speaking.

Owing to the rejections made for the tenets of behaviorism, Monitor Theory, which can be linked to Chomsky's theory of language (assuming individuals are born with innate facility for language learning), was proposed by Stephen Krashen as a disavowal in the

1980s. Stephen Krashen has long been an influential figure in the field of SLA and English Language Teaching (ELT). His contributions to these fields are undeniable. Especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, Krashen's Monitor Model had a significant place in the field (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2016). Theoretical formulations deriving from Krashen's ideas have prompted the way linguists view the processes of second language learning (Mclaughlin, 1980). Consequently, a great deal of research has been carried out inspired by the ideas of Krashen (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). His ideas were also very influential when behaviorist language teaching methods (e.g. Audio-lingual Method) caused growing dissatisfaction and the field started to gravitate toward approaches focusing on meaning rather than form, such as Communicative Language Teaching (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Particularly, the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), associated with Krashen's hypotheses about second language acquisition, was favored by many as it intended to raise awareness of the importance of a ''naturalistic environment'' for language acquisition (Mclaughlin, 1980, p. 334). Nevertheless, the use of misleading terms by Krashen and his pretentious claims are still controversial. Therefore, the purpose of this review paper is to revisit and critically review his Input Hypothesis and Monitor Model focusing on the insufficiency of the input for language acquisition, absence of an operational definition of comprehensible input, and misleading use of the term acquisition. However, we do not intend to restate the common tell tales about his well-known hypotheses. It is emphasized that the style could be a little satirical to deepen appropriate understanding of Krashen's ideas and to pinpoint certain misleading understandings regarding the Input Hypothesis and Monitor Model, operational definition of Comprehensible Input and the misleading use of the term "acquisition."

Krashen proposed five main hypotheses that we will briefly mention here to provide a background for our claims in a later section of this paper. These hypotheses are (a) the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, (b) the Natural Order Hypothesis, (c) the Input Hypothesis, (d) the Monitor Theory and (e) the Affective Filter Hypothesis. In the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, it is claimed that there are differences between the acquisition, happening naturally, and the learning, happening consciously, explicit. According to the Natural Order Hypothesis, acquisition takes place according to a predictable order. It is postulated in the Input Hypothesis that i+1 is the most essential data for SLA, referring to the input that is relatively beyond the current level of the learner. The Monitor Theory refers to the monitor of learned language on the acquired language by editing or reformulating while producing at the target language. Lastly, the Affective Filter Hypothesis draws attention to the necessity of comfort of learners and their positive attitude towards the language at the acquisition process.

However, Krashen's theory, which can be more accurately named as a hypothesis, for it does not completely account for the phenomenon of second language acquisition, still remains a controversial topic in the field of second language acquisition (Brown, 2007; VanPatten & Williams, 2015). In other words, although Krashen's Monitor Theory justifies how second language acquisition occurs, it also brings several issues that need to be discussed. One of them is the vagueness of i+1 as it is almost impossible to define what i indicates due to individual differences and experiences that learners bring to the language

class. Besides, increased input does not guarantee that more acquisition will take place. This situation varies even more considering the fact that language classes are mostly non-homogenous in terms of the level of proficiency and less- able learners may have lower motivation and higher anxiety due to the increased input. In this respect, this paper aims to focus on the insufficiency of comprehensible input for language acquisition and operational definition of comprehensible input.

Is 'only' comprehensible input sufficient for language 'acquisition'?

Input is a prerequisite for all language development processes whether it is received during the acquisition of mother tongue or while learning a second language, as with the help of input, language development happens very quickly (Crystal, 2003; Hoff & Core, 2013). Ellis (2015), using the terms learning and acquisition interchangeably, suggests that input is necessary for learning to take place. Input is similarly the kernel of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), which posits that languages can be acquired in only one way and it happens through receiving comprehensible input and understanding the message it carries. However, the controversy itself stems from this particular point. In spite of incontrovertible vitality of the input for language development, Krashen's assertion that "receiving comprehensible input is sufficient for language acquisition" is too strong to defend and can be confuted empirically (Krashen, 1985, p. 2).

For instance, Schmidt (1983), to illustrate, conducted a study with a native speaker of Japanese learning English in the United States. Schmidt asserted that the subject's temporal L2 system did not improve despite over three years of comprehensible input and meaningful use of English. Similarly, Sato (1990) carried out a longitudinal case study working with two 10- and 12-years old Vietnamese brothers living with their American foster parents in a totally English-speaking environment. One of the children was placed in sixth grade and the other one was placed in a third/fourth-grade combination class. Apart from attending their regular subject area classes that are taught in English (e.g., a biology class taught in English), the Vietnamese brothers did not take any English as a Second Language classes. They were actually in their natural English language environment. At the end of the study, Sato documented minimal grammatical development despite the naturalness of the context and the ample comprehensible input obtained from the natural environment. Specifically, she focused on the development of past tense verbs and observed that the brothers were able to identify past tense adverbials such as yesterday but they frequently omitted the past tense aspect markers *-ed/-d*, simply producing sentences similar to '*Yesterday, I play*'. Correspondingly, Swain (1985), an advocate of Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (COH), carried out a longitudinal study that drew data from oral production, multiple-choice, and written production tasks done by children who were attending French immersion schools. The results of the study indicated that the children showed minimal grammatical development both in receptive and productive skills although they received a great deal of comprehensible input. In addition, Swain (1995) emphasized the importance of comprehensible output as follows:

> [I]n producing the target language (vocally or subvocally) learners may notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially, about the target language.

In other words, under some circumstances, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously recognize some of their linguistic problems; it may bring to their attention something they need to discover about their L2. (pp. 125-126)

Most of the empirical studies also support the importance of comprehensive output compared to comprehensible input. For instance, in their empirical study, Namaziandost, Dehkordi, and Shafiee (2019) investigated the effectiveness of input and output activities on productive knowledge of vocabulary among pre-intermediate EFL learners. First, they used the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) to choose the intermediate level participants, and then they divided these participants into three: two experimental groups and one control group. The first experimental group was exposed to input activities, while the second experimental group was exposed to output activities. The instructions for the experiment groups were focused on these two different approaches. The experiment took 9 sessions and each session was 50 minutes long. After the experiment, a post-test for measuring the vocabulary productivity was conducted to all the groups. Then, two weeks after this test, a delayed post-test was conducted to measure the effectiveness of input and output activities in students' retaining the vocabulary taught. Results indicated that both of the experiment groups outperformed the control group on the post-test and delayed post-tests. In addition, even though there was not a statistically significant difference between the experiment groups (i.e., input activity group and output activity group), the means for the output activity group were higher.

In another study, Tabatabaei and Yakhabi (2009) investigated the relative impact of comprehensible input and comprehensible output on the development of grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity. Drawing quantitative data from 60 female EFL learners, Tabatabaei and Yakhabi (2009) concluded that although the input group performed better in terms of speech complexity, the output group outperformed them in grammatical accuracy. The results revealed that receiving comprehensible input, although beneficial, cannot account for language acquisition. Another study conducted by Nowbakht and Shahnazari (2015) focused on the comparative effects of comprehensible input, output, and corrective feedback on the vocabulary development of EFL learners. The experiment group, which received input and was required to produce written output as well as receiving corrective feedback, outperformed the control group, which received comprehensible input only.

In another study, Rassaei (2017) investigated three forms of output activities to understand their effectiveness on L2 vocabulary learning, specifically on students' recognition and recall of L2 vocabulary items. Rassaei grouped the learners into three and asked each group to complete three different output tasks after reading two narrative passages. The first group summarized the text by including the L2 vocabulary, the second group created comprehension questions and answered these questions, and the last group made predictions on what would happen in the text by making use of the L2 vocabulary. The results indicated that making predictions and creating comprehension questions and answers were more helpful output activities than summarizing the text for recognizing and recalling L2 vocabulary.

Xiaolei (2013) investigated the effectiveness of input focused activities and the meaning-based output focused activities on Chinese learners' ability to comprehend and produce one of the Chinese adverbs. In this study, 41 Chinese learners were grouped into three. The first experiment group was exposed to input focused activities after the teacher's lecture to practice the L2 adverb, while the second experiment group was exposed to output focused activities after the teacher's lecture. And, the control group was not exposed to any interactive activities. L2 learners' performances were examined through reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing production, and translation activities. At the beginning, a pre-test was conducted, while at the end there was one immediate post-test and a delayed post-test. The results indicated that the meaning-based output focused activities helped L2 learners more than the input focused activities. In other words, activities in which the L2 learners produced output in a meaningful way in order to transmit a message or to communicate an intention helped learners retain L2 items more compared to input focused activities.

Ren (2017) also recognizes the importance of output in his "output-driven, input-enabled" hypothesis. He refers to output activities as input stimulating activities, and states, "It cannot only promote students' abilities to use receptive linguistic knowledge they have acquired, but also arouse their desires to generate new linguistic knowledge" (p. 152). He emphasizes the importance of output activities as follows:

> In completing the language output tasks, language learners will encounter the gap in their linguistic knowledge, which prompts them to process relevant input materials with more focused attention so that they can learn something new about the language, in terms of both language form and content. In this way, learning can be enhanced through the act of producing language, which increases the likelihood that learners are aware of what they can and cannot do with English, which then leads the learners to reappraise their capabilities in English and stimulate them to acquire new knowledge. (p. 152)

In line with these studies, Salimi and Shams (2016) also investigated the comparative effects of input and output focused activities on L2 learners' autonomy in writing in English. There were 18 pre-intermediate female participants in each group. In the first session, a writing task was given to both the input and output groups. In the next six sessions, certain vocabulary items related to the writing task was provided as input for the input group; however, the researchers did not ask them to use these words. On the other hand, in the output group, they asked the learners to use the target vocabulary items in writing and speaking tasks. In the seventh session, the same writing task was provided to both of the groups and the learners were asked to write a passage. In assessing the writing tasks, the researchers used a criterion consisting of essay length, fluency, complexity, and accuracy. The results indicated that output focused activities were more effective in terms of developing L2 learners' autonomy in writing skill.

Furthermore, Sun (2017) investigated the effects of three types of instruction on 80 Taiwanese EFL learners' vocabulary learning and retention of the vocabulary items. The learners were university students and their levels were low intermediate and intermediate. The participants were exposed to three types of instruction each week during their reading

classes. And these instructional types were a) picture-book reading-only, b) picture-book reading and vocabulary instruction, and c) picture-book reading and reading-based collaborative output activity. Each instructional period was 100 minutes long. The students' vocabulary learning was measured through an immediate post-test and also a delayed post-test a month later. The results indicated that picture-book reading and vocabulary instruction was helpful for immediate vocabulary learning, but picture-book reading and reading-based collaborative output activity was the most effective one among the three types of instruction in terms of vocabulary retention and in terms of improving learners' productive knowledge because these output activities "were open-ended, creative, generative, and collaborative, qualities that stimulate thinking and imagination, provoke discussions for story meaning, and promote learning enjoyment" (Sun, 2017, p. 110). Regarding the benefits of output activities, Sun (2017) also stated, "Without trying to memorize words, students learned vocabulary through mental investment in group discussions and generative activities, leading to their mastery of productive word knowledge" (96).

Peker, Regalla, and Cox (2018) investigated instructional strategies in teaching French L2 vocabulary in an inclusive, prekindergarten foreign language exploratory (FLEX) program through observations, video recordings, and vocabulary assessments of student learning through classroom tests. In this study, there were three teachers teaching French as an L2, and their instructional strategies were different. Each teacher used such instructional strategies to a certain extent as whole-class choral repetition, individual prompts to each student, individual prompts to selected students, and voluntary participation, teacher-made visuals, flashcards accompanying the video series, realia. These strategies were focused on eliciting participation (e.g., urging students to produce output) and supporting contextual understanding (i.e., providing meaningful input). Teacher 1 used more output activities than Teacher 2, and Teacher 3 was the one who used as more repetition as Teacher 2 but she used fewer output activities than Teacher 2. Results indicated that all students including students with special needs were able to learn L2 vocabulary; however, the scores of L2 vocabulary assessment were the highest in Teacher 3's classroom where the participants had more chances to produce output while engaging in meaningful communication.

Most of these studies refer to one particular issue or two important aspects of L2 learning: insufficiency of comprehensible input for language development and the necessity of output focused activities. They emphasize the difference between comprehension and production. Comprehensible input may help learners comprehend the meaning conveyed through it, yet it may not be enough for the use of the linguistic system to express meaning. Nevertheless, Krashen tries to confute this idea merely by referring to the scarcity of comprehensible output rather than mentioning the significance of production. In this regard, Krashen's hypothesis should be revisited and the idea of 'languages being acquired only through receiving comprehensible input' should be interpreted carefully because the word 'only' limits the other involved processes such as production or output. Swain and Lapkin (1995), in this respect, posited that for L2 acquisition to take place learners need to ''notice a gap in their own knowledge when they

encounter a problem in trying to produce the L2'' (p. 373). They call this comprehensible output that encourages the learner to discover what they do not know. Indeed, it is the comprehensible output that Krashen's hypotheses lack. Therefore, learners should also be pushed to produce the language so that they can modify their output (Swain, 1985).

What do comprehensible input or i+1 really refer to?

The Natural Approach, developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983), places emphasis on the linguistic hierarchy of structural complexity for language acquisition. Despite their avowed communicative approach to language, Krashen and Terrell's perception of language acquisition (learning) is not substantially different from of audiolingualists, who view language acquisition as mastery of structures (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). It is possible to infer this from the way they view learner's competence level and comprehensible input. The Input Hypothesis (IH) tries to expound this view as follows (Krashen et al., 1983, p. 32):

> An acquirer can "move" from a stage i (where i is the acquirer's level of competence) to a stage i + 1 (where i + 1 is the stage immediately following i along some natural order) by understanding language containing i + 1.

Although it looks quite logical at first sight, this idea comes with its deficits, thus causing ambiguity. Indeed, the first point that needs to be elucidated is the characterization of the learner's present state of i. In order to do this, we need to go step by step and find answers to certain questions. The first question is about defining learner's i. How can the learner's level of competence, which is i, be properly defined so that the precise comprehensible input +1 is provided? Krashen does not account for this issue. He (1982) only states "if the communication is successful, i + 1 is provided" (p. 21). Nevertheless, he does not verbalize what successful communication means, either.

The second question is related to the changeable competence level of learners. Can the learners' current level of competence not vary depending on the context? Given the interaction between a child and his mom, understanding the child's competence level may not be too arduous. Nevertheless, this issue becomes more complicated in language classes, "where learners will be at many different levels of competence" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 133). In this situation, it will be almost impossible to provide each learner with comprehensible input through 'successful communication' as Krashen claims.

Another point that is open to question is the uncertainty of the applicability of i + 1 formula to all the aspects of language ranging from lexis to phonology and syntax (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013). Krashen does not clarify this ambiguity in his work, nor does he explain to which aspects of language his formula refers. Therefore, this issue brings up an obvious question: are we talking about the language holistically or certain aspects of it when we take Krashen's formula into consideration?

The use of sugar-coated acquisition term

Last but not least, this section of the article will touch upon Krashen's preference of the term acquisition to the term learning for the Natural Approach (1983) – an application of Krashen's Monitor Model to language teaching. Having developed the Input Hypothesis, Krashen was swift to come up with the profitable product of his hypothesis:

The Natural Approach. As it seemed to be offering a 'natural' way to learn languages, it received considerable attention and inspired the development of many textbooks.

In the Natural Approach, Krashen cleverly differentiated between the concepts of acquisition and learning defining the former as an unconscious process and the latter as a conscious process (Krashen & Terrell 1983). That is, acquiring a language happens in a natural context in which the person is unaware of grammatical rules of the language (e.g., acquisition of the mother tongue by the child), whereas learning a language is seen as the direct instruction of the rules of language (e.g., adults' learning a foreign language). In accordance with Krashen's differentiation, the Natural Approach views acquisition activities as the central part of the organization of the second language course, yet the role of learning exercises is considered peripheral.

So far, everything seems to be plausible and unexceptionable. After all, who would contest the apparent difference between learning and acquisition? Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that using the sugar-coated acquisition term for language development regardless of age and context is what makes this idea (the Natural Approach) popular. In this regard, age is the first factor to look into as it has both attracted so much attention and led much controversy in the field of SLA. Many research findings suggest that the younger the learner is exposed to the language, the better and faster the learning takes place (e.g. Abrahamsson, 2012; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Bley-Vroman, 1990; Felix, 1985; Johnson, 1992; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Long & Larsen-Freeman, 2016; Mackay, Flege, & Imai, 2006; Muñoz, 2011; Muñoz & Singleton, 2007; Oyama, 1976, 1978; Patkowski, 1980; Pfenninger, 2017; Singleton, 1989; Slavoff & Johnson, 1995; Stölten, Abrahamsson, & Hyltenstam, 2015). However, starting learning a language especially after age 6 appears to hinder native-like proficiency in phonology. A study carried out by Flege, Mackay, Piske, and Meador (2002) investigated the effect of age on the accent of Italian-English bilinguals. The results of the study showed that early bilinguals had no accents in either language, whereas late bilinguals (Italian L1 dominant) had detectable foreign accents. The effect of age is not only related to phonology. Long (1990), for instance, reports a number of studies that state that starting to learn a language later than early teens leads to morphological and syntactical issues, as well. Although Krashen admits the importance of age difference in learning a language, he insists on calling "all performers, young and old, acquirers" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 61). In fact, Krashen's insistence on using the term acquisition brings to mind Lewis Carroll's famous character, Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass* (2006), who says "when I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less" (p. 60). As mentioned earlier, *acquisition* is a sugar-coated term and sounds a lot fancier than learning, yet using it for the whole language development process is nothing more than a mere generalization. As also claimed by Sato (1990) and Schmidt (1983), *acquisition* may be just learning and not completely acquiring certain structures. Therefore, scholars in the field should be careful when using the term "acquisition" and "learning." Even if Krashen tried to make the distinction clear, there are still cases in which some learners may not be acquiring a language even when the conditions that Krashen refers to are met (e.g., Moyer, 2014; Moyer, 2018; Muñoz, 2008; Sato, 1990; Schmidt, 1983). Thus, even though, as authors, we do not mean rejecting the

term "acquisition," we do warn researchers and scholars to use the term "acquisition" carefully and consider what is implicit and what is explicit for some input to be acquired. As mentioned earlier, some learning exercises may be considered peripheral, but depending on the learner and other factors, peripheral learning could lead to acquisition.

Conclusion

Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Monitor Model undeniably contain defective aspects. For instance, it is widely accepted that comprehensible input enables learners to construct their grammar; however, Krashen does not explicate what comprehensible input refers to for different levels of learners. On the other hand, Gass and Mackey (2015) refer to *modified input* and state, "the function of modified input is that modifying input makes the language more comprehensible" (p. 182). They address the comprehensibility of the input provided to language learners as level-adjusted input to make the meaning clear. If such terms used by Krashen were clarified enough or operationally defined in different contexts and levels, there would not be this much of controversy or ambiguity in the field.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, Krashen centralizes acquisition within the Natural Approach; however, the terms *learning* and *acquisition* have been used interchangeably in many contexts (Ellis, 2015; Ortega 2013; Regalla, Peker, Lloyd, & O'Connor-Morin, 2017). Also, Krashen calls all language performers as "acquirers" regardless of their age and their contexts, which also conflicts with the critical period hypothesis that postulates acquisition cannot be a case for learners of any age (Birdsong, 1999). These flaws, indeed, can be accepted as the main reasons for "taking his proposals not so much as a theory but as guidelines on how to behave in the absence of a theory" (White, 1987, p. 108).

However, Krashen's ideas are not so worthless that they should be thrown out the window. As mentioned earlier, his contributions to language teaching methodology and second language acquisition research are beyond dispute. Due to the complex nature of second language acquisition, it may not be possible to identify one particular theory that accounts for the whole language acquisition phenomenon or process. Therefore, rather than assuming Krashen's ideas completely inaccurate, raising awareness of their short-comings and aiming at turning their weaknesses into strengths would be more beneficial for the field of SLA and language teaching methodology.

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