ForumSprache

Kontroversen

Kontroverse Ideen und markante Persönlichkeiten prägen die Entwicklung einer Disziplin in bestimmten Phasen. Erst im Rückblick erschließt sich jedoch, in welcher Weise dieser Einfluss wirksam geblieben ist. Einmal pro Jahr bitten wir zwei Autoren darum, den Beitrag einer Idee, einer Theorie oder einer Person zur Fremdsprachendidaktik aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven zu erörtern. In dieser Ausgabe widmen sich Wolfgang Butzkamm und Wilfried Brusch den Theorien von Stephen Krashen. Da es sich um durchaus persönlich gefärbte Stellungnahmen handelt, verzichten wir auf ein einheitliches Format.

Zugleich möchten wir Sie, unsere Leserinnen und Leser, anregen, mit den Autoren und dem Herausgeberteam sowie der aktiven Leserschaft, diese Beiträge in einem FORUM zu diskutieren. Schreiben Sie uns Ihre Einschätzung zu Krashens Hypothesen oder berichten Sie über praktische Erfahrungen, die auf Krashens Theorien zurückgehen. Wir freuen uns auf eine lebhafte Debatte.

Controverses

Les domaines de recherche académique se forment et se définissent grâce aux débats, menés par des chercheurs et en lien avec leurs parcours et profiles spécifiques. Toutefois, le bilan des effets et des impacts potentiels d'une idée ou théorie ne peut qu'être dressé après un certain temps. Afin de saisir ces impacts, nous invitons de façon annuelle deux auteurs de mettre en perspective une théorie à potentiel fort pour le domaine de recherche en lien avec le travail d'un chercheur ou d'enseignant, ayant fait couler beaucoup d'encre dans le passé.

Dans ce numéro, Wolfgang Butzkamm et Wilfried Brusch discutent les théories, mises en avant par Stephen Krashen au cours des années, ayant marqué les conceptions de l'apprentissage des langues. Dans la mesure où nous invitons les auteurs à développer leur point de vue personnel, les contributions (de) « controverses » bénéficient d'une certaine liberté quant à la forme choisie par l'auteur.

De plus, nous invitons nos lectrices et lecteurs à participer au débat autour du sujet donné, afin de mieux saisir les effets que les théories de Krashen ont pu avoir sur le terrain de l'enseignement des langues. A cette fin, un FORUM en ligne est mis à disposition. Nous sommes curieux de connaître vos perspectives sur les hypothèses préconisées par Stephen Krashen. N'hésitez pas à nous donner vos exemples et vos expériences en salle de classe, susceptibles d'illustrer l'un ou l'autre point de vue. Au plaisir de vous lire et de vous rencontrer dans le cadre de ce débat.

Controversies

Controversial ideas and idiosyncratic personalities shape the development of an academic discipline at a certain time. However, it only becomes clear in retrospect, in which way and to which extent these personalities and ideas have had an impact. Once a year we ask two authors to discuss the impact of a scholar, a teacher or a theory from different points of view.

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In this issue Wolfgang Butzkamm and Wilfried Brusch look at Stephen Krashen's theories and their influence on our understanding of language learning. Since these statements may carry some personal overtones, we grant the authors a certain degree of freedom of form.

We would like to invite our readers to participate in the discussion of Krashen's impact on foreign language education by contributing to an online FORUM. Tell us what you think about Krashen's hypotheses or relate an example from the classroom which supports or contradicts Krashen's theory. We are looking forward to a lively debate.

Controversias

Las áreas de investigación académica se forman y definen como tales gracias al debate que generan los investigadores a través de sus recorridos singulares y sus ideas controvertidas. Sin embargo, para reconocer la influencia que ha tenido la figura de un investigador o los efectos de sus teorías, es necesario que haya pasado el tiempo. Tal valoración sólo puede hacerse de forma retrospectiva. Precisamente con el objetivo de comprender esta influencia, anualmente solicitamos a dos autores que valoren desde distintas perspectivas el impacto que ha tenido la figura de un investigador, un profesor, una idea o una teoría en un área de investigación determinada.

En este número, Wolfgang Butzkamm and Wilfried Brusch debaten las teorías de Stephen Krashen y la influencia que han tenido en nuestra comprensión del aprendizaje lingüístico. Dado que los autores desarrollan libremente su punto de vista personal, sus contribuciones gozan también de cierto margen de libertad formal.

Por otra parte, querríamos invitar a nuestros lectores a que participen en este debate sobre el impacto de las teorías de Krashen en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras a través de contribuciones en nuestro FORO. Comente cuál es su opinión sobre las hipótesis de Krashen o explique un ejemplo extraído de su experiencia docente que apoye o contradiga la teoría de Krashen. Sus contribuciones son indispensables para animar el debate y lograr que éste sea verdaderamente controvertido.

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The Language Acquisition Mystique: Tried and Found Wanting

Wolfgang Butzkamm

Introduction

When it was first suggested that I should write yet another critique of ideas advanced by Krashen in the seventies and eighties, my first reaction was to say no. I had clearly rejected what became known as the "no-interface" position with reference to skills psychology (Butzkamm 1989/2002), and I had found fault with the input hypothesis in an article which remained buried in a festschrift (Butzkamm 1992). In the meantime, "Krashen-bashing" had become quite popular. Serious criticism had been advanced by Ellis (1990: 106), for whom the input hypothesis was "a bucket full of holes" – to name but one author. However, I was aware of the fact that the "acquisition" option so skilfully and forcefully promoted by Krashen was still very much alive among modern theorists, including proponents of the currently much discussed task-based instruction. Krashen and the adherents of task-based instruction share the underlying assumption that teaching practice should derive its principles from untutored natural acquisition situations (L1 and L2). So taking a fresh look at some of Krashen's basic hypotheses might still be useful today.

The acquisition–learning hypothesis

The acquisition-learning distinction as defined by Krashen is problematical. "Learning" is restricted to conscious and explicit learning, it is defined as "knowing the rules" or "knowing about the language", whereas acquisition is "picking it up", it is subconscious and implicit. This is terminologically quite unacceptable. "Learning" is an established umbrella term. Giving it a personal, restricted meaning can only sow confusion. Perhaps it would have been better to use the classic distinction between "intentional" learning, when people actively pursue their learning goals, and "incidental" learning, when people develop language skills while focusing on something else. Both ways are ways of learning. On the other hand, it does make sense to speak of an "acquisition" approach where it is based on observations of informal, untutored, "natural" acquisition of a first or second language in the crib or in the streets. This could be seen in opposition to "direct instruction", where teachers present, practice, and talk about, texts, conduct exercises and give explanations.

But terminology apart, what Krashen really wants to get across is that – putting it crudely - acquisition is good, and direct instruction is bad. The latter is equated with "language teaching in grammar-based approaches which emphasize explanations of rules and corrections of errors", and should be replaced by acquisition-type activities (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 26). In other words, in order to promote these activities in the classroom, Krashen is setting up a straw man, at least from a European perspective: "The idea that we first learn a new rule, and eventually, through practice, acquire it, is widespread" (Krashen 1982: 83). However, I have yet to find a methodologist of the 20th century who advises us to do so. Ever since the days of Harold Palmer, of Jespersen in Denmark or Philip Aronstein in Germany grammar rules have been presented only in close conjunction with demonstration and practice. The learner first encounters past tense forms, gerunds or if-clauses in texts which he listens to, reads and talks about, before practising them and analysing them in special exercises. This is also supported by research: For difficult constructions, explanations should come before practice, but after introductory presentation in texts or situations (Elek & Oskarsson 1973). "Conventional" classrooms, as we have known them for decades, even when roughly following a grammar-based syllabus, expose learners to meaningful language, try to deal with all kinds of classroom business in the foreign language, include communicative interactions

of many kinds and provide comprehensible input via listening and reading. Krashen tends to see his acquisition-learning distinction as an either/or position, which doesn't describe what normally happens. It is, to say the least, a misrepresentation of good practice as recommended by the vast majority of methodologists (all the methodologists I know of). In fact, classroom reality is much more complex. However, the distinction between "acquisition" and "direct instruction" is useful, as it provides different perspectives on the teaching-learning situation.

The input hypothesis versus the principle of dual comprehension

Much the same criticism applies to the input hypothesis. "Humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages, or by receiving comprehensible input" (Krashen 1985: 2). "It may be that all the teacher need do is make sure that students understand what is being said or what they are reading" (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 33). Very bold claims indeed.

This, again, is too simple, and in a sense too obvious, and does not even accurately describe first language acquisition on which it is apparently modelled. Admittedly, only comprehensible language input enables the child to develop grammatical constructions, defined as form-meaning pairings. Infants have learned to communicate successfully with their caretakers in narrowly defined, recurring situations even before they start to speak. They carry over their understanding of the situation and its components to the language accompanying the action. Understanding the language is made possible through a prior understanding of the situation. However – this is where we differ from Krashen – understanding must occur on two levels, a situational / functional and a formal / structural level (Butzkamm 1989; 1992; see also Cook's (1993: 61) distinction between "decoding speech" and "codebreaking speech"). In order to make progress, the child must not only understand what is meant, but must also see through the linguistic structure, i.e., identify elements of the world within the flow of language, and relate changes in the situation (for instance several balls instead of one) to changes in the language spoken to him (plural-s). Thus, for the language system to be acquired, a double transparency or double comprehension is necessary. Much of the special nature of mother-child dialogue can be seen as aiming at both levels of transparency (Butzkamm & Butzkamm 1999).

By comparison, the tourist has less help here. He may quickly learn to say "s'il vous plaît" whenever appropriate. However, not until he can break the expression down to its meaningful parts has he received input that can be grammatically processed. Only then can he be expected to analogize – subconsciously or consciously – and try phrases he has never heard before such as "si l'hotel vous plaît". Understanding a structure can multiply our production potential a thousand times. We cannot formulate the rule, but we know it in a functional, "can-do" way. This is when language learning really takes off.

To take one more example. An intuitive understanding of the French phrase "maman t'aime" (which, when pronounced, could be heard as a three-syllable word) is not enough. Ultimately, the child must not only understand that this is an expression of love (easy), and that it is "maman" who loves (easy), but the child must also detect where she herself, i.e., the loved person / the person spoken to is hidden in that phrase and must separate it out from the idea of loving. The latter is the more difficult because she does not see this phrase in print but only hears a continuous flow of language. Without an understanding of their structure such phrases "provide no less but also no more than holistic signals and gestures of affection, greetings, farewells, requests or thanks. Such gestures are also possible for some sorts of animals. However, the essential feature of human language which differentiates it from all animal languages is the way it divides and combines. Meaningless phonemes combine and recombine into meaningful words; words endlessly recombine to make up novel sentences, and on yet another level of organization, sentences are strung together into entirely different texts. Anyone wants

to learn the language of their dream partner, therefore, must not only know what to say but also how to put the message together" (Butzkamm 2001: 151).

In all fairness, it needs to be stated that Krashen does give passing recognition – in a footnote (!) – to the fact that "comprehension may not be sufficient […] it is quite possible to understand without making any form-function connection" (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 49). Well, yes. This is essential!

Ideally, then, the learner receives messages and along with them, transparent syntactical data. This puts them in a position to notice which utterance parts correspond with which components of the situation and how the pieces fit together, so that they can figure out the message *and* its structure. In Cook's terms (1993: 60f.), "decoding" must be supplemented by "codebreaking", which is conflated in Krashen's input hypothesis. This "dual comprehension" is best achieved not merely by receiving input, but by participating in dialogue and actively negotiating meanings.

From the start, speaking is a way of doing, "the continuation of action using different means" (Hörmann 1970). Language can take root if it is a means of satisfying physical and cognitive needs and getting control of the surroundings. We do not first learn language in order to use it later on. Learning to talk means talking to learn. Communication and learning how to communicate are rolled into one.

These observations are supported by the basic law of skill learning: ultimately, we learn what we do. A skill is acquired through the repeated carrying out of the complete skill, however imperfect it may at first be. This cannot be replaced by the carrying out of various sub-skills or part-skills, however useful they may be as part of the process of skill acquisition. There must be abundant opportunities for speaking spontaneously in social situations. From this follows the concept of teaching a language through communication: In one sense there is no way to communication; communication is the way.

The monitor hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis states that conscious learning has an extremely limited function. It can only be used as a monitor or editor and does not contribute to developing fluency. We are reminded of the acquisition – direct instruction distinction, which Krashen sees as independent ways which do not relate each other.

The monitor hypothesis flies in the face of all we know about the acquisition of skills. There is no empirical basis for the assertion that the monitor, i.e., declarative knowledge does not convert into procedural knowledge. It is an unassailable fact that speaking can be rightfully seen as a typical perceptual-motor skill such as typing, using morse code, playing the piano or driving. Skills psychology, from which we have already drawn in the previous section, provides a learning theory powerful enough to explain how knowledge about something can positively help develop a skill. It is probably the most serious objection to be made against Krashen that although he talks a lot about "learning" and how ineffective it is as compared with "acquisition", a theory of learning is conspicuously missing. This can be provided by skills psychology.

"In teaching a skill, there is always a place for initial explanation. This is as obvious for language teachers as it is for driving instructors, golf coaches or piano teachers." (Butzkamm & Caldwell 2009: 168). *Wissen* (declarative knowledge, knowledge *that*) and *Können* (procedural knowledge, knowledge *how*) need not be compartmentalised, but via practice, *Wissen* can turn into *Können*.

Incidentally, in the literature the distinction between "declarative knowledge" (which one can formulate explicitly) and procedural knowledge (which is normally implicit and not articulated) is often attributed to Anderson (1976). It is indeed an important distinction, one that the German language has made for centuries.

Skills theory explains how this process of *Gestaltwandel* (see Butzkamm 1989/2002: 40) or "restructuring" comes about:

> Performance changes through repeated practices, because the organism ceases to respond at the same level to a repeated stimulus (…) As pupils practise and perform a dialogue and get into the rhythm of the dialogue, utterances become

'kinetic melodies', they just seem to happen. Information on details, for instance on individual sounds, drops away and attention can be re-directed to higher-order events. Grammatical explanations are put aside, as declarative knowledge is compiled into procedural knowledge ("proceduralization", Johnson 1996). Groups of neurons that initially fire in sequence are merged into one. "Pruning" thus results in neuronal reorganisation and is identical with "short-circuiting" as used by West (1962, 48): "The indirect bond is short-circuited out by practice just as memorial dodges for remembering people's names are eliminated once the name is established." Pianists, for instance, can very well afford to 'forget' the fingering they learned. But 'eliminate' or 'forget' does not mean that the information is necessarily lost. In fact, it can often be retrieved, for instance when we become aware of an error and take time to reflect upon it and correct it (Krashen's "monitor"). As we attain mastery some neuronal connections just become silent. Speech production thus becomes elegant and economical. (Butzkamm & Caldwell 2009: 168f.)

Knowledge about language, when stated in simple, informal terms ("Mandarin doesn't have articles"; "most French adjectives are placed after nouns") has always been used in foreign language instruction. Although is has often been found necessary to warn against the misuse of complicated rules and explanations, there can be no doubt whatsoever that explicit knowledge can speed up the acquisition process (while its misuse can impede it simply by using up precious time and learning energy). A no-interface position must clearly be rejected.

Evidence from classrooms: 'a serious mistake'

Does the acquisition approach live up to its promise? Can exposure to comprehensible language plus communicative interactions trigger accurate acquisition? Said another way, is a focus on grammar quite unnecessary?

Krashen's idea that exposure to meaningful language is the one essential requirement for second language acquisition has been aptly termed the "just listen (…) and read approach" (Lightbown & Spada 2004: 128). The authors report about the New Brunswick experiment where this approach was implemented:

> It is the English period at a primary school in a French-speaking area of New Brunswick, Canada. Students (aged nine to ten) enter the classroom, which looks very much like a miniature language lab. With small carrels arranged around the perimeter of the room. They go to the shelves containing books and audio-cassettes and select the material which they wish to read and listen to during the next 30 minutes. For some of the time the teacher is walking around the classroom, checking that the machines are running smoothly. She does not interact with the students concerning what they are doing. Some of the students are listening with closed eyes; others read actively, pronouncing the words silently. The classroom is almost silent except for the sound of tapes being inserted or removed or chairs scraping as students go to the shelves to select new tapes and books.

To some extent, the programme was successful. However, the authors go on to say that a follow-up study in grade eight revealed that "students who continued in the comprehension-only program were not doing as well as students in a program that included speaking and writing components, teacher feedback, and classroom interaction." Perhaps the most telling thing is the fact that the programme was subsequently abandoned. As Sheen (2003: 62) comments:

> The Province of Quebec, in 1984, implemented a strong version of communicative language teaching based on the most extreme interpretation of Krashen's Monitor Model, banning all teaching of grammar and devoting all classroom time to communicative activities. In the ensuing 18 years, it has become increasingly apparent that the reform is considered a serious mistake, given that during the last decade or so the introduction of various other forms of grammar instruction have been sanctioned by the Ministry of Education.

The same "serious mistake" which had to be rectified concerns the highly praised Canadian French immersion programmes. Hammerly was one of the first to point out – on

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the basis of various empirical studies – that an "error-laden classroom pidgin becomes established as early as Grade 2 or 3" (Hammerly 1991: 5). Incidentally, from a European perspective, I find it unfair and unscholarly that Hammerly is given so little credit for his thorough critical evaluation of the first two decades of French immersion. The criticisms voiced by Hammerly and others must undoubtedly have contributed to improving the programme.

Mention must also be made of the Canadian Development of Bilingual Proficiency (DBP) project (Harley et al. 1990). In his evaluation paper, Stern (1990: 108) concludes by suggesting "for core French (= conventional French lessons) to extend into experiential teaching, and for immersion programs to add ways of combining experiential teaching with some degree of necessary and helpful analytic support." In other words, an enlightened eclectic approach is best.

Sadly enough, it is mainly due to acquisition theorists that grammar has almost become a bogey word, although their claims were unsubstantiated and not supported by classroom research. "Teachers of language, both foreign language and mother tongue, have allowed themselves to be manoeuvred into apologising for mentioning grammar, as a word to be ashamed of" says Hawkins (1987: 139) with reference to his own country. In Germany, none of the successful teachers I know of, who have a first-hand experience of the available options, dispenses with some explanations and regular grammar practice.

The natural order hypothesis and more counter-evidence from classrooms

Let us quote a modern confirmation of the natural order hypothesis:

> Thirty years of modern Second Language Acquisition research has repeatedly demonstrated that learners do not acquire grammatical structures or lexical items on demand, incrementally, one at a time, or in the order in which they happen to be presented by teacher or textbook. Instead, with some modifications due to L1 influence … , they acquire structures in roughly the same order, regardless of instructional sequence or classroom pedagogic focus…. Within many structures, they traverse seemingly universal, immutable interlingual sequences. (Long 2007: 121)

Long goes farther than Krashen: he even includes "lexical items", which I think is ridiculous, and which is why I will not comment on that point any further. Long mentions "some" modifications due to L1 influence; I think they are quite important and far-reaching. There is, among others, the work of Erika Diehl et al. (2000) – not mentioned by Long – which testifies to the significance of L1 influence. My main objection is based on personal classroom experience. In student productions after drill practice little evidence was found in informal checks for developmental sequences. I did find the occasional error which is also found in L1 acquisition, such as *She didn't bought the jeans*. But such errors could be easily dealt with. Well-known typical developmental stages in the acquisition of negation such as *I no like milk* did not pose a problem. Our drills were carried out when the structures, such as the gerund, infinitive constructions, the past and future tenses, if-clauses, personal passives, mid-position adverbs – you name them – were required by German coursebooks of English. The structural syllabus of the grammar school coursebooks seemed to work more or less satisfactorily. Learners seemed to be ready for the structures taught – at least when taught along the bilingual lines explained below. Secondary school learners could seemingly skip or compress developmental stages for the structures mentioned above, if they should exist at all. Of course, there are developmental stages for L1 learners, let's say in the acquisition of relative clauses, but no such stages could be observed for German secondary school learners who were taught English relative clauses.

What then are the "many" structures which learners acquire after traversing "immutable" sequences? Long (2007: 121) does not specify them, but says that to impose a pre-set, external grammatical syllabus on learners, "riding roughshod over individual differences in readiness to learn (…) attempts the impossible" and is "psycholinguistically

untenable". Well, no. 'Whatever is, is possible.' Countless language teachers all over the world have worked within a grammatical syllabus prescribed by their textbooks, many of them with considerable success, and have thus achieved what Long thinks is impossible. The language acquisition concept seems to have muddied the waters of language teaching and learning. While the concept fits well with the learning environment of first language, bilingual households, migrant children and adults in an L2 environment, it is debatable to what extent it applies to the 3 to 5 weekly hours of class time available for L2 learning in most schools. Students will mostly view L2 as just one of the many school subjects, which incidentally also face the problems of individual difference and Rousseauist readiness, and perhaps even see it as an imposition if it is mandatory and if they cannot understand the grammar system or the meaning. Here, a traditional grammar-based approach works best. However, when acquisition time can be expanded outside the classroom as students advance and begin reading independently, viewing TV, films and news, making contact with L2 speakers such as net-pals, enter immersion learning contexts and so on, the methodology will change. In the final years of EFL, many teachers have quite naturally ended up with only an occasional "focus on form", as an explicit correction, as a corrective recast, as a reminder of a rule, or as brief grammatical interludes while learners discuss a text or work on communicative tasks. Nothing of this is new, and since teachers are quite familiar with this practice they also know that it does not work for beginners.

It goes without saying that teachers should be able to distinguish between many types of errors, including developmental errors. It is doubtful, however, whether we have to go beyond a rough order of difficulty established by didactic common sense and pedagogic experience over many decades. It is also quite difficult to see how teachers of a class of 20-odd pupils could take account of an individual learner's stage of development with regard to a specific construction. Moreover, the terms 'stage' and 'sequence' falsely suggest to the non-expert that there are always clear boundaries or cut-off points, but in point of fact, there are often just gradual shifts in frequencies with old and new forms occurring side by side. Well-formed structures emerge gradually in natural first language acquisition. An important lesson to be learned from acquisition studies is for teachers to exercise more patience with such items as elliptical answers of the type *yes, it is / no, it isn't* and the 3rd person singular -s morpheme – items with little communicative relevance.

Moreover, there is empirical evidence that in classrooms learners don't just pass through developmental sequences but can get stuck somewhere on the way if not taught properly with a focus on correct forms. In a major longitudinal classroom study Sheen (2005; 2007) could show that, when a "grammar-free" communicative approach was chosen, incorrect auxiliary-free interrogative forms fossilised: francophone learners of English spent 8 years at school showing no development from forms first acquired after their first year. It seems that classrooms don't enjoy the luxury of foreign language contact time large enough to allow natural developmental sequences to run their course. All you need is communication? No, because all you get is fossilisation. So: "Should we teach children syntax?" (Dulay & Burt 1973). The answer can only be a qualified yes. Acquisition theorists need to specify the constructions that can be acquired through exposure alone. All practitioners know that some features, for obvious reasons, are acquired incidentally, without pedagogical guidance, such as English adjective order for Germans. But what about, say, the French pronouns *en* and *y*? (See also Sheen's articles for further studies rejecting the acquisition option and favouring an eclectic approach.)

There is a major conflict here between the young and expanding science of second language acquisition and experienced practitioners-cum-applied linguists, who, taking stock of 2000 years of trial and error, try to understand the successes and failures of the past and research what works best for their students. At present, suggestions from acquisition theorists as to how to teach seem premature and apt to sow confusion, especially when accompanied by arrogant attacks such as Long's against time-tested teaching practices. No doubt some time will pass before the two strands of endeavour

can really come together. In the end, it is the language teachers themselves who will have to accept or reject any suggestions from outside.

A serious oversight

"Do not refer to a student's L1, when teaching the L2. The second language is a new and independent language system. Since successful second language learners keep their languages distinct, teachers should, too". (Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982: 269). How odd that they should have overlooked the ways in which bilinguals quite naturally use their stronger language to help fill gaps in their weaker language and get on with a conversation in that language. The overwhelming evidence of history as well as modern classroom experiments speak to the efficacy of the mother tongue as a central teaching aid (Butzkamm & Caldwell 2009).

What renders Krashen's stance particularly striking is the fact that an author, for whom comprehension and meaning are central, should reject the use of the mother tongue which is provably the most accurate and most flexible means of meaning conveyance and making FL constructions transparent.

Take the German two-part conjunction *je…desto*, which is used to show that two things change to the same degree. This is an explanation as clear as it can be, but which will nevertheless leave the reader baffled for a moment or two. An example with its idiomatic translation is all the grammar you need. Even the term 'conjunction' can be dispensed with:

Je eher ich gehe, desto besser.
'The sooner I leave, the better'

Je länger ich bleibe, desto mehr gefällt es mir hier.
'The longer I stay, the more I like it here.'

Je mehr wir über die Welt wissen, desto sinnloser erscheint sie uns.
'The more we know of the universe, the more meaningless it appears.'

The translation <u>is</u> the grammar. In other cases a combination of idiomatic and literal translation, or better: 'mirroring' is needed. 'Mirroring' is the term used by Butzkamm & Caldwell (2009: 106ff.) for didacticised literal translation, literal translation adapted to teaching purposes:

Il ne me faut rien.	'I need nothing'.	*It to-me lacks nothing.
Il lui faut toujours de l'argent.	'He always needs money.	*It always to-him lacks money.
Il leur faut encore une heure.	'They still need an hour.'	*It to-them still lack an hour.
Il lui faut une femme.	'He needs a wife.'	*It to-him lacks a wife.

This is part of the grammar of the *il-faut* construction, and it is now crystal clear. We can see that mirroring differs from literal translation. It takes into account that learners would be familiar with the position of adverbs such as *toujours* and *encore* and with two-part negations such as *ne…rien*. After being shown these sample sentences mirrored in their own native tongue, English learners of French can be expected to make their own sentences along those lines. Admittedly, our methodology is far from "natural" since we must make sure that key constructions are encountered often enough and processed thoroughly in order to take root in the learner's competence.

To the best of my knowledge, the studies undertaken so far on the role of grammar teaching, the monitor, acquisition orders etc. have not included L1 support both in the form of idiomatic and literal translation. It is a type of direct instruction which is still "officially" outlawed in many countries. But with this kind of systematic mother tongue support, course books need no longer be grammatically sequenced as rigidly as they were in the past, although grammar must still be dealt with regularly and progressively

– "provided of course that what is learned linguistically is also used communicatively as it is learned" (Hammerly 1991: 46).

A grammar syllabus would mean that there is a step-by-step treatment of grammar items, but this need not regard the teaching texts. These can contain constructions that would only be analysed and systematised at some later point. Mother tongue translations would clarify them in the same way as they clarify lexical items, as Butzkamm & Caldwell (2009: 84) point out:

> "'Yesterday was Sunday' is just as easy for a five-year-old to understand as 'Today is Monday', but not for two-year-olds, given their undeveloped understanding of time. The reluctance to introduce the past tenses early on does not take into consideration the pioneering work that the mother tongue has already done, much to the benefit of the FL. Similarly, English pupils could easily handle a German subjunctive such as "Ich hätte gern eine Cola" [I'd like a Coke] in their first week of lessons. With translations, pupils learn these forms as a single 'one-off' unit. This will make it easier to choose authentic texts."

Apart from past tense forms, there are many more English constructions that German learners could handle right from the beginning of the course, but which traditionally occur much later in the textbooks. In my view, texts for listening and reading need not be grammatically sequenced and could be structurally random, provided that they are (or can be made) easily comprehensible on two levels. Krashen fails to recognise that "the L2 user has two languages in one mind" (Cook 1993: 66).

Nature and artifice: Getting our theoretical house in order

J.M. Coetzee (1997: 125), the nobel-prize winning novelist from South Africa, remembers his visits to his uncle's farm, when he was four or five and could not speak Afrikaans at all:

> There was no one to play with but the Coloured children. With them he made boats out of seed-pods and floated them down the irrigation furrows. But he was like a mute creature: everything had to be mimed; at times he felt he was going to burst with the things he could not say. Then suddenly one day he opened his mouth and found he could speak, speak easily and fluently and without stopping to think. He still remembers how he burst in on his mother, shouting 'Listen! I can speak Afrikaans!'

This is probably the archetypal situation, or osmotic absorption, which has fascinated acquisition theorists and has eventually led them to apply it wholesale to the classroom. Be that as it may, Krashen's acquisition ideas and task-based instruction are undoubtedly based on an assumed similarity between natural language acquisition and FLT. But teaching environments suffer from various deficiencies; most important are the restrictions of space and time and the fact that – in contrast to natural acquisition situations – the pupils have only one mature speaker to communicate with. To compensate for these deficiencies, teachers must use specially devised techniques, in other words, "artificial" means. Nature and artifice must come together. For instance, reading and writing in themselves are "artificial" products of cultural processes. It has taken centuries of observation, experimenting and theorizing to develop writing systems. For instance, leaving spaces between words is a comparatively recent invention. In ancient Greek and Latin is was customary to write letters continuously, without demarcating one word from another. No approach that uses printed texts with words neatly spaced out can rightly be called "natural" and "grammar-free". We must take to artifice, but the artifice is suggested by nature and will soon become "second nature". To put this idea in a wider perspective, I have tried to borrow the concept of "natürliche Künstlichkeit" from Helmuth Plessner, the anthropologist (Butzkamm 1989/2002; see also the excellent discussion in Swan 2005: 397).

Language acquisition theorists espouse a Rousseauist view of the language learner, discounting the benefits of direct instruction. According to them, "nature" has all the answers laid out at our feet. But direct instruction is far more important than Krashen

and his followers would have us believe. Let us learn from the past and not forget Palmer's distinction between "primary" and "secondary matter" (Palmer 1917: 68ff.), which is still pertinent and relevant, later, and more aptly, to be termed "memorized" and "constructed matter" (Palmer 1922: 141). In years of exposure acquirers absorb large amounts of primary matter or raw material from which they, gradually and creatively, construct more and more secondary matter, i.e., sentences of their own they might never have heard before. Their path *en route* to mastery reveals typical developmental stages. Ultimately those on the acquisition track, as we all know, will overtake classroom learners who must set off faster and must make more out of less. Said another way, for classroom learners, there is less primary matter to begin with, which means that they must build more on constructed matter – through carefully crafted grammatical exercises. Given the time restraints of classrooms, "productive skills learning, at the very least, requires something more than simple environmental saturation" (Caldwell 1999: 472).

For instance, a speaker of English who has learned to say *Er ist alt* and *Sie ist jung* and knows both what they mean and how they are said (dual comprehension again!) will quite naturally come up with *Er ist jung* and *Sie ist alt*, and of course also with *Sie ist müde* or *Er ist krank*, as soon as he knows those adjectives. He doesn't have to be given a rule or puzzle it out by himself, he simply analogizes. In Palmer's terms, he converts memorized matter into constructed matter. It is the teacher's job to facilitate this process, especially when L1 and L2 constructions are not identical, as in the following example.

English or German learners of French will pick up the phrase *vous auriez dû venir* ('you should have come') as primary matter, let's say in a dialogue. Before they act out the dialogue they should have understood both the message and the medium, i.e., its component parts. In subsequent exercises they will have to convert this base sentence into secondary matter, they might learn to say *j'aurais dû protester* and other things via substitution. Moreover, a conjugation table (*j'aurais dû venir, tu aurais dû…*) will also be made available for learners to refer to when needed. We are certainly not going to give up conjugation tables only because some acquisition theorists such as Long (as cited by Sheen 2003: 226) call traditional grammar exercises "Neanderthal" practice.

Conclusion

Krashen's ideas have captured the imagination of many teachers and applied linguists. I have always found his exposition of his ideas extremely readable and comprehensible and have recommended his books to my students. His ideas, including the four flawed aspects highlighted in this article, have been a great help in clarifying my own thinking.

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We would like to invite our readers to participate in the discussion by contributing to an online FORUM. We are looking forward to a lively debate.

Nous invitons nos lectrices et lecteurs à participer au débat autour du sujet donné. Un FORUM en ligne est mis à disposition. Au plaisir de vous lire et de vous rencontrer dans le cadre de ce débat.

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Controversies

Kontroversen

Controversias

Controverses