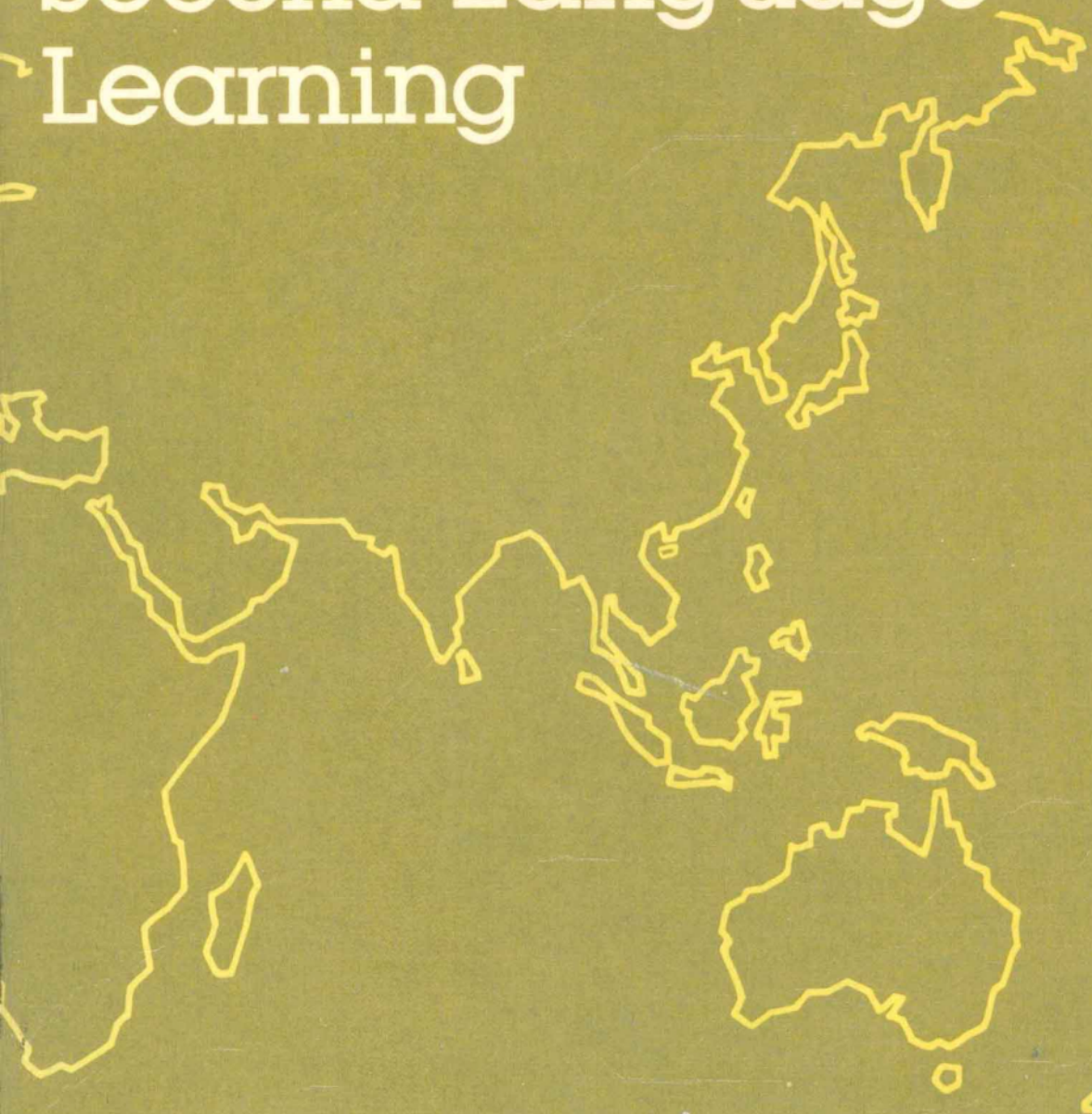
Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning

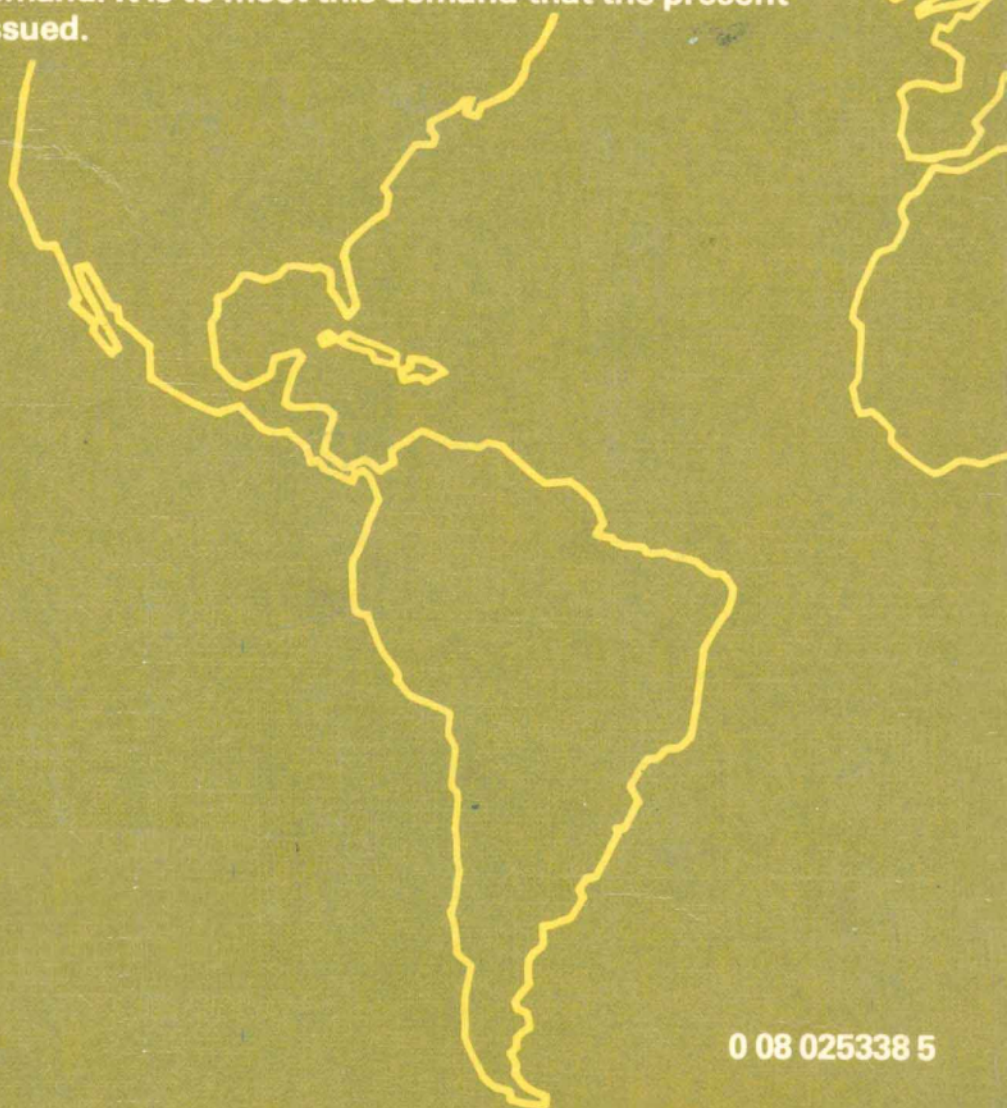


Stephen D Krashen

Pergamon Institute of English

This book presents the first comprehensive theory of adult second language acquisition, Stephen D Krashen's "Monitor Theory". Based on the important acquisition-learning distinction (which Earl Stevick has described as "potentially the most fruitful concept for language teachers that has come out of the linguistic sciences during my professional lifetime . . . ") Krashen's theory provides new insight into all areas of second language research and practice. Topics covered include the acquisition of grammatical structures, the role of affective variables, aptitude, individual variation, age differences, and, most important, teaching methodology.

STEPHEN KRASHEN is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Southern California, USA. His previous publications include (as co-author) the *Human Brain,* Prentice Hall, 1975, and he has published some 60 professional papers, many of which are in constant demand. It is to meet this demand that the present volume is issued.



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AND

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Contents

Introduction

This book is concerned with what has been called the "Monitor Theory" of adult second language acquisition. Monitor Theory hypothesizes that adults have two independent systems for developing ability in second languages, subconscious language *acquisition* and conscious language *learning,* and that these systems are interrelated in a definite way: subconscious acquisition appears to be far more important.

The introduction is devoted to a brief statement of the theory and its implications for different aspects of second language acquisition theory and practice. We define acquisition and learning, and present the Monitor Model for adult second language performance. Following this, brief summaries of research results in various areas of second language acquisition serve as both an overview of Monitor Theory research over the last few years and as introduction to the essays that follow.

Acquisition and Learning and the Monitor Model for Performance

Language *acquisition* is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language—natural communication—in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. Error correction and explicit teaching of rules are not relevant to language acquisition (Brown and Hanlon, 1970; Brown, Cazden, and Bellugi, 1973), but caretakers and native speakers can modify their utterances addressed to acquirers to help them understand, and these modifications are thought to help the acquisition process (Snow and Ferguson, 1977). It has been hypothesized that there is a fairly stable order of acquisition of structures in language acquisition, that is, one can see clear

similarities across acquirers as to which structures tend to be acquired early and which tend to be acquired late (Brown, 1973; Dulay and Burt, 1975). Acquirers need not have a conscious awareness of the "rules" they possess, and may self-correct only on the basis of a "feel" for grammaticality.

Conscious language *learning*, on the other hand, is thought to be helped a great deal by error correction and the presentation of explicit rules (Krashen and Seliger, 1975). Error correction, it is maintained, helps the learner come to the correct mental representation of the linguistic generalization. Whether such feedback has this effect to a significant degree remains an open question (Fanselow, 1977; Long, 1977). No invariant order of learning is claimed, although syllabi implicitly claim that learners proceed from simple to complex, a sequence that may not be identical to the acquisition sequence.

The fundamental claim of Monitor Theory is that conscious learning is available to the performer only as a *Monitor*. In general, utterances are initiated by the acquired system—our fluency in production is based on what we have "picked up" through active communication. Our "formal" knowledge of the second language, our conscious learning, may be used to alter the output of the acquired system, sometimes before and sometimes after the utterance is produced. We make these changes to improve accuracy, and the use of the Monitor often has this effect. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction of acquisition and learning in adult second language production.

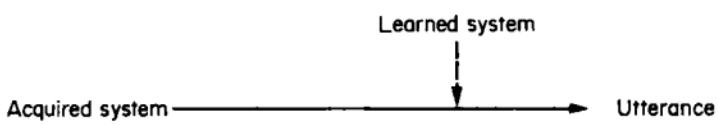

Fig. 1. Model for adult second language performance

The acquisition–learning distinction, as I have outlined it, is not new: Lawler and Selinker (1971) propose that for rule internalization one can "postulate two distinct types of cognitive structures: (1) those mechanisms that guide 'automatic' language performance . . . that is, performance . . . where speed and spontaneity are crucial and the learner has no time to consciously apply linguistic mechanisms . . . and (2) those mechanisms that guide puzzle- or problem-solving

performance . . ." (p. 35). Corder (1967), citing an unpublished paper by Lambert, also discusses the acquisition–learning distinction and the possibility that acquisition is available to the adult second language performer.

The Monitor Theory differs somewhat from these points of view, in that it makes some very specific hypotheses about the inter-relation between acquisition and learning in the adult. In the papers that follow, I argue that this hypothesis sheds light on nearly every issue currently under discussion in second language theory and practice.

Conditions of Monitor Use

There are several important constraints on the use of the Monitor. The first condition is that in order to successfully monitor, the performer must have *time*. In normal conversation, both in speaking and in listening, performers do not generally have time to think about and apply conscious grammatical rules, and, as we shall see later, we see little or no effect on the Monitor in these situations. This condition, however, is necessary but not sufficient. Heidi Dulay and Marina Burt have pointed out to me that a performer may have time but may still not monitor, as he or she may be completely involved with the message. There is, thus, a second condition: the performer must be "focused on form", or correctness. As we shall see later, the second condition predicts some recent data nicely.

An important third condition for successful Monitor use is that the performer needs to know the rule, he or she needs to have a correct mental representation of the rule to apply it correctly. This may be a very formidable requirement. Syntacticians freely admit that they have only analyzed "fragments" of natural languages, applied linguists concede that they have mastered only part of the theoretical literature in grammar, language teachers usually do not have the time to fully study the descriptive work of all applied linguists, and even the best language students do not usually master all the rules presented to them.

It is therefore very difficult to apply conscious learning to performance successfully. Situations in which all three conditions are satisfied are rare (the most obvious being a grammar test!).

Note that the model presented here allows us to self-correct using acquired knowledge of language, or our "feel" for grammaticality. That is what native speakers generally do in the case of speech errors. The point is not that we can only monitor using conscious rules. This is not the case. The point is that conscious learning is only available as a Monitor.

In the last few years, the acquisition–learning distinction has been shown to be useful in explaining a variety of phenomena in the field of second language acquisition. While many of these phenomena may have alternative explanations, the claim is that the Monitor Theory provides for all of them in a general, non *ad hoc* way that satisfies the intuitions as well as the data. The papers in this volume review this research, and include discussion of how the second language classroom may be utilized for both acquisition and learning.

Individual Variation

Chapter 1, based on a paper written in 1976 and published in Ritchie (1978), describes how the learning–acquisition distinction captures one sort of individual variation in second language performance. Based on case histories, this section proposes that there are basically three types of performer:

Monitor "overusers" are performers who feel they must "know the rule" for everything and do not entirely trust their feel for grammaticality in the second language. One case, "S", described by Stafford and Covitt (1978), remarked: "I feel bad . . . when I put words together and I don't know nothing about the grammar." In Stevick's terms (Stevick, 1976, p. 78), overusers may suffer from "lathophobic aphasia", an "unwillingness to speak for fear of making a mistake".

At the other extreme is the underuser, who appears to be entirely dependent on what he can "pick up" of the second language. Underusers seem to be immune to error correction, and do not perform well on "grammar" tests. They may acquire a great deal of the target language, however, and often use quite complex constructions.

The optimal user is the performer who uses learning as a real supplement to acquisition, monitoring when it is appropriate and

when it does not get in the way of communication (e.g. prepared speech and writing). Very good optimal users may, in fact, achieve the illusion of native speaker competence in written performance. They "keep grammar in its place", using it to fill gaps in acquired competence when such monitoring does not get in the way of communication.

Attitude and Aptitude

Chapter 2 illustrates how the acquisition–learning hypothesis provides a parsimonious explanation for what had appeared (to me) to be a mysterious finding: both language aptitude, as measured by standard language aptitude tests, and language attitude (affective variables) are related to adult second language achievement, but are not related to each other.

This section explores two hypotheses that attempt to account for this problem. The first is that aptitude may be directly related to conscious learning (especially certain components, as detailed in Chapter 2). As we shall see in Chapter 2, scores on aptitude tests show a clear relationship to performance on "monitored" test situations and when conscious learning has been stressed in the classroom.

Second language attitude refers to acquirers' orientations toward speakers of the target language, as well as personality factors. The second hypothesis is that such factors relate directly to acquisition and only indirectly to conscious learning. Briefly, the "right" attitudinal factors produce two effects: they encourage useful input for language acquisition and they allow the acquirer to be "open" to this input so it can be utilized for acquisition.

The pedagogical implications of these hypotheses will not surprise many experienced teachers: if the direct relationship between acquisition and attitudinal factors does exist, and if our major goal in language teaching is the development of communicative abilities, we must conclude that attitudinal factors and motivational factors are more important than aptitude. This is because conscious learning makes only a small contribution to communicative ability.

Chapter 2 also contains a discussion of the nature of child–adult differences, claiming that the Monitor, the conscious grammar, may

owe its source to Piaget's Formal Operations stage. Affective changes that occur around puberty, some related to Formal Operations, affect language acquisition. The chapter concludes with a re-definition of the "good language learner", now defined as someone who is first and foremost an acquirer, and who may also be an "optimal Monitor user".

Chapter 2 originally appeared in Diller (1980).

Formal and Informal Linguistic Environments

Chapter 3 is a revised version of a paper that appeared in the *TESOL Quarterly* in 1976 (see Krashen, 1976a). It shows how the acquisition–learning distinction helps to solve a puzzle in the second language acquisition research literature: several studies apparently show that formal learning environments are best for attaining second language proficiency, while other studies appear to show that informal environments are superior. In this section, it is argued that informal environments, when they promote real language use (communication), are conducive to acquisition, while the formal environment has the potential for encouraging both acquisition and learning.

This chapter, then, begins the discussion of the potential of the second language classroom for language acquisition, a discussion that is continued in later sections (Chapters 8 and 9).

The Domain of the Conscious Grammar: The Morpheme Studies

Chapter 4 reviews research pertaining to acquisition or difficulty order of certain structures, that is, which structures adult second language acquirers tend to acquire early and which they tend to acquire late.

The value of these studies is considerable. They provide more information than merely showing us the actual order of acquisition. They also show us when performers are using conscious grammar and when they are not. We have hypothesized that when conditions for "Monitor-free" performance are met, when performers are focused on communication and not form, adult errors in English as a second language (for grammatical morphemes in obligatory occasions[1]) are quite similar to errors made by children acquiring English as a second

language (some similarities to first language acquisition have been noted as well). When second language speakers "monitor", when they focus on form, this "natural order" is disturbed. The appearance of child-like errors in Monitor-free conditions is hypothesized to be a manifestation of the acquired system operating in isolation, or with little influence of the Monitor.

Current research in the "morpheme studies" supports the hypothesis that second language performers utilize the conscious grammar extensively only when they have to do extreme "discrete-point" grammar tests, tests that test knowledge of rules and vocabulary in isolation.

Also included in Chapter 4 is a response to some criticisms of the morpheme studies. Material in Chapter 4 was previously published in Gingras (Krashen, 1978b) and in a paper appearing in *On TESOL '77* (Krashen, 1977a).

The Role of the First Language

Chapter 5 deals with so-called first language "interference". It attempts to provide some empirical data for a position first held by Newmark (1966): "interference" is not the first language "getting in the way" of second language skills. Rather, it is the result of the performer "falling back" on old knowledge when he or she has not yet

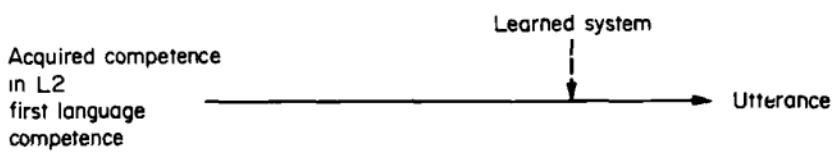

Fig. 2. First language influence in second language performance

acquired enough of the second language. In terms of the Monitor performance model, interference is the result of the use of the first language as an utterance initiator: first language competence may replace acquired second language competence in the performance model, as in Fig. 2.

From the data we have so far, this hypothesis correctly predicts that those aspects of syntax that tend to be acquired are also those that show first-language-influenced errors in second language performance.

First language influence may thus be an indicator of low acquisition, or the result of the performer attempting to produce before having acquired enough of the target language. It is, not surprisingly, found most often in foreign language, as opposed to second language situations, where opportunities for real communication are fewer, and is only rarely seen in "natural" child second language acquisition. Children are usually allowed to go through a "silent period", during which they build up acquired competence through active listening. Several scholars have suggested that providing such a silent period for all performers in second language acquisition would be beneficial (see, for example, Postovsky, 1977).

Note that it is possible for performers to use the first language and the Monitor to perform without any aquired competence in the second language. This bizarre mode is severely limited, yet its use may give the adult a temporary head-start over children, who presumably rely on acquisition alone for the most part.

This chapter is a slightly expanded version of a paper that originally appeared in *On TESOL '77* (Krashen, 1977a).

Neurological Correlates

Chapter 6 was originally published in the *SPEAQ Journal*, co-authored with Linda Galloway (Krashen and Galloway, 1978). It discusses current research in two areas of neurolinguistics and the relationship of this research to the acquisition–learning hypothesis. The first part of this chapter deals with the development of cerebral dominance, and explores research bearing on Lenneberg's hypothesis that child–adult differences in second language acquisition are due to the completion of the development of cerebral dominance, hypothesized by Lenneberg to occur at around puberty. More recent reports place the completion of the development of cerebral dominance much earlier (some claiming age 5, others claiming that laterality is present at birth). The implications of this research are that the "critical period" and cerebral dominance may not be related at all. Other explanations of child–adult differences are discussed, namely the hypothesis presented in Chapter 2, that Formal Operations causes an increase in our ability to *learn* but damages our ability to *acquire*.

In the second part of this chapter, the role of the right hemisphere in language acquisition is discussed. Psychological and neurological evidence is presented in support of the hypothesis that there is an early stage in second language acquisition (not learning) that involves the right side of the brain. Since it may be the case that early first language acquisition also involves some right hemisphere participation, confirmation of such a hypothesis would strengthen the parallel between first and second language acquisition.

Routines and Patterns

Chapter 7 originally appeared in *Language Learning* and was co-authored with Robin Scarcella.

Routines and patterns are "memorized language". Routines are whole sentences or phrases, such as *How are you?*, and patterns are sentence frames with open slots, such as *That's a* ———. A performer can use routines and patterns without learned or acquired knowledge of its internal parts. This chapter presents evidence to support the hypothesis that routines and patterns are fundamentally different from both acquired and learned language, and they do not "turn into" acquired or learned language directly. This evidence is drawn from neurolinguistic research, and studies in child first, child second, and adult language acquisition. Routines and patterns may be quite helpful, however, in establishing and maintaining social relations, and managing conversations, as Fillmore's work points out.

Theory to Practice

Chapter 8 deals directly with application to the second language classroom. It focuses, first of all, on the important question of how we acquire, concluding that *comprehensible input* is the crucial and necessary ingredient. This hypothesis, the "Input Hypothesis", is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. I then discuss what sorts of activities provide comprehensible input, input language in which the focus is on the message and not the form.

This chapter is optimistic with respect to the role and value of the classroom in encouraging second language acquisition, suggesting that