A Brief Description of Second Language Acquisition

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From the Professional Development Resource Series, "Second Language Acquisition", BUENO Center, University of Colorado, Boulder (2000)

This essay serves as a summary of several of the seminal theories of second language acquisition. It is meant to be used as a supplemental resource for those users who are looking for a more detailed description of the theories mentioned throughout the module. While the perspectives discussed here are theoretical in nature, they are grounded in the needs of the classroom teacher who is increasingly likely to be faced with growing numbers of English language learners in her classroom. Teachers of second language students are faced with many challenges and often have questions about how to best teach these students. Common questions include:

- How long does it take to learn a second language?
- What do we know about second language learners?
- What influences the learning of a second language?
- What can I do in my classroom to facilitate the process of second language acquisition?
- What should I expect the second language learners in my classroom to be able to do?

This paper will address the above questions through an analysis of two second language acquisition theories which have greatly influenced second language teaching today: Nativist Theory, and Environmentalist Theory. Nativist theory explores the linguistic aspects of language acquisition and provides an answer to the question of how people acquire a second language. However, this theory does not adequately address the environmental factors which can affect language acquisition. Environmentalists suggest that social and psychological factors are equally as important as linguistic factors in second language acquisition. This article provides a brief description of both theories and discusses the principal researchers within each camp and the contributions they have made to the teaching and understanding of second language acquisition.

Nativist Theory

The term nativist "is derived from the fundamental assertion that language acquisition is innately determined, that we are born with a built-in device of some kind that predisposes us to language acquisition." (Brown 1973). In 1965, Noam Chomsky, a linguist, proposed the theory that all people have an innate, biological ability to acquire a language. He theorized that people possess a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), a sort of neurological wiring that, regardless of the language to be acquired, allows a child to listen to a language, decipher the rules of that language, and begin creating with the language at a very young age. With the LAD they are able to make or understand utterances that they have not previously heard. Their first language is acquired with no direct instruction, no practice, no drills and with no apparent difficulty. Chomsky suggests that, if provided with the correct input, the LAD predisposes all people to the acquisition of a second language in basically the same manner.

Most of us cannot remember learning our first language – it just seemed to happen automatically. However, for many children learning a second language, the process does not

seem natural or automatic, and it can be associated with many negative experiences and memories.

Stephen Krashen (1977,1981,1982,1985) developed his Monitor Theory based on Chomsky's concept of a LAD. The Monitor Theory is composed of four hypotheses that provide a framework for teaching a second language:

- The Input Hypothesis;
- The Natural Order Hypothesis;
- The Affective Filter Hypothesis; and
- The Acquisition vs. Learning Hypothesis.

These hypotheses lay the foundation for the communication-based teaching strategies that have become popular with many instructors today. We will briefly describe each hypothesis, and then provide a checklist summarizing the methods and tools necessary to put Krashen's theory into action.

Input Hypothesis

Krashen proposes that children only comprehensible input to activate the LAD and begin acquisition of a second language. Comprehensible input is language (either written or heard) that is understood by the second language learner. Input becomes comprehensible when the teacher uses strategies such as:

- **Showing pictures or visuals to accompany new vocabulary words and communicative concepts**. For example, a math lesson on multiplying and dividing negative and positive numbers should incorporate pictures of the positive (+) and negative (-) signs, as well as the symbols for multiply and divide. A history lesson on Columbus sailing to the New World should incorporate pictures of Columbus, the ships, maps and the Taino Indians. In wood shop, rather than just telling the students what the tools are and what they can do, the teacher can hold up the tool or point to the tool as he/she says the name and demonstrate the tools capabilities. Additionally, the teacher can provide second language students with pictures of the tools next to which the students can write the name and use of the tool to use as a study guide.
- **Incorporating gestures, drama and music into the lessons**, Listening to rhythms and music and physically acting out situations make a lesson more comprehensible and memorable. To better illustrate the experiences of the first English colonists in Virginia, the teacher might have students act out the situation using their new vocabulary and using facial expressions to demonstrate the feelings of the colonists. The American states can be taught through songs such as "The United States." which rhythmically introduces the students to the name of each state. Carolyn Graham has produced a number of books for English language development which use these rhythmic "jazz chants" to emphasize different grammar rules.
- **Designing lessons with hands-on activities and manipulatives.** Science and math are ideal subjects for incorporating hands-on activities and manipulatives. In math class, the teacher can demonstrate the concept of perimeter and area by having students place a string around different

sections of grid paper. The string represents the perimeter and the squares within the grid paper represent the area. To study the planets of the solar system in science class, the teacher can help students measure out a scaled representation of the distances between planets outside on the playground. Students can then represent each of the planets and find out why different planets take different lengths of time to complete their orbits. An English or history lesson can utilize pictures and props to support the new vocabulary and the plot of a story. To check for comprehension, the teacher might have students place the pictures in order and describe the pictures using the newly learned vocabulary. In geography, the teacher or the students can design a floor puzzle of the United States consisting of 50 pieces, each one a different state. Students can work jointly on putting the puzzle together. As well, the teacher or students can design a floor map of the world and students can stand on the different continents as the teacher says their names.

- **Repeating new vocabulary.** The teacher repeats vocabulary crucial to the understanding of the lesson in a variety of ways: 1) games where students place the written vocabulary word on the corresponding picture or write the word as the teacher holds up the picture; 2) board games such as trivial pursuit, vocabulary, scrabble, boggle or hangman; 3) computer assisted lessons that incorporate the new vocabulary.

- **Translation.** When the second language group is homogeneous, the teacher can quickly translate key concepts to make the lesson comprehensible. However, the teacher should not come to rely upon translation as a common teaching tool in her second language classroom, as the students will learn to direct their attention to the translation rather than the target language.

Krashen posits that without comprehensible input, the second language learner is left with a group of words that are perceived as incomprehensible noise and can not be processed in the LAD. As Met (1994) states, "By enabling students to match what they hear to what they see and experience, teachers can ensure that students have access to meaning. Experiential, hands-on activities make input comprehensible."

Comprehensible input should be adjusted as the child acquires more and more language. "The acquirer understands (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure 'a bit beyond' his or her current level of competence" (Krashen 1981a:100). Krashen refers to this concept as i+1, where "i" symbolizes the child's present stage of acquisition and the "1" symbolizes the more advanced input the teacher will provide the child so that she may progress beyond the present stage. For example, if a student in a Chinese language class has already learned the weather expressions (its hot, its cold, its snowy etc.) the teacher can introduce the seasons using the weather terms as descriptors. In winter, it is cold and snowy. In summer, it is hot and sunny. The seasons (the more advanced concepts referred to as "1") become comprehensible by describing them using known vocabulary words ("i").

Ideally, comprehensible input should be attended to in more than just the English language development classroom. Northcutt-Gonzalez and Schifini developed what they refer to as the "sheltered approach" to instruction, where materials in content area classes are made comprehensible by incorporating the strategies of comprehensible input outlined above. Tharp

(1989, 1991, 1992, and 1994) discusses the principal of Contextualization in which teachers tap into students' prior knowledge to create a comprehensible content area lesson. For example, a target language science lesson on electricity will yield differing results if it is taught to a second language student who has previously studied batteries and circuits in school in her country of origin (prior knowledge) versus a second language student who may not have even grown up with electricity in her house. The student who has previous experience with electricity will have the capability to transfer that prior knowledge to the present lesson and therefore, will have a better understanding of the lesson and the new vocabulary. The student who has had only a limited exposure to electricity in her personal experience will most likely find the new material incomprehensible and, therefore, difficult to acquire. It is important that teachers assess the prior knowledge of their students and then, build upon the complexity of the lesson from the point of prior knowledge to the introduction of more advanced concepts. The principal of Contextualization is very similar to Krashen's notion of "i+1." The "i" in this situation is the student's previously acquired academic knowledge. The "1" would symbolize the new knowledge the teacher will build onto the prior knowledge.

It is important to note that the sheltered approach to content area instruction is best suited for a homogeneous group of English language learners. If the Sheltered class consists of a mixed group of English-only students and English language learners, the lesson is more difficult to implement. These two groups have different needs and the English-only students will tend to dominate the class due to their superior English skills.

Making a lesson comprehensible also involves assessing a student's level of academic vocabulary. Cummins (1979) discusses two forms of language developed in the acquisition process: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS is the first type of language a student acquires and is often referred to as "playground vocabulary" or survival vocabulary. It is the language that a person needs to function in society or to socialize with family and friends. It usually takes a student 2-5 years to acquire a high proficiency in BICS. Students with advanced BICS skills can converse about a seemingly endless number of topics and are familiar with the target language slang and idiomatic expressions. However, these same students may have great difficulty in academic areas such as science, math and history that require a different type of vocabulary (i.e. CALP). Rarely do students discuss academic subjects using academic vocabulary while socializing with family or friends. Therefore, unless specifically instructed in the academic vocabulary necessary to understand the lesson, second language students are prone to a low proficiency in this cognitive academic language, which can lead to academic failure. To ensure the success of second language students, it is important for content area teachers to directly instruct second language students (using comprehensible input strategies) in the academic vocabulary and language patterns necessary to comprehend the content area lesson. The following would be considered examples of academic vocabulary:

- **Math** - add, subtract, divide, multiple, integer, graph, etc.;
- **History** - democratic, vote, president, constitution, etc.;
- **English** - plot, protagonist, character, outline, scene, etc.; and
- **Science** - beaker, Bunsen burner, electricity, atoms, etc.

Thus, while teachers need to be aware of providing comprehensible input, they must also attend to the degree of Cognitive Challenge. As Tharp (1994) warns, "At-risk students, particularly those of limited Standard English proficiency, are often "forgiven" any academic challenges, on the assumption that they are of limited ability; or they are "forgiven" any genuine assessment of progress because the assessment tools don't fit." Teachers should not

"water down" the curriculum to make it comprehensible. At-risk students require instruction that is cognitively challenging and demanding of analysis and critical thinking, not just drills and repetition. Teachers should set challenging standards for their students and then prepare lessons that facilitate students' ascension to these standards. A cognitively challenging lesson in history, for example, should involve the same concepts as those introduced in the corresponding mainstream history class (i.e. Manifest Destiny, the Constitution), but, the second language history teacher would incorporate strategies to make the lesson more comprehensible (i.e. visuals, drama) and directly instruct the students on the academic vocabulary necessary to understand the lesson. If the teacher uses comprehensible input in the lessons while simultaneously developing CALP vocabulary, the majority of students will meet the cognitive challenge presented by the teacher.

> **Checklist for Teachers Implementing the "Input Hypothesis" in the Classroom**
> - Prepare visuals, realia, and manipulatives (drawings, photographs, real life objects, counting devices, etc.).
> - Determine the prior knowledge students bring to your lesson and plan the lesson from that point.
> - Plan content area lessons that incorporate the same concepts as the mainstream classes but modify the curriculum by adding devices to make it comprehensible to your students.
> - Decipher the academic vocabulary the students require to understand the lesson and plan a strategy to teach the students this vocabulary.

Natural Order Hypothesis

Krashen hypothesizes that every person learning a language will acquire that language in a predictable order. For example, students learning English, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, will acquire the plural "s" (girl<u>s</u>) before the third person singular "s" (like<u>s</u>). Despite the time a teacher spends practicing the grammatical aspect of third person singular "s" with the students, the students will not use the grammatical aspect in target language conversations until they have naturally acquired it. The natural order of acquisition is not affected by instructional sequences. Krashen suggests that providing students with meaningful comprehensible input that contains grammar, but focuses on communication, will enable students to naturally acquire the necessary grammar. Krashen expanded the "Natural Order" hypothesis when he teamed with Tracy Terrell to develop the four stages of BICS language acquisition.

Stage 1- Pre-Production

Student Characteristics and Examples of Student Work

During this stage, the second language student actively listens to the language input. Much like a one year old baby, the student is developing <u>comprehension</u> in the second language. At this level, students' reading and oral production will be marked with a transference of their first language pronunciation. For example, the letters of the alphabet represent different sounds in different languages. A Spanish speaker will pronounce the letter "i" as "e," and "v" as "b." Because the Asian languages do not differentiate between the phonemes [l] and [r], the students will mix these letters when speaking or reading. Given time, however, the students will acquire the sounds of the English alphabet and slowly change their pronunciation. As well, the format of

stories differs among languages. For example, a Spanish speaker is accustomed to longer sentences and will, therefore, often ignore the English punctuation when reading aloud to produce a story formatted more like his/her native language. Again, given time, the second language student will acquire the format of English language story telling and writing. A stage 1 student will be unable to correctly produce verbs in the past or future tenses and will rely on the present tense for communication. A stage 1 student will have great difficulty writing in the target language.

Length of stage
The length of this stage varies greatly, although most students spend 3-6 months in stage 1. Some students are ready to produce language immediately and will mimic the sounds of the teacher and the target language group until they can produce words in the target language. Other students are more hesitant to produce language and will spend a longer period listening before they attempt to speak. However, a student's reluctance to speak in the target language is not an indication that he/she is not acquiring the second language. Students at this stage can follow directions, point, draw, and act out situations in the target language - all without speaking.

Teaching Strategies
Effective teaching strategies at Stage 1 include Total Physical Response (TPR), Natural Approach, and cooperative grouping. To view an example of these strategies, please see video #_____ in the SLA module.

Assessment Techniques
Assessment techniques involve a number of modifications, especially that of substituting purely written examinations for visual and oral assessments. Students may be assessed by:
- placing pictures in order to show the history or sequence of a story,
- matching vocabulary words to pictures,
- touching or pointing to the vocabulary word (Show me a "saw." Where is the "chalkboard?").
- drawing concepts and adding words to the drawings (Draw the "Stamp Act" and label it using these words - "fire," "stamp"," British," and "Colonists").

Each of these assessment techniques requires oral instruction and support from the teacher. The Stage 1 learner will not understand solely written or abstract oral instructions.

Stage 2 Early Production

Student Characteristics and Examples of Student Work
At this level, students began producing utterances of one word. Students will repeat words they have often heard and that are comprehensible. It is not uncommon for students at this stage to produce memorized phrases such as "My name is..." My address is," "Sit down! " and "Leave me alone." Many teachers are fooled by the student's ability to produce a perfectly formed phrase. However, use of a memorized phrase does not indicate that the student is capable of manipulating and forming original sentences in the target language. The student has not necessarily learned the function of the separate words in the phrase, but has learned the function of the phrase as a whole. In other words, the whole phrase is utilized in the same manner that the student would utilize a single word. At stage 2, students will still have transference of native language pronunciation similar to stage 1. Toward the end of stage 2, students will begin to incorporate different verb forms into speech but will over-generalize the grammar rules. For example, once the student attributes "ed" with forming the past tense, he/she will use "ed" to form all past tense – regular and irregular. Students will produce utterances such as "She goed to

the store," or "She <u>doed</u> her homework." Although the teacher might view these overgeneralizations as a negative, they actually indicate that the student is progressing quite well in the target language. Given time and adequate comprehensible input, the student will eventually differentiate between the regular past tense and the irregular and correctly apply the grammar rules.

Length of Stage

As with all stages of BICS acquisition, length of time spent at this stage varies; some students pass through this stage rather quickly and move on to complete sentences while other students will communicate in one word utterances for a few months before progressing to stage 3. The typical amount of time spent at this stage is 6 months to one year. As long as the teacher provides comprehensible input that continues to progress beyond the students' present capabilities (i+1), the student will continue to acquire the L2.

Teaching Strategies

Effective teaching techniques at stage 2 include T.P.R., Natural Approach, cooperative grouping, drama or acting out of concepts, reading books with illustrations, Sheltered Approach instruction in the academic content areas of math, science and electives, and Instructional Conversation.

Tharp advocates the use of Instruction Conversation to encourage skills that will enhance interaction with the target culture. "Basic thinking skills - the ability to form, express, and exchange ideas in speech and writing - are most effectively developed through dialogue, through the process of questioning and sharing ideas and knowledge that happens in the instructional conversation" (Tharp 1989, 1994). Instructional Conversation involves eliciting responses from students beyond the "known answers" established in many classrooms. In the majority of classrooms, teachers tend to do most of the talking which focuses on a "predetermined and decontextualized inventory of skills and topics." (Pease-Alvarez and Vasquez 1994) Student opportunities to talk are limited and do not mimic the type of talk utilized in student's home or social interactions. Instructional Conversation, on the other hand, focuses on eliciting authentic dialogue between students and the teacher. This type of dialogue not only encourages the practice of new and different vocabulary, but enlightens the teacher as to the beliefs, ideas and culture of the students. If Instructional Conversation is utilized in a classroom of mixed cultures, other students will also gain an understanding and, hopefully, acceptance of the cultures represented in the classroom.

Assessment Techniques

Assessment modifications are similar to those of stage 1 except the teacher can now introduce more written words into the exams. For example, the student can:

- match written vocabulary words to short written descriptions (1. Columbus - c. a man from Italy who wants to discover a New World.)
- find the written definition of a vocabulary word in a multiple choice test (as long as the vocabulary utilized is not more advanced than the student's present knowledge).
- match a written word to a picture.
- answer "who," "what," "where," and "when" questions requiring one word answers (Who gave Columbus the ships to travel to the New World? When

did Columbus land in the New World? What type of people did Columbus find in the New World?).

- carry out performance assessments that focus on higher order thinking skills while minimizing linguistic demands.

The student will still require oral assistance while taking the test and can rarely perform effectively on a totally written exam. As well, the teacher should expect significant spelling and grammar mistakes at this stage as listening, speaking, reading, and writing all precede written proficiency.

Stage 3 Speech Emergence
Student Characteristics

During this stage, students begin to construct simple sentences until they acquire enough language to produce increasingly complex phrases. Transference of first language pronunciation will begin to subside although accent will continue to be an issue, especially for older learners. Students at this stage begin to use differing verb forms (past, present, future) and can engage in more lengthy conversations. However, teachers should expect a multitude of grammar rule overgeneralizations. For example, students will produce sentences such as:

- "doesn't can" instead of "can not"
- "doesn't goed" or "didn't went" instead of "didn't go"
- "I have many money" instead of "I have a lot of money"
- "He have little apples" instead of "He has a few apples"
- "She are going to the store" instead of "She is going to the store."

All of these overgeneralizations indicate great progress on the part of the second language student. The above examples demonstrate that the student has acquired rules for negatives, past tense, future tense, and count and non-count nouns**.** The student requires more time and more comprehensible input to sort out the grammar rules and begin to utilize them correctly.

Length of Stage

As with the prior two stages, students progress through this stage at varied times. The typically amount of time spent at this stage is 1-2 years.

Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies at stage 3 include Natural Approach, Sheltered Instruction in content area classes, cooperative grouping, drama, reading, writing, and Instructional Conversation. To develop better communicative competence as well as cultural awareness, it is beneficial to the second language learner to have ample contact and interaction with the target language group at this stage.

To encourage interaction between the second language students and the target culture, Tharp advocates the use of Joint Production Activity. Tharp highlights the frequency with which joint activities are used within families, communities and jobs to help children or novices learn by working jointly on a project with more experienced others. However, in K-12 education, joint activity is rarely practiced. A Joint Production Activity is an activity performed among mixed groups: novice student--expert student groups; student--teacher groups; second language student--target language student groups; and expert community member--student groups. Such an activity is designed to yield an end product that is meaningful to all who are involved in producing it and

includes all those involved in the planning. Joint Production Activities have many advantages in the second language classroom:

- they enhance opportunities for SLLs to acquire new vocabulary and communicative strategies;
- they assist second language students in learning new linguistic skills by interacting with experts;
- they increase the opportunity for SLLs to hear language used in meaningful conversations and increase the opportunity for SLLs to test their own hypothesis of language usage and;
- they help SLLs develop relationships within the target language culture which enhance feelings of acceptance and understanding and help to eliminate social and psychological distances.

Assessment Techniques

Assessment techniques at stage 3 can include more written work, although the vocabulary should be modified. Assessment techniques include:

- Multiple choice and matching answers,
- Short answer essay type questions incorporating "who," "what," "where," " when," and "how" questions.
- Continued reliance on high cognitive ability – low linguistic ability assessment such as performance tasks.

At this stage, teachers can expect exam answers to be grammatically incorrect with spelling and punctuation mistakes. For example, a stage 3 answer to the question, "Was Columbus a good governor?" would look something like this: "Columbus, he no good governor because he treat bad the Taino Indians. They no like he and he take theys money and make they slave." The student has the correct answer although the answer is riddled with grammar and spelling mistakes. At this stage, the teacher needs to be clear about the criteria he/she wishes to grade; the knowledge of the content area lesson or the English language. If knowledge is being graded, then the teacher should not mark down for spelling and grammar errors. If language is being graded, then it is appropriate to mark for spelling and grammar.

Stage 4 Intermediate Fluency

Student Characteristics

The student can now manipulate the language to create original sentences and engage in more complex conversations. The student should have a good grasp on different verb forms (past, present, future, etc..) although grammatical mistakes are still quite common. The student is ready to acquire advanced writing skills and perfect his/her oral and reading skills.

Length of Stage

The student tends to stay in stage 4 longer than the other stages. This stage involves more complex language skills and the acquisition of advanced academic vocabulary should be emphasized. It is not unusual for a student to be at this stage for 2-3 years.

Teaching Strategies

The teacher should continue to provide the child with comprehensible input, both oral and written. At this stage it is beneficial for the child to spend a significant amount of time with target language peer models. Instruction should emphasize the teaching of academic language using sheltered techniques, the Natural Approach, Instructional Conversation and Joint Production Activities.

Assessment Techniques

Assessment techniques are similar to those of stage 3 but can also include modified mainstream exams that incorporate the more advanced "why" questions. These exams should use wording that is straight forward with no slang or idiomatic expressions. The teacher should be aware that grammar and spelling mistakes are still common at this stage.

Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen claims that all people possess a "filter" which moves into one of two positions, low or high. A low position allows language to enter the person's LAD and be acquired. A high position prohibits language from entering the LAD thereby restricting acquisition. A low affective filter exists when the student feels comfortable and non-threatened in the learning environment. A high affective filter exists when a person is too pressured by outside factors to relax and allow the acquisition process to occur. Outside factors include a stressful learning environment such as too much instructional focus on error correction, pronunciation and form, or a humiliating learning situation where the child is forced to produce language before he/she is ready. To ensure acquisition of the second language, it is important that the teacher maintain a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.

Checklist for Teachers implementing the "Affective Filter Hypothesis" in the Classroom
- Create a learning environment that is comfortable for all students
- Attempt to model the correct grammar form rather than explicitly correcting the student every time a mistake occurs.
- Focus the majority of the lesson on meaningful communication and content area subjects.

Acquisition vs. Learning Hypothesis

Krashen asserts that two separate systems underlay second language performance. The first system is the *acquisition system*, which naturally occurs when a person receives plenty of comprehensible input, has a low affective filter, and the focus of the language lesson is on communication and meaningful use of the language. If these criteria are met, the language enters the learner's LAD and is acquired into the mind - a totally unconscious process. The advantage to acquiring a language is that the language becomes part of the linguistic system of the learner and can be automatically used in conversations and communication with the target culture group.

The *learning system* is activated when the learner is conscious of the language and is focused on the form and rules of the language. Learning a language encourages the student to focus on editing and planning the language rather than communicating with the language. Learning occurs most often in a grammar-based, drill and practice type instructional setting. Although learning is an important aspect of second language acquisition, Krashen believes that in order to fully use language in a communicative setting, the second language student must first acquire the language before learning is introduced. Learning too early in the process will

interrupt the acquisition process and produce learners that focus on form and editing and are stilted in their ability to communicate fluently.

While Krashen's Monitor Theory offers numerous linguistic explanations for the acquisition of a second language, it fails to completely address the social or psychological aspects of learning a second language. These additional factors are important in second language learning. Too often teachers are faced with linguistically capable students whose feelings of alienation, fear or frustration toward the target culture prevent them from acquiring high proficiency in the second language. The Environmentalist theory of second language acquisition specifically addresses the affective aspects of second language learning.

Environmentalist Theory

Environmentalists posit that environmental/outside influences over the learner play a substantial role in acquisition of a second language. The principal environmentalist theory, Schumann's "Acculturation Model," suggests that a learner's social and psychological distance from the target language group influences that individual's ability to develop proficiency in the target language.

Social distance refers to the social proximity of two cultures that come into contact with one other. For example, the culture of Americans and Canadians are quite similar. Therefore, the *social distance* between them is minor. However, American and Mexican cultures are very different. Therefore, the *social distance* between these two cultures is quite great. Schumann (1976) describes social distance as consisting of eight factors, described below, having positive or negative effects on the acquisition of a second language.

Positive Social Factors	Negative Social Factors
• **Social Dominance** The second language learner's cultural group feels dominant or of equal status to the target language group.	• **Social Dominance** The second language learner's group feels subordinate to the target language group.
• **Integration Pattern** The second language learner desires assimilation or acculturation into the target language group.	• **Integration Pattern** The second language learner desires preservation of his/her own cultural identity.
• **Cohesiveness** The second language learner's cultural group encourages ample contact with the target language group.	• **Cohesiveness** The second language learner's group is cohesive and tends to discourage contact with the target language group.
• **Enclosure** The second language learner's group requires contact with the target language group to go about daily life.	• **Enclosure** The second language learner's group has its own churches, newspapers and leaders and is not dependent on the target culture for daily living.
• **Size** The second language learner's group is small and encourages inter-group relations.	• **Size** The second language learner's group is large and tends to facilitate only intra-

	group relations.
• **Cultural Congruence** The target language group and the second language group are culturally congruent (similar). • **Attitude** The attitude of the two groups toward one another is positive. • **Length of Residence** The second language learner intends to reside within the target culture for an extended period of time.	• **Cultural Congruence** The target language group and the second language group are incongruent (dissimilar). • **Attitude** **The attitude of the two groups toward one another is negative.** • Length of Residence **The second language learner only intends to reside within the target culture for a limited period of time.**

      Schumann hypothesizes that the greater number of negative social factors affecting a second language learner's (SLL) relationship with the target language (TL) group, the more difficult it will be for the second language learner to acquire the target language. For example, in a new culture, a SLL can face a number of social pressures:

- alienation from the target culture because he/she feels subordinate to the TL group (- social dominance),
- encouragement only to associate with people from his/her culture (- enclosure) ,
- origin from a culture that is very different from the target culture (- cultural congruence),
- a decision to stay in the target culture for only a limited period of time (- length of residence).

These social pressures all work against the SLL and make acquiring a high proficiency in the target language a difficult task. On the other hand, if the learner feels:

- accepted into the target culture and shares equal status with the target culture (+ social dominance),
- associates often with the target culture (+ enclosure),
- is highly motivated to learn the language (+ attitude),
- and plans to reside in the target culture for a significant amount of time (+ length of residence),

      the learner will have greater ease in acquiring the language.

      In addition to social distance, Schumann (1978) describes *psychological distance* which consists of three factors: 1) culture shock, 2) language shock, and 3) motivation. These psychological factors, as well as the social factors mentioned above, affect an individual's ability to acquire a second language.

    1) Culture shock is the second stage of acculturation into a new society. The excitement and euphoria over the newness of the situation eventually wears off and the feeling that more and more cultural differences are intruding into the SLL's own image of self and security arise. At this stage, the SLL often complains about the target language (TL) culture and seeks solace in countrymen or situations similar to his/her own culture. It is not uncommon for SLLs to temporarily reject the target language and culture at this stage. However, if the SLL receives assistance and support during the culture shock phase and is encouraged to continue studying the TL, he/she will eventually acquire proficiency in the TL.

2) Language shock occurs when the target language is so different from the second language learner's own language that the learner passes through a "shock" period very similar to that of culture shock. The language system is so overwhelming that the second language learner can reject the target language for a period of time. Seville-Troike refers to the "saturation point" as part of language shock. Although required to attend school all day in the target language, newly arrived second language learners can reach a saturation point of learning in the new language after 30-45 minutes of instruction. Students who have reached this saturation point will stop paying attention, act out in class and become frustrated and discouraged. The saturation point can also occur in second language learners who have been in the target culture for 6 months to a year. These students hit a plateau in their language learning; they seem to stabilize at a set point and can not progress. These students also act out in class and become very discouraged. It is important for teachers to recognize when a student is at the saturation point and remove the pressure to produce. Eventually, the student will move beyond the saturation point on his/her own and begin to absorb more language. The second language learner needs encouragement and support to successfully overcome language shock and continue acquiring the target language.

3) Motivation is subdivided into two categories: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation refers to the desire to learn the second language for reasons such as furthering a career, translation, gaining employment, or college admissions. Integrative motivation refers to a SLL's desire to integrate into the TL culture. In this case, the SLL must learn the target language to become part of that society. Research by Lambert (1972) and Spolsky (1969) found that SLLs with integrative motivation scored higher on second language proficiency tests than those with instrumental motivation. However, studies by Yasmeen Lukmani (1972) have found that in India, instrumental motivation played an even greater role in language acquisition than did integrative motivation. Basically, motivation in general is psychologically essential to acquiring a second language. If the learner is involuntarily in the target culture and has no motivation to learn the target language, proficiency is unlikely.

Regardless of the competence and qualifications of the SL teacher, if the learner feels great social or psychological distance from the target culture, acquisition of the TL will be negatively affected. One of the manners in which a teacher can prevent social or psychological distance is by helping students become familiar with and enjoy the target culture. Swain, Canale, Long and Gee hypothesize that language acquisition is enhanced through interaction with people of the target language and culture. Swain argues that opportunities for output (student speech) are as important to the acquisition of a second language as opportunities for input. While input provides students with vocabulary and grammar, output provides students with opportunities to test their hypothesis of the linguistic and discourse rules of the language. Gee hypothesizes a social component to language acquisition. "Acquisition is a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings that are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and that they in fact want to so function" (1992 pg. 113).

Conclusion

Our understanding of the process of second language acquisition continues to evolve. These developing conceptions in turn influence our beliefs as to what is best practice for the teaching of English language learners in our schools. Recommendations for teachers have

changed over the years along with our understanding of the research on classroom practice. In this module our goal is to present the latest knowledge on both the theory and practice of teaching English language learners. As we discussed in the introduction, teachers of second language learners often have questions about how to best teach these students, questions like: what can I do in my classroom to facilitate the process of second language acquisition, and what should I expect the second language learners in my classroom to be able to do?

In this article we have tried to address such questions by outlining two popular second language acquisition theories: Nativist Theory, and Environmentalist Theory. We have argued that nativist theory provides an answer to the question of how people acquire a second language, but that it falls short in addressing the importance of the environmental factors encountered by the second language learner. Environmentalist theory highlights the social and psychological factors as well as the linguistic factors in second language acquisition. This article is meant to introduce the reader to both of these theories as well as to some of the principal researchers within each camp.

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