

The role of input and interaction in sla

[Linguistics, Language Acquisition](#)



The role of input and interaction in SLA Terminology input —any language directed at the learner intake —the portion of input that learners notice and therefore take into temporary memory. Intake may subsequently be accommodated in the learner’s interlanguage system (become part of long-term memory). However, not all intake is so accommodated. output —what the learner produces (spoken & written language) and how much he understands from the input

input → intake → output

views on the role of input:

- behaviourist There is a direct relationship between input and output. Acquisition is believed to be controlled by external factors, and the learner is viewed as a passive medium. They ignore the internal processing that takes place in learner’s mind. Input consists of:
 - stimuli — with stimuli, the person speaking to the learner models specific linguistic forms which the learner internalizes by imitating them
 - feedback — it takes the form of positive reinforcement or correction. The possibility of shaping L2 acquisition by manipulating input to provide appropriate stimuli and adequate feedback
- mentalist They emphasize the importance of the learner’s ‘black box’. Input is still seen as essential for L2 acquisition, but it is only a ‘trigger’ that starts internal language processing. Learners have innate knowledge of the possible forms that any single language can take and use the information supplied by the input to arrive at the forms that apply in the case of the L2 they are trying to learn. Input is insufficient to enable learners to arrive at the rules of the target language.
- interactionist cognitive interactionist Acquisition is a product of the interaction of the linguistic environment and the learners’ internal mechanisms, with neither viewed as primary. Input has a determining

function in language acquisition, but only within constraints imposed by the learner's internal mechanisms. social interactionist Verbal interaction is crucial for language learning as it helps to make the ' facts' of the L2 salient to the learner. comprehensible input (Krashen 1981) - Input is a major causative factor in L2 acquisition - Learners progress along the natural order by understanding input that contains structures a little bit beyond their current level of competence (i+1) - Comprehensible input is necessary to acquisition to take place, but it is not sufficient — learners need encouragement to ' let in' the input they comprehend - Input becomes comprehensible as a result of simplification and with the help of contextual and extralinguistic clues - Fine-tuning (= provision of the linguistic features which the learners is ready to acquire next and using them, opposite: rough-tuning) is not necessary - Speaking is the result of acquisition, not its cause, learner production does not contribute directly to acquisition input and intake. Input refers to what is available to the learner, whereas intake refers to what is actually internalized (or, in Corder's terms, " taken in") by the learner. Anyone who has been in a situation of learning a second/foreign language is familiar with the situation in which the language one hears is totally incomprehensible, to the extent that it may not even be possible to separate the stream of speech into words. Whereas this is input, because it is available to the learner, it is not intake, because it " goes in one ear and out the other"; it is not integrated into the current learner-language system. This sort of input appears to serve no greater purpose for the learner than does that language that is never heard. Conceptually, one can think of the input as that language (in both spoken and written forms) to which the

learner is exposed If there is a natural order of acquisition, how is it that learners move from one point to another? The Input Hypothesis provides the answer. Second languages are acquired “ by understanding messages, or by receiving ‘ comprehensible input’ ” (Krashen, 1985, p. 2). Krashen defined “ comprehensible input” in a particular way. Essentially, comprehensible input is that bit of language that is heard/read and that is slightly ahead of a learner’s current state of grammatical knowledge. Language containing structures a learner already knows essentially serves no purpose in acquisition. Similarly, language containing structures way ahead of a learner’s current knowledge is not useful. A learner does not have the ability to “ do” anything with those structures. Krashen defined a learner’s current state of knowledge as i and the next stage as $i + 1$. Thus the input a learner is exposed to must be at the $i + 1$ level in order for it to be of use in terms of acquisition. “ We move from i , our current level to $i + 1$, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing $i + 1$ ” In Krashen’s view, the Input Hypothesis is central to all of acquisition and also has implications for the classroom. a Speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but “ emerges” on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input. b If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order—it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input. there are numerous difficulties with the concept. First, the hypothesis itself is not specific as to how to

define levels of knowledge. Thus, if we are to validate this hypothesis, we must know how to define a particular level (say, level 1904) so that we can know whether the input contains linguistic level 1905 and, if so, whether the learner, as a result, moves to level 1905. Krashen only stated that “ We acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$). This is done with the help of context or extralinguistic information" (1982, p. 21). Second is the issue of quantity. Krashen states that there has to be sufficient quantity of the appropriate input. But what is sufficient quantity? How do we know whether the quantity is sufficient or not? One token, two tokens, 777 tokens? And, perhaps the quantity necessary for change depends on developmental level, or how ready the learner is to acquire a new form. Third, how does extralinguistic information aid in actual acquisition, or internalization of a linguistic rule, if by “ understanding" Krashen meant understanding at the level of meaning (see below and chapter 14 for a different interpretation of understanding)? We may be able to understand something that is beyond our grammatical knowledge, but how does that translate into grammatical acquisition?