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How adults acquire second languages: Input, not output.

Eric Hilfer, in an essay on artificial intelligence (Language Magazine, June, 2018), assumes that adult language development “may be learned ... formally ... through instruction and explicit explanation of a new language’s structure” and that full competence in the language requires “... extensive practice speaking... and a large volume of feedback...”

There is, however, a great deal of research supporting the hypothesis that developing competence in a second language depends primarily on natural language acquisition, via comprehension of what we hear and read, and not on language production (speaking and writing). Research also confirms that consciously learning the rules of a language’s structure, remembering the rules, and then using these consciously learned grammar rules in real language use is extremely difficult, and that formal instruction and correction have weak and fragile effects. Studies comparing methodologies and correlational studies support these conclusions, and there are a number of published cases of older second language acquirers who have achieved high levels of competence with little or no instruction or correction. This kind of evidence strongly suggests that the ability to produce accurate and fluent language is the result of receiving “comprehensible input.”

Research confirming these points has been published regularly in the professional literature for decades. See e.g. the work of James Asher, Kyung Sook Cho, Warwick Elley, Harry Gradman, Christy Lao, Sy-Ying Lee, Jeff McQuillan, Beniko Mason, Leonard Newmark, Valerian Postovksy, Willy Renandya, Kenneth Smith, John Truscott, Harris Winitz, and others. Many of my papers on this topic are available for free download at [www. sdkrashen.com](http://www.sdkrashen.com).

Mr. Hilfer is free to disagree with this research, but he is not free to ignore it.

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Hilfer paper at: <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2018/06/10/the-agency-of-artificial-intelligence/>