English Fever = an overwhelming desire to learn English (and make sure your children learn English).
The obvious importance of English in today's world has given rise to English Fever. I propose here a cure that does not threaten the first language, that is available to all studentsregardless of family income, that does not require full "immersion" or the extensive use of native speakers, and that leads to continuing growth in English after the program ends.

Dr. Stephen Krashen, currently Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of Southern California, is best known for his work in establishing a general theory of second language acquisition. He is co-founder of the Natural Approach and the inventor of sheltered subject matter teaching. His most recent publications include *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use: The Taipei Lectures* by Crane Publishing Co. Ltd. (Taiwan) and Heinemann (USA), and *The Power of Reading* (Heinemann and Libraries Unlimited, 2004).
Dr. Krashen holds a black belt in Tae Kwon Do and was the 1978 Incline Bench Press Champion of Venice Beach, California.

Also by the author:

- Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use: The Taipei Lectures
- Foreign Language Education: the Easy Way
  (Published by Crane Publishing Co. Ltd.)

ISBN 986-147-133-2

文鶴出版有限公司
CRANE PUBLISHING CO.,LTD.

English Fever

Stephen D. Krashen

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First published in 2006
Published by Crane Publishing Co., Ltd.
3F., No. 200, Sec. 2, Jinshan S. Rd.
Taipei City, 106, Taiwan (R.O.C.)
Printed in Taiwan

ISBN: 986-147-133-2
Book No.:0030835
Retail price in Taiwan: NT$250
International Price: US$12.00

CONTENTS

Chapter One

ENGLISH: THE WORLD'S SECOND LANGUAGE

"The English tongue is rapidly spreading and bids fair to become the general language of the human race" (John Lubbock, 1803-1865; cited in Peter, 1977, p.284).

English fever = the overwhelming desire to (1) acquire English and (2) ensure that one's children acquire English, as a second or foreign language.

There is a good reason why so many people suffer from English fever. English has become the world's second language, the world's lingua franca. In fact, it is safe to say that it is difficult in today's world to be active and successful in international business, politics, scholarship, or science without considerable competence in English.

The language of the internet

Possibly the best overall indication of the dominance of English is the internet. As of 2001, 45% of the 500 million web users were native English speakers (State of the Internet Report, US Internet Council and International Technology and Trade Associates, Ltd., 2001; also reported in Krebs, 2001). Nevertheless over 75% of websites linked to secure servers in 1999 were in English (Press, 2000).

The language of science

Without question, English has become the language of science. In 1997, 95% of the articles cited in the Science Citation Index were written in English, up from 83% in 1977 (Garfield, 1998). This increase is not due to more work being done by scholars in English-speaking countries; the contributions of scholars from non-English speaking countries are substantial and increasing. It is due to more scholars from non-English speaking countries publishing in English. In 1977, 6% of all published papers were in German. This dropped to 1.5% by 1997, but during the same time period the number of scientific papers published by German scholars rose from about 24,000 to about 50,000 (Garfield, 1998).

The Pasteur Institute in Paris changed the language of its journal from French to English (Garfield, 1989). The editors explained that in 1973 only about 15% of articles submitted to the journal were in English, but in 1987 100% were. The journal still accepts articles written in French, however.

Coury (2001) reported what most readers of this book know already from their own experience. She investigated the language use of 20 Brazilian academics who were university lecturers as well as researchers. All used English to communicate with scholars around the world by e-mail, all read professional literature in English, and wrote papers in English. Nineteen said they did research on the internet in English, and eighteen said they used English to talk to other scholars at international conventions. All reported that there was pressure on them to produce work in English.

The language of aviation

The International Civil Aviation authority has recommended that English be the "default" language in ground-to-air communications; English is used if the communication is not possible in the language normally used by the ground station. This means that most international air traffic uses English (de Lotliniere, 2001).

The Usual Solutions, and the Unusual Solutions

The central concern of many language students and parents is accent and apparent fluency, what Cummins (2000) refers to as "conversational" language. From the uses of English surveyed above, however, a reasonable conclusion is that the needs for English in today's world coincide with what Cummins refers to as "academic language," the use of language for cognitively demanding purposes.

The usual approaches to English fever are to offer English to very young children (and sometimes require it) and to provide a lot of it. Two "common-sense" but incorrect assumptions underlie this approach: (1) Young children are superior at language acquisition: They "soak up" other languages effortlessly. (2) It takes years of schooling to master a language.

A "national obsession"

The situation in Taiwan is typical. In the words of one writer, studying English has become a "national obsession" in Taiwan (Liu, 2002),

and there are "high demands" for students to begin English as early as possible, in grade one and kindergarten (Chang, 2003). Also, English is a popular subject in cram schools; in Taiwan in 2000, about 29% of all primary school students were studying at cram schools (Taiwan Headlines, 2000).

At the time of this writing, Japan is experiencing a "boon" in English for young children. In 2002, public elementary schools introduced English in the form of games and songs: By 2004, 90 percent offered these lessons. This has resulted in increased English in preschool, with English school chains expanding and English lessons provided in day-care centers. According to a Japan Times article (Nakamura, 2005), English for preschool children is a growth market in Japan. According to the Benesse Corporation (Berlitz in Japan), 14% of households with children of preschool age are sending their children to some form of English lessons (McCurry, 2006).

The Korea Times (Chung, 2006) reported that one reaction to "English frenzy" is a huge increase in children going abroad "mainly for English." There has been a 10-fold increase in study abroad in the last six years, with most of the increase in small children, from about 200 in 1998 to over 6,000 in 2005.

Testing as a solution

Another popular means of increasing English proficiency, one that appears to be an automatic reaction to any perceived educational problem seized on by bureaucrats, is to devise new tests and incentives for those who pass. On September 1, 2005, The Taiwan Times reported that civil

servants in Taiwan who pass advanced-level English tests will get extra "performance credits" and have better prospects for promotion. This push may not be necessary: Only two months later, the China Post announced that a Taiwanese government survey showed a clear improvement in the English language environment in Taiwan. Foreigners surveyed said that the overall English environment improved from 5.53 to 6.21 on a scale of 1 — 10, with government agencies improving from 5.62 to 6.42 in one year (Che, 2005). The Taiwan government celebrated this accomplishment with an "English Carnival" in December, 2005, "in order to showcase their efforts at making Taiwan an English-friendly environment for foreigners" (Chuang, 2005).

In addition to starting early, pumping more English into the school day, and adding more tests, there have also been some unusual approaches:

Study space and villages

In preparation for the 2008 Olympics, a section of a park in Beijing has been set aside as "Citizens' English study space" where free English lessons are provided to all comers. One reporter wrote that 300 people attended the class on the day the reporter was there (The Asahi Shimbun, 2005).

For those who can afford it, "English villages" have emerged in Korea and Japan, small towns or resorts in which only English is spoken, where, for a fee, enthusiasts can immerse themselves in English.

Aimed at primary and middle school children, The Seoul English Village accommodates about 300 students at a time; students stay in the village for six days and are allowed to communicate with each other only in English. The "classes" are all day, but according to an article in the Seoul News, "During class-hours, students visit police stations, banks, hospitals, basketball courts and other simulations where students have to use 'living' English, or practical phrases" (Seoul News, 2005).

The villages are not real, however. The buildings are simulations of banks, post offices, airline offices, etc., and the interactions are simulations: The "residents" of the English village in Korea are actually English teachers trained to play different roles, such as policemen. (An ad for English teachers for the Seoul English Village mentions that the teachers will also be trained to act as doctors! See http://www.eslcafe.com/jobs/korea/index.cgi? read = 16024).

To my knowledge, there have been no formal evaluations of the English villages. The Seoul News, however, stated that "In a survey conducted by the city government, 91.5 percent of 1,169 respondents said that they were satisfied with the program" (Seoul News, 2005).

Crazy English

English fever has stimulated the growth of English teaching entrepreneurs. Among them is Li Yang. His "Crazy English" approach is, according to media reports, based on shouting. Li claims that the "tongue muscle training" he prescribes, shouting words and sentences out loud,

helps learners remember better, and helps them overcome inhibitions ("Li Yang a Crazy Talker," China.org.cn, Dec. 26, 2003). According to Time Asia, Li Yang has been so successful that imposters have attempted to give similar sessions claiming to be him. In 1999 Li claimed that 12 million people were using his method (Time Asia, January 18, 1999). No evaluations have been done of Crazy English, to my knowledge.

Garbage trucks and English

Moving to the more bizarre, Time.com carried the following news item on November 17, 2002, under the heading "Trash Talking in Taiwan":

"In Tainan, Taiwan, Mayor Hsu Tain-tsair has taken English instruction to a whole new level. Garbage trucks in Tainan usually blare symphonies to alert residents to bring out the trash. But since September, Hsu has had several trucks blast English phrases like 'May I help you?' and 'How much is it?' Dozens of five-second English lessons, which will change weekly, have been recorded for the program. Mayor Hsu says the free English lessons are part of his plan to promote Tainan as a hospitable destination for international tourists." I have been unable to discover how long this program lasted and what its effects were, both on the public and the truck drivers.

Tongue surgery

Certainly the most bizarre was reported in a documentary called *Tongue Tied*: A surgeon in Korea has performed "frenotomies," the removal

of about a half-inch of the membrane connecting the floor of the mouth to the tongue, in improve the potential for acquiring a good accent in English (MSNBC, 2004. "A short cut to better spoken English," http://www.msnbc.com/news/981625.asp? cp1=1)

(Note: Frenotomies are usually performed to deal with a genuine disorder, ankyloglossia, better known as "tongue-tied." Ankyloglossia occurs when the tissue attaching the floor of the mouth to the tongue is too short, which can result in problems in speech.)

The assumption behind this surgery is that there is something about the anatomy of the Korean tongue that prevents Koreans from pronouncing English correctly. There is no evidence that it helps improve accents, and the surgeon performing this operation has not, to my knowledge, been confronted by the obvious fact that thousands of Korean-Americans speak American English with no accent.

Nor, fortunately, does it seem to be the case that this procedure has become popular. Very few frenotomies have been performed for accent improvement; it appears to be the case that only one surgeon does it, and according to one report he only does one or two per month.

Prenatal English

The latest manifestation of English fever is "online English lessons for fetuses still in the mother's womb" (Segye Times, "Koreans try out English lessons for fetuses," Nov. 30, 2005). An internet company,

Bebecom, provides "lessons" that begin in the fourth month of pregnancy and continue until the baby is born: "The lessons begin by teaching simple greetings, introductions of family members, and lullabies. Later, fetuses are taught the names and functions of the parts of the human body, numbers and geometric shapes, and the names and flavors of various foods. A recording of a story for children is available for fetuses approaching the point of birth."

I understand that English fever is, to some extent, justified, that English has, in fact become the world's second language. But I don't think the process has to be so complex, so expensive, and so hard. I don't think children need to be immersed in English beginning at very young ages for long periods of time. The proposals I will present here are not only more modest than English from garbage trucks and tongue surgery, they are also much cheaper than English villages.

An Easier Way

I propose here a plan that is more efficient, and, at the same time, is easier and less expensive than the usual options. A few preliminaries need to be discussed first, however. It is, I think, very important to understand the reasons for the proposals I am about to make.

In the next chapter, I review our current state of understanding of second language acquisition. ❶

Footnote

❶ Not everybody suffers from English fever. Commenting on an editorial in the China Post (Taiwan), Lau Shu-mei Feng (2005) acknowledges that English is necessary for business, academia, the arts and industry, but advises fellow Taiwanese that "we should not abandon our cultural assets and identity." Blindly chasing English, Feng warns, may result in the degeneration of competence in Chinese and an ignorance of Taiwanese culture and history: "For a nation, the language represents a significant cultural asset accumulated through a series of complicated alternations with time. How can you get close to this land and love these folk if you cannot employ the language well enough to communicate?"
In the same issue of the China Post, Mark Wilber even questions the value of achieving superiority in English, noting that countries that have done well are not necessarily those with the highest international rankings in English:

"Taiwanese children's English proficiency was ranked at 11th. So what? Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan 'won.' Their English was ranked as 'best.' What did that do for them? On the other hand look at Japan. In 1960, it was amongst the poorest countries in the world. By 1980, it was the second wealthiest. Was it an 'English powerhouse' during that time? Absolutely, not. Maybe if Taiwanese people were half as crazed about teaching their children engineering as English, Taiwan would be even richer than Japan."

There is a great deal of truth in what these writers say. It is important that any program designed to improve English allow for the continued development of the native language and for advanced learning of both culture and science in the primary language.

Chapter Two

THE COMPREHENSION HYPOTHESIS (AND OTHER HYPOTHESES)

The Comprehension Hypothesis

At the core of current theory of second language acquisition is the Comprehension Hypothesis. The Comprehension Hypothesis states that we acquire language when we understand messages, when we understand what people tell us, and when we understand what we read.

Until a few years ago, I referred to this hypothesis as the Input Hypothesis, a term I still consider to be acceptable. I have come to prefer "Comprehension Hypothesis" because it more accurately reflects what the hypothesis says.

The Comprehension Hypothesis is not new with me. In the field of second language acquisition, James Asher (e.g. Asher, 1994) and Harris Winitz (1981) discussed the importance of comprehension years before I did. Nor is the Comprehension Hypothesis limited to second language acquisition. In the field of reading instruction, Kenneth Goodman (1986) and Frank Smith (2004) hypothesized that "we learn to read by reading"; we learn to read by understanding what is on the page. And as we will see in chapter three, the Comprehension Hypothesis also correctly predicts that reading has positive consequences: Our reading ability, our ability to write

in an acceptable writing style, our spelling ability, vocabulary knowledge, and our ability to handle complex syntax are all the result of reading.

The Comprehension Hypothesis is not a wild idea, the result of staying up all night drinking cheap wine. It is, rather, conservative, an effort to make sense of and be consistent with a wide body of academic research.

For a hypothesis to survive, it must be consistent with all the research: there can be no exceptions. I have argued that this is the case with respect to the Comprehension Hypothesis: It is consistent with research in several different fields and continues to be validated, and potential counterexamples have been easily dealt with. I will not review all this research here as details are available in previous publications (e.g. Krashen 2002a,b).

A corollary

The Comprehension Hypothesis has an important corollary: The ability to produce language is the result of language acquisition, the result of obtaining comprehensible input, not the cause. In other words, talking is not practicing and writing is not practicing; we do not learn to speak by speaking, and we do not learn to write by writing (see chapter four for more discussion of writing).

The Comprehension Hypothesis and other Hypotheses

Acquisition-Learning

The Comprehension Hypothesis is closely related to other hypotheses. The acquisition-learning hypothesis claims that we have two distinct means of developing competence in language; we can *acquire* language and we can *learn* language.

Language acquisition occurs subconsciously. While it is happening, we are not aware that it is happening. We think we are having a conversation, reading a book, watching a movie. Of course we are, but at the same time we might be acquiring language.

Also, once we have acquired something, we are not usually aware that anything has happened; the knowledge is stored in our brains subconsciously.

The research strongly supports the view that both children and adults can subconsciously acquire language. Also, both oral and written language can be acquired.

Acquisition is sometimes referred to as "picking up" a language. When someone says, "I was in France for a while and I picked up some French," it means he or she acquired it.

Language *learning* is a conscious process: When we are learning, we know we are learning, and we are trying to learn. Language learning is

what we did in school; in everyday language, when we talk about "rules" and "grammar," we are talking about "learning."

Error correction is supposed to help learning. When we make a mistake and are corrected, we are supposed to change our conscious version of the rule. If a learner says, "I comes to school every day," and a teacher responds with "No, it's 'I *come* to school,'" the learner is supposed to realize that the -s doesn't go on the first person singular.

The Comprehension Hypothesis refers to subconscious acquisition, not conscious learning.

The Natural Order Hypothesis

According to the Natural Order Hypothesis, we acquire (not learn) the parts of language in a predictable order. Some grammatical items, for example, are acquired early, while others are acquired later. The order is not exact: Not every acquirer proceeds in exactly the same order. But the variation among acquirers is not extreme.

In English as a second language, for example, the -ing marker, the progressive ("John is playing the violin"), is among the first grammatical markers (function words) to be acquired, while the third person singular -s is acquired later. In fact, some adults who speak English as a second language guitewtll may not have acquired this marker.

Research has come up with some surprising findings about the natural order. First, it is not true that "simple" rules are acquired early and complicated rules are acquired later. Some rules that look simple (e.g. the third person singular) are acquired late. Others that appear to linguists to be complex are acquired early. This presents a problem to curriculum designers who present rules to language students from "simple" to "complex." A rule may look very simple to a grammarian, but may be late-acquired.

Second, the natural order cannot be changed. We cannot alter the natural order by giving explanations or with drills and exercises. A teacher can drill the third person singular for weeks, but it will not be acquired until the acquirer is ready for it. This explains a great deal of the frustration language teachers and students have.

The cause of the natural order is comprehensible input, or, phrased the other way around, if acquirers are provided with comprehensible input in another language, they will acquire the rules of the language in a predictable order.

The Affective Filter

The Affective Filter Hypothesis claims that high anxiety and low motivation hurt language acquisition not by directly affecting the operation of the "language acquisition device" but by preventing input from reaching the device.

If the acquirer is anxious, has low self-esteem, does not consider himself or herself to be a potential member of the group that speaks the language (not a member of the club, see Smith, 1988 for discussion of this last factor), he or she may understand the input, but it will not help; it will not cause language acquisition. A block, the affective filter, will keep it out.

The presence of the affective filter explains how two students can receive the same comprehensible input, yet one makes progress, while the other does not. One is "open" to the input while the other is not. Comprehensible input is not enough to guarantee language acquisition.

If we ignore the Comprehension Hypothesis, that is, provide students with incomprehensible input, and force early speaking, we will raise students' affective filters.

The Monitor Hypothesis and the role of grammar

The Monitor Hypothesis claims that consciously learned language is only available to us as a Monitor, or editor.

The ability to produce language fluently and easily comes from what we have acquired. All the grammar rules that we learned in school have only one function: They act as a Monitor or editor.

When we are about to say something in another language, the sentence pops into our mind, thanks to our subconsciously acquired competence. Then just before we actually produce the sentence, just before

we say it, we scan it internally, inspect it, and use our consciously learned system to correct errors. Sometimes we realize that something we said is incorrect after we say it, and we self-correct using the conscious Monitor.

Constraints on the Monitor

It is extremely difficult to use the Monitor. In order to use the Monitor successfully, three very stringent conditions must be met:

1) The Monitor user must know the rule. This is a very difficult condition to meet. Linguists tell us that they have not yet described all the rules of any language. Authors of grammar texts know a lot of rules, but generally know fewer rules than the linguists do. Language teachers do not teach all the rules in the texts. Even the best students don't learn all the rules that are taught, even the best students don't remember all the rules they have learned, and even the best students can't always use the rules they do remember: Some are simply too complicated.

2) The acquirer must be *thinking about correctness*, or be *focused on form*. This is very difficult to do. It is hard to think about both form and meaning at the same time.

3) The acquirer must have time. For most people, normal conversation doesn't provide enough time to think much about grammar rules.

A few language experts can Monitor to some extent while conversing, but these are very advanced acquirers who only need to Monitor an

occasional rule here and there, and who have a special interest in the structure of language.

Research indicates that we use grammar, that we use the conscious Monitor, only when all of these three conditions are met. For most people, this happens only when they take a grammar test.

The weakness of the conscious Monitor confirms that our competence comes from comprehension of messages, not grammar study.

Recent controversies

This claim has been questioned in recent years, as a stream of papers have appeared in the professional journals claiming that grammar instruction is indeed helpful. I am pleased that these studies are being done: What was once an axiom is now a testable hypothesis.

In my reviews of these studies, I have concluded that they confirm the correctness of the Comprehension and Monitor Hypotheses: They show only that even after substantial grammar study, even very motivated students show only modest gains in accuracy, and these gains occur only on measures that encourage a focus on form and are "fragile," that is, the knowledge tends to fade rapidly. Truscott (1998) has arrived at very similar conclusions.

As noted above, correction is supposed to help us fine-tune and adjust our consciously learned grammar rules. In his review of the literature,

Truscott (1996) has concluded that correction has no effect on grammatical accuracy. In (Krashen, 2002), I came to similar conclusions – correction only seems to help when students are tested on tests in which the conditions for Monitor use appear to be met, e.g. a grammar test, and even then the impact is modest.

Is grammar forbidden?

Some have interpreted this position as a claim that all grammar teaching is forbidden. Not so. There are two good reasons for including grammar in the EFL curriculum.

The first is for "language appreciation," otherwise known as "linguistics." Linguistics includes language universals, language change, dialects, etc. The second is to fill gaps left by incomplete acquisition and places in which idiolects differ from the prestige dialect. Standards for accuracy, especially in writing, are 100%: We are not allowed "mistakes" in punctuation, spelling or grammar (except on e-mail). One public error, in fact, can result in humiliation. Even well-read native speakers have gaps, places where their grammatical competence differs from accepted use. (Consult any list of "frequent grammatical errors.")

Consciously learned rules can fill some of these gaps, which are typically in aspects of language that do not affect communication of messages. The place to use this knowledge is in the editing stage of the composing process, when appealing to conscious rules will not interfere with communication.

I recommend delaying the teaching of these rules until more advanced levels. I would first give acquisition a chance and then use conscious knowledge to fill in some of the gaps. There is no sense teaching rules for Monitoring that will eventually be acquired.

The Monitor is weak, but it is not useless. Grammar study should not be excluded. It is, however, no longer the star player but has only a supporting role.

Chapter Three

RECREATIONAL READING: THE CORE OF THE PROGRAM

Evidence for the value of free voluntary reading, or recreational reading, continues to accumulate. In the last few decades, evidence from several areas continues to show that those who do more recreational reading show better development in reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. These results hold for first and second language acquisition, and for children and adults.

Research on Recreational Reading

Because recreational reading is such an important part of the suggestions I will make later on, some details on research supporting this claim will be helpful.

Correlational studies

Correlational studies have consistently shown that those who read more show more literacy development. I reviewed a number of these studies in detail in (Krashen, 1988) that relied on simple correlations. The results of such studies are reassuring and consistent with the view that reading results in language and literacy development, but of course, correlation is not causality; it is quite possible that those who read better, as a result of more direct instruction in school, then go on to do more recreational reading.

More recent studies in second language acquisition make this interpretation less plausible: They consistently report a positive relationship between the amount of free reading done and various aspects of second and foreign language competence when the amount of formal instruction students have done is statistically controlled (Y.O. Lee, Krashen, and Gribbons, 1996; Stokes, Krashen and Kartchner, 1998; Constantino, S.Y. Lee, K.S. Cho and Krashen, 1997; S.Y. Lee, 2001, 2005a).

Case histories

Case histories provide convincing verification of the power of reading. While not considered by some to be "scientific," they clearly are, because in many cases one can only attribute gains in literacy and language development to recreational reading; there are no plausible alternative explanations for the obvious development that took place. In Krashen (2004), I described a number of case histories, including Malcolm X and Richard Wright, both of whom achieved very high levels of literacy and attributed their literacy development to self-selected reading.

More recent studies include the Sweet Valley studies (Cho and Krashen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b): Adult second language acquirers made obvious and impressive progress in English as a second language simply by reading books from the Sweet Valley series, novels written for young girls (Sweet Valley Kids, Sweet Valley Twins) and teenage girls (Sweet Valley High). Subjects did not attend ESL classes; their main source of English was the novels. All subjects had lived in the US for a considerable amount of time before starting their reading program, and had made little progress in English.

In-school free reading

Studies of in-school free reading are considered the gold standard for demonstrating the effectiveness of recreational reading, because they include a comparison group that engages in traditional instruction while the experimental group does free voluntary reading. There are slightly different models of in-school free reading (sustained silent reading, self-selected reading, and extensive reading), but they all have this in common: Students can read whatever they want to read (within reason), and there is little or no accountability in the form of book reports or grades.

In my reviews of the research on in-school free reading (e.g. Krashen, 2004), I have concluded that with very few exceptions, students in these programs progress in reading at least as well as those in comparison groups, and often do considerably better. The most successful studies are those that last for longer than one academic year. Short-term studies produce positive but less spectacular results, most likely because it usually takes readers some time to settle in and find suitable reading material.

As noted above, the evidence comes from a wide variety of situations. The bulk of the research deals with English as a first language, but includes studies using children in elementary school, teenagers (including juvenile delinquent boys in reform school; Fader, 1965), and case studies of adults who had been poor readers but who started a reading habit later in life.

The evidence supporting free reading is especially strong in English as a foreign language. In addition to earlier studies (e.g. Elley and

Mangubhai, 1985; Mason and Krashen, 1997), a new wave of studies from Korea and Taiwan using both elementary school children and college students confirms the power of reading.

K.S. Cho and colleagues recently completed a series of three studies confirming the power of reading for children in EFL programs in Korea. In all three cases, readers showed good gains in language and attitudes, outperforming comparisons in the two studies in which comparisons were used.

The internet study (Cho and Hey-Jung Kim, 2004)

Two groups of sixth graders in Korea with three previous years of English study were compared. One group followed the traditional curriculum for two 40-minute periods per week; the experimental group did the traditional curriculum one period per week, but read English stories from the internet in the second period, selecting from a total of 250 short, easy stories. The study lasted 16 weeks. The readers did better than the traditional students on tests of English; most important, they showed a more positive attitude and more confidence in reading English.

The newspaper study (Cho and Hee Jeoung Kim, 2005)

Sixth-grade students of English as a foreign language in Korea spent about 30 minutes per week for 12 weeks doing activities related to reading newspapers written for EFL students. Students had access to the newspapers throughout the school day. Nearly all those in the newspaper class voluntarily read the newspapers in their free time at school, and the class

made significantly better gains in English than a comparison group.

The Clifford Study (Cho, Ahn and Krashen, 2005)

Fourth grade students studying English as a foreign language in Korea read and did activities related to the Clifford ("The Big Red Dog") book series for twelve weeks. Subjects showed gains in English competence, increased enthusiasm for English, and showed evidence of understanding the advantages of narrow reading. The gains in English competence are reassuring. More important are the attitudinal results, because they suggest that students will continue to read in English.

Syying Lee and colleagues, and Ching Kang Liu have added significant studies in the professional literature from Taiwan.

The vocational college study (Hsu and Lee, 2005)

Most studies of EFL at the college level examine student performance at the more "elite" universities. Hsu and Lee studied the impact of SSR with vocational college students in Taiwan, among students who typically have less English proficiency. Students in the experimental (reading) class engaged in extensive reading from a wide assortment of graded readers for one period per week for one semester; the other two periods were devoted to the regular curriculum, which emphasized translation and grammatical analysis. A comparison group followed the regular curriculum three periods per week. Experimental students were required to meet all course requirements, such as homework, presentations, and examinations.

Both groups made significant gains on vocabulary and cloze tests, but there was no significant difference between the groups, which means that the students who only read for pleasure did as well as the group that had traditional instruction. Both groups' performance on course requirements was also similar, with the experimental group doing slightly better than the comparison group, even though the comparison group had more course-related instruction.

SSR under less than optimal conditions (Lee, 2005b)

First year university students who did SSR (graded readers) in and outside of class for three to five hours per week did better than one control group on a cloze test and were not significantly different on a vocabulary test. The experimental group was equivalent to a second control group on the cloze test, but the second control group, which had a heavy emphasis on vocabulary in class, did better on the vocabulary test.

The conditions for free reading were far from optimal: students had a limited selection of reading material, only read for 14 weeks, and did not have a serious attitude toward class, thanks to the previous semesters' experience with a less-than-dedicated instructor. This study confirms that SSR is "robust," that it is effective even when some conditions are not met.

Two one-year studies

Two one-year studies done in Taiwan show what SSR can do when conditions are closer to optimal. In a study by Lee (2006), college students

read once a week for a little over an hour from graded readers, and were asked to record what they read (title, author) and to write a short reflection in English or Chinese. The readers outperformed three different classes of comparison students on measures of vocabulary and on a cloze test. In addition to having more time, another factor that probably contributed to the success of this study was the fact that the students had access to about 1200 books.

C. K. Liu's one-year study (Liu, 2005) was also done with university freshmen in Taiwan. In this study, SSR was done outside of class and included abridged classics, popular fiction and magazines; classtime was dedicated to other topics in linguistics. The classes doing reading were compared with three comparison groups, in which students did assigned reading from traditional anthologies of readers or a collection assembled by the instructor. All of the students improved in vocabulary and reading comprehension over the year, but the two reading groups gained significantly more than the comparison groups. One of the reading groups did a large amount of assigned reading in other classes, but the results still support the hypothesis that reading is the source of literacy development.

Narrow Reading

Narrow reading is the cornerstone of my suggestions for dealing with English fever.

Most foreign and second language classes provide students with exposure to a variety of topics. Beginning level texts typically jump from

topic to topic (e.g. "shopping" to "ordering food" to "families"), "readers" usually include several different kinds of short articles (e.g. "nonverbal communication" or "mind, body and health"), and short stories, and introductory courses in literature usually give the student only one short example of each author's work. Only later, in advanced courses, does a second language student "specialize," e.g. by taking classes in "20th century fiction," and only the most advanced students focus on the work of a single author. The assumption behind this is that exposure to different topics, genres, and styles is beneficial.

This may be all wrong. I propose that narrow input is much more efficient for second language acquisition; in other words, it is much better if second language acquirers specialize early rather than later. This means reading several books by one author or about a single topic of interest.

The case for narrow reading is based on the idea that the acquisition of both structure and vocabulary comes from many exposures in a comprehensible context; that is, we acquire new structures and words when we understand messages, many messages, that we encode. Narrow reading facilitates this process in several ways.

First, since each writer has favorite expressions and a distinctive style, and each topic has its own vocabulary and discourse, narrow reading provides built-in review.

Second, background knowledge is a tremendous facilitator of comprehension. An acquirer of English reading a John Grisham novel who

understands the legal system in the U.S. will understand the book much better than someone unfamiliar with courts and legal procedures in the U.S. The reader with better background will also acquire more English from the novel, because it will be more comprehensible. Narrow readers gain more contextual knowledge as they read narrowly: The more one reads in one area, the more one learns about the area, and the easier one finds subsequent reading in the area (and the more one acquires of the language). Reading one John Grisham novel will make subsequent John Grisham novels more comprehensible.

An example of this can be termed "the first few pages" effect (pointed out to me by Mari Wesche; see also Yang, 2001). Intermediate foreign language students, reading a novel in the foreign language, often report that they find the first few pages of a new author's work tough going. This is due to the fact that the context, the story, is new, and, in addition, the reader has not adjusted to the author's style. After this initial difficulty, the rest of the book goes much easier. Providing only short and varied selections never allows language acquirers to get beyond the initial stage. Instead, it forces them to move from frustration to frustration.

It may be argued that narrow reading produces only the ability to read in one area. This is not true. Deep reading in any topic will provide exposure to a tremendous amount of syntax and vocabulary that is used in other topics. Any technical field, for example, will use "subtechnical" vocabulary, words such as "function," "inference," "isolate," "relation," etc. (Cowan, 1974).

Also, readers typically do not read only one author or in one area for the rest of their lives; they gradually expand their reading (for evidence that high school students gradually expand their reading interests as they read more, see (LaBrant, 1958).

The clearest advantage of narrow reading, however, is that it is potentially very motivating. In any anthology, it is certain that most topics are not of great interest to most readers. The combination of new vocabulary, an unfamiliar style, a lack of context, and a lack of interest in the subject matter ensures that much of this kind of reading remains an exercise in deliberate decoding. In contrast, narrow reading on a topic of real interest has a chance of resulting in the reader really reading for the message, for meaning, in early stages of language acquisition.

Evidence

There is evidence supporting the narrow reading idea. Lamme (1976) found that good readers in English as a first language tended to read more books by a single author and books from a series, a result that many readers of this book can identify with, including former devotees of Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and the Bobsey Twins. As noted above, Cho and Krashen (1994, 1995a, 1995b) reported considerable enthusiasm for reading and substantial vocabulary development among adult second language acquirers who read books in the Sweet Valley series; readers rapidly moved from Sweet Valley Kids (second grade level) to Sweet Valley Twins (fourth grade level) to Sweet Valley High (fifth and sixth grade level). Several

readers in this study had never read a book in English for pleasure before, but became fanatical Sweet Valley fans.

Ujiie and Krashen examined several lists of books that children liked to read, books that children said were the books that got them interested in reading (their "home run" books; Trelease, 2001; Ujiie and Krashen, 2002), and books from bestseller lists from bookstores (Ujiie and Krashen, 2005). A large percentage of these books were "series" books, that is, books that were part of a continuing series with identical characters and a continuing storyline.

The home run book list was obtained from fourth and five graders who were asked, "Was there one book or experience that first interested you in reading?" If the answer was "Yes," they were asked to provide the name of the book. Although children named a wide variety of home run books, the most frequently mentioned titles were part of a series: Harry Potter and Goosebumps, with Animorphs also placing highly.

The bestsellers were obtained from bookweb.org, which provided records of bestsellers. On the January 9, 2004 bestseller list, 11 out of 15 were series books or at least part of a trilogy (from Artemis Fowl, Harry Potter, Unfortunate Events, Captain Underpants, Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, Amulet of Samarkand). On the May 27, 2004 list, five of the 15 were series books.

Chapter Four

THE ROLE OF OUTPUT

As discussed in chapter two, the Comprehension Hypothesis claims that we acquire language by input, not by output. The ability to produce language is hypothesized to be the result of language acquisition, not the cause. Evidence for this claim comes from several kinds of studies:

(1) Studies showing that spoken and written output are too infrequent to account for much of our competence in language (Krashen, 1994). (Note that this applies to "comprehensible output" as well (See Krashen, 1998). This argument, of course, does not exclude output from playing a role in language acquisition. Rather, it says that at most, it has a supplementary role.

(2) Gains in language acquisition can occur without output (Krashen, 1994), that is, by reading and listening alone. Again, this does not eliminate output as a possible peripheral contributor.

(3) Increasing output does not result in more language acquisition (Krashen, 1994). This result is very consistent in studies of writing, and suggests that output does not play a direct role in language acquisition.

This does not mean that output should be forbidden. Oral output (speaking) invites aural input, via conversation. If you talk, somebody might

answer back. The Comprehension Hypothesis predicts, however, that the contribution of conversation to language acquisition is what the other person says to you, not what you say to them.

Comprehensible input-based methods encourage speaking but do not force it. Students are not called on; rather, participation is voluntary.

Writing

The focus of this chapter is written output, a pressing need for many speakers of English as a foreign language.

The evidence summarized above indicates that writing itself does not contribute to language or literacy development; we do not "learn to write by writing." But writing makes a profound contribution in a different way. In short, writing makes us smarter. As we write, as we put our ideas on paper and revise them, we come up with better ideas. When it does not happen, when we have "writing blocks," it is often because we are not using what is called "the composing process," strategies for using writing to come up with new ideas.

The insight that writing makes you smarter is shared by many observers. Elbow (1975), for example, concluded that meaning is not what you start out with in writing, but what you end up with. Boice (1994) noted that inspiration is the result of writing, not the cause. In addition, there is empirical evidence supporting this assertion, experiments showing that writing can aid in thinking and problem-solving (Krashen, 2002) as well

as positive correlations between eminence and amount written among professional writers and thinkers (Simonton, 1984).

The composing process

One of the great triumphs of the language arts profession has been the description of the "composing process," strategies writers use to solve problems and make themselves smarter. Studies have shown that good writers utilize several strategies (Krashen, 1984):

Before good writers write, they have a plan. They are, however, willing to change their plan as they write and come up with new ideas.

Good writers are willing to revise. They consider their early drafts to be tentative, and understand that as they move from draft to draft, they come up with new ideas.

Good writers delay editing. They concern themselves with formal correctness only after they are satisfied with the ideas they put on the page.

Good writers stop frequently and reread what they have written.

The above are the "classical" components of the composing process. There is good reason to add two more components:

Productive writers engage in "regular daily writing" rather than "binge writing"; instead of waiting until they have large blocks of free

time, they write a modest amount each day, a strategy demonstrated to produce more writing as well as more new ideas (Boice, 1994). Also, good writers understand the importance of short breaks that encourage "incubation." New ideas and solutions to problems often emerge when writers leave their writing and give their minds a rest (Krashen, 2001).

The strategies that make up the composing process perform two valuable functions: In addition to encouraging the emergence of new ideas, they keep writers from losing their place. Losing one's place is very easy to do when problems are complex. A plan obviously helps writers know where they are, rereading reminds writers where they are, delaying editing prevents loosing the train of thought, and failure to write regularly is nearly a guarantee of losing one's place.

The strategies that make up the composing process are most valuable when writing involves complex issues and difficult problems. There is less need for planning, rereading, and revision when writing simple descriptions and summaries, and more need for these strategies when writing requires the integration of a great deal of diverse information, when complex analysis is called for, or when data can be interpreted in different ways.

Writer's block

Failure to use these strategies when writing on complex topics is one cause of writer's block, defined as "an inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skill or commitment" (Rose, 1984, p.3 ❶.

The second language writer

Most of the research on the composing process has been done with writing in English as a first language. The first question we need to investigate when discussing the second language writer is whether the composing process is the same for all languages: Do writers in languages other than English use similar strategies when dealing with complex writing tasks for keeping their place and discovering new ideas? There is suggestive evidence that they do.

Lee and Krashen (2003) administered a blocking questionnaire developed by Rose (1984; see footnote 1) to subjects whose first language is Mandarin Chinese, undergraduate university students in Taiwan. Mandarin is a particularly interesting language to compare with English because there are obvious differences in the structure of essays in these languages (Cai, 1999; Shi, 2003; but see Kirkpatrick, 1997). Lee and Krashen reported that those who reported more premature editing also reported more blocking (for readers who are statistically minded, $r = .27$), and those who reported more difficulty with complex writing tasks reported more blocking ($r = .48$), consistent with the hypothesis that at least some aspects of the composing process are similar in Mandarin and English.

Does the composing process transfer from the first to the second language?

If writers in different languages do indeed use the same strategies for discovering meaning and dealing with complex writing tasks, we can

then ask if some or all of the strategies transfer from the first to the second language. This question is important practically as well as theoretically. If it is true, the strategies that make up the composing process are part of a "common underlying proficiency" (Cummins, 1989), deeper than any specific language, and need only be developed once, in the first language. Also, it will be much easier to develop these strategies when writing in the primary language, as developing writers will have less concern with mastery of the language and the conventions of writing, and can thus focus more easily on meaning.

The results of several studies suggest that at least some aspects of the composing process transfer. Saraki and Hirose (1996) studied the writing behavior of American and British studies majors in Japanese universities. More of those considered "strong writers" in English reported planning for organization before writing in both Japanese and English, and more strong writers reported that they wrote "with organization in mind" in both languages.

Pennington and So (1993) reported "similar patterns" in the composing process of college students in Singapore writing in their first language (English or Chinese) and in a language they were studying in school (Japanese): "Skilled writers" were more willing to revise in both languages, but unskilled writers did not "experience writing as a back-and-forth process of generating ideas and revising texts to find their intended meaning" (p.51).

Hall (1990) also reported clear similarities in the revision behavior of foreign students in the US when writing in their L1 and in English, and

Lee and Krashen (2002) found that those who reported having an efficient composing process in their first language (Mandarin) tended to have an efficient composing process in English and that an inefficient composing process in Mandarin was associated with blocking in Mandarin.

If additional studies confirm that even some strategies transfer across languages, the results will parallel those seen in studies of bilingual education in children: It has been demonstrated that reading ability transfers across languages: those who read better in their primary language typically read better in the second language (given sufficient exposure), and pedagogical approaches that build literacy in the primary language have been shown to be successful in developing second language literacy (e.g. Krashen, 1996, 2003).

If writers have not developed the composing process in their first language, it is likely that it can be developed in the second language. As noted earlier, however, it will be easier to develop an efficient composing process in the language writers know best, their primary language. Because writing makes such a profound contribution to intellectual development, and because the composing process allows us to use writing as an intellectual tool, if the composing process does in fact transfer, then introducing the composing process in the first language may be an efficient means of promoting intellectual development.

Such a result would confirm the importance of developing all aspects of literacy in the primary language. If primary language education is solid, it means that we do not need to pay as much attention to writing in the

foreign language as previous programs have. Given the awkwardness of writing in a foreign language for those with little competence, and given the huge amount of time the teaching of writing demands of teachers, this is indeed good news.

It would also show that developing literacy in the primary language not only aids in developing literacy in the second language, it also provides writers with a means of intellectual growth that can be used in any subsequent language they acquire.

Professional writing

In English-speaking countries, foreign language education has little need to be concerned with writing. For English as a foreign language, the situation is very different. As noted earlier, a large percentage of communications are in English today. Professionals who write in English are expected to write at the native or near-native level.

The first prerequisite for the ability to write at a high professional level is of course reading, massive reading of the kind of writing one is expected to produce. As Smith (1988) has noted, "To learn to write for newspapers, you must read newspapers; textbooks about them will not suffice. For magazines, browse through magazines rather than through correspondence courses on magazine writing. To write poetry, read it..." (p.68).

General reading of the kind recommended earlier will help bring the future writer to the point where specialized texts are comprehensible.

Moreover, reading anything will help all writing; even though there are differences between different styles of writing, there are also profound similarities (Biber, 1986). Real professionals, however, must master all the subtleties of writing in their own field, and this comes only after a great deal of professional reading.

It is clearly impossible to include professional reading as part of an EFL program, and it is inefficient to try. This kind of reading needs to come later, once the future writer has begun specific education in the chosen profession.

Research has not yet begun to be done in this area, but I suspect that when it is done, it will reveal that many EFL writers have acquired an impressive amount of the approved writing style of their professions. In fact, I think it is safe to predict that their competence in many areas of expository prose exceeds those of non-professional native speakers. They often, however, have gaps in late-acquired peripheral aspects of writing, conventions of writing that contribute little or nothing to actual communication, but have only a cosmetic effect.

Someday, because of the influence of nonnative writers of English (recall that they are now a majority on the internet), English expository prose might evolve; some of what is considered ungrammatical today may, in a few decades, be grammatical, and more aspects of institutionalized non-native varieties of English (e.g. Indian English, Nigerian English; Kachru, 1992) may be considered acceptable for international written communication. But until that happens, EFL writers must obey all current

conventions and supply all the "cosmetic" aspects of language. Just how to close this gap is not yet clear.

One thing we do know: Formal instruction is not the answer. In addition to the demonstrated limited effects of formal instruction (Krashen, 2002a), many advanced writers of EFL are obviously fully conversant with the known rules of writing; in fact, many are teachers of advanced writing in English as a foreign language and even do research in the field. What is clear is that these problems can and should be dealt with long after the formal EFL program is finished.

Footnote

1. Rose (1984) has presented a number of cases of writer's block that are clearly due to a lack of mastery of the composing process. Rose inspected the composing behavior of college students who scored high on the blocking subscale of a questionnaire he created and noted that they tended to engage in premature editing more than subjects classified as low blockers, and had inappropriate strategies for dealing with complexity. One high blocker, Liz, for example, was so preoccupied with editing and correctness that she would often forget the thought she was trying to express (Rose, 1984, p.46). Liz also failed to engage in sufficient planning before writing, "but planned in increments as she wrote" (p.48), which prevented her from getting a sense of the whole essay.

Chapter Five

A SUGGESTED APPROACH: Some Preliminaries

The Use of the First Language

The Comprehension Hypothesis helps us with the issue of whether and how to use the student's first language in foreign language education. *The Comprehension Hypothesis predicts that the first language helps when it is used to make input more comprehensible*: This happens when we use the first language to provide background information. This could be in the form of short readings or explanations by the teacher before a complex topic is presented. Information provided in the first language can help the same way pictures and realia can help at the beginning level, as context that makes input more comprehensible.

The Comprehension Hypothesis predicts that first language use can hurt when it is used in ways that do not encourage comprehensible input. This happens when we translate to such an extent that students have no need to attend to the second language input.

Research from the field of bilingual education is consistent with these predictions. In general, bilingual programs have been shown to be quite successful in helping language minority children acquire the majority language. An important feature of bilingual education is that subject matter is taught in the primary language in early stages to provide background

knowledge (Krashen, 1996). One version of bilingual education, however, "concurrent translation," in which teachers present the same message in both languages using sentence-by-sentence translation, has not been shown to be effective (Legarreta, 1979).

The Comprehension Hypothesis thus predicts that a quality education in the primary language is an excellent investment for later second language development. Strong second/foreign language education should not weaken first language education. The first language can contribute background knowledge and literacy development that can accelerate second language development.

Age: Why Older is Faster

Contrary to popular opinion, younger is not necessarily better for acquiring a second language: In initial stages, adults progress faster than children, and older children acquire language more quickly than younger children do (Krashen, Long, and Scarcella, 1979).

The Comprehension Hypothesis helps us understand why this is so: Older acquirers, thanks to their superior knowledge of the world, understand more of the input they hear and read.

What this means is that we do not need to start the English program when children are very young. An early start is less efficient and does not guarantee a native accent (see below). There is no need for preschool cram school English, no need to start English at kindergarten. There is, however,

a need to build subject matter knowledge and literacy through the primary language. This is the current view of the Ministry of Education in Taiwan (Chang, 2003; see also Han, 2003, for discussion).

There is, in addition, no practical demand for young children who do not live in English-speaking countries to speak English. (Starting later is a preferred option in foreign language programs, but may not be in second language programs. In programs designed for minority language children, there is an urgent practical need for early second language competence. We start English through ESL right away in bilingual programs in the US.)

The Development of a Good Accent

It is true that studies of immigrant second language acquirers show that those who begin second language acquisition before puberty tend to develop native accents, and those who start later typically do not (Seliger, Krashen and Ladefoged, 1975).

It is also true, however, that many who start later develop excellent accents, very close to native and that many who begin studying foreign languages when they are young do not. For example, "heritage language" speakers, those who speak a minority language at home (e.g. American-born Chinese living in the US) often speak the heritage language with an accent, even though they have been hearing it and speaking it their entire lives.

In addition to age, another variable appears to be at work, what Smith (1988) calls "club membership": we acquire the accents of the group we feel we are a member of, or feel we can join. This explains why children do not talk exactly the way their parents talk — they talk the way their friends talk. (Accent may be, to a great extent, a result of a reluctance to talk in a certain way, not a lack of competence. For speculation, see Krashen, 1997.)

If club membership is an important factor in determining accent, what club should students of English as foreign language join? The use of English does not automatically entail loyalty to, or even sympathy with English-speaking countries or native speakers of English. English is now firmly an international language, Star Trek's "standard." The only club EFL students need to join is the club of people who speak English well, citizens of their own country with regular dealings with those from other countries.

The Goal: Autonomous Acquirers

The goal in foreign language pedagogy is to bring students to the point where they are autonomous acquirers, prepared to continue to improve on their own. The language education profession does not need return business.

In terms of the Comprehension Hypothesis, an "autonomous acquirer" has two characteristics:

(1) The autonomous acquirer has acquired enough of the second language so that at least some authentic input is comprehensible, enough to ensure continuing progress.

Thus, the goal of language pedagogy is to help students reach *the intermediate level*, defined as the level at which students have acquired enough of the language to continue to acquire on their own; they can then obtain comprehensible input outside the language classroom.

This means that the goal of the language class is not to produce error-free performance and complete understanding of all rules of grammar.

Note that a pure "skill-building" view of language acquisition, one that presumes that direct instruction, exercises and drills are the true and only path, predicts that use of the language outside the classroom can't result in new competence, just more fluent performance of what has already been learned. The Comprehension Hypothesis says that language acquisition continues in the outside world.

(2) The autonomous acquirer understands how language is acquired. The autonomous acquirer knows that progress comes from comprehensible input, not from grammar study and vocabulary lists, and will understand ways of making input more comprehensible (e.g. getting background information, avoiding obviously incomprehensible input).

Steven Sternfeld (personal communication) has pointed out that in a sense, it doesn't matter how much of the second language students acquire

in a given pedagogical program. What matters is whether they have the motivation and tools to continue to acquire after the course has ended. Thus, students need to know how language is acquired.

A knowledge of language acquisition theory also helps justify methodology. The methodology proposed here differs from the "traditional" approach, and some students may need reassurance that the method is based on a coherent theory and that it works.

A review of what is known about language acquisition can be done initially in the primary language, and can be done eventually in more detail as sheltered subject matter. S. Y. Lee (1998) provided evidence that presenting adult EFL students with a knowledge of theory had a positive effect, when presented before a sustained silent reading program began.

An autonomous acquirer is not a perfect speaker of the second language, just good enough to continue to improve independently. This is, of course, the goal of all education — not to produce masters but to allow people to begin work in their profession and to continue to grow.

The appendix to this book is a set of suggestions for the adult autonomous language acquirer who wishes to improve in another language.

English Need Not be Taught in Massive Doses

If the goal of the language program is not to develop native-like proficiency but is only to help students reach the intermediate stage, so

they can continue to improve on their own, then language programs in schools do not need to provide "massive doses" of English.

Just how long it takes to reach the goal of being an intermediate is an open question, but it is likely that one period per day for several years, with effective methodology, is enough. The failures of foreign language education in the past were not, in my opinion, due to the lack of time devoted to the language; the failures were due to the methodology.

The Classroom

Language classes should be filled with comprehensible input

At the beginning level, there are excellent methods that clearly do this, such as Total Physical Response (Asher, 1994) and the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), and the empirical research confirms that they are consistently more effective than traditional programs on most measures; at worst, they are equivalent (Krashen, 2002a).

At the intermediate level, we can continue to provide comprehensible input through sheltered subject matter teaching, or content-based instruction, classes in which the focus is on providing subject matter instruction in a comprehensible way to second language acquirers. Sheltered subject matter teaching results in both language acquisition and subject matter knowledge (Krashen, 1991).

We can provide a powerful supplement to regular pedagogy in the form of recreational reading. This can be done in the form of sustained silent reading or other forms of in-class free voluntary reading (Krashen, 2004, chapter three, this volume). Students need not read the classics in these sessions. In fact, in some successful programs, students begin with very easy graded readers (Mason and Krashen, 1997), and as discussed in chapter three we have had great success using adolescent literature ("teen romances") with adult ESL students (Cho and Krashen, 1994, 1995a, 1995b).

The recommendation to lower our standards is not a rejection of great literature; rather, it is in the service of literature. Light reading provides a bridge that makes the reading of more demanding literature comprehensible. It is the missing link in nearly all second and foreign language teaching programs.

Stages for free reading

Free voluntary reading in English can be done in three stages: (1) graded readers, that is, books written especially for language students; (2) easy authentic reading (light novels, comics, magazines), and finally (3) demanding authentic reading. Stage (1) can be done as part of beginning EFL. Stage (2) can be part of sheltered subject matter teaching (see the next paragraph). Stage (3) might be attained only after the regular EFL program is completed. (Note: the stages are not strict; students are allowed to skip forward and back, to recycle. Given enough reading, new grammar and vocabulary will be covered in adequate doses (Krashen, 1981)).

Include sheltered popular literature

A means of combining sheltered subject matter teaching and recreational reading is the establishment of sheltered popular literature classes. The goal of these classes is to introduce students to popular literature, to what is available to them for pleasure reading in the second or foreign language, in the hope of helping students establish a pleasure reading habit in the second language (Krashen, 1997).

Improve libraries

Libraries are crucial to the success of this kind of foreign language program. In foreign language situations, students do not generally have access to comprehensible input outside of class. We can provide comprehensible input in the form of libraries, libraries filled, of course, with interesting books and magazines, but also filled with interesting audiotapes and videotapes. Such a library, open to the public, allows foreign language students to continue to obtain both aural and written comprehensible input long after the class is over. Such libraries would be enormously beneficial to those who need to bring their competence to high levels and to those who need a refresher before travel.

Dealing with English Fever

The cure for English fever is a program in English that does not threaten first language development but that takes advantage of the first language's ability to accelerate second language acquisition, that does not

begin super-early, and that does not take up extraordinary amounts of the school day. It includes classrooms filled with comprehensible input, where the formal study of grammar is de-emphasized (but not eliminated), and where free voluntary reading is encouraged. My prediction is that such a program will not only be easier to do, it will be more effective than what we have tried in the past.

Chapter Six

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

I outline below a possible application of the Comprehension Hypothesis and related hypotheses to the EFL situation.

Orientation

One component of EFL needs to be orientation, a brief explanation of language acquisition theory. As noted earlier, our goal is to develop independent, or autonomous, acquirers. Knowing how language is acquired will help ensure that this will occur. It is also important to tell students something about the philosophy underlying our practice because the approach outlined here is radically different from traditional approaches; we need to justify our pedagogy to students and in some cases to their parents.

Orientation can be done in the primary language fairly early in the EFL student's language career and can be covered in more detail at advanced levels in English.

A Program

Instruction begins at around ages 8 to 10, when the child is old enough to take advantage of knowledge gained in the first language and young enough to profit from the advantages of beginning as a child.

The suggestions below take advantage of the fact that development of the first language can accelerate second language acquisition (chapter five) and at the same time encourage full development of the first language. This happens in two ways:

- First, EFL does not dominate the school day — what is proposed is not a full immersion program but is just one subject. There is plenty of time in school available for study in the primary language, building subject matter knowledge, promoting cognitive development, and developing literacy, including mastering the composing process (chapter four).

- Second, use of the first language is built into the EFL program in places where it is helpful in providing background knowledge.

The program aims to develop autonomous acquirers, those with enough competence to understand at least some authentic input as well as having knowledge of language acquisition theory so they know what to do to improve and what to expect (see chapter five).

Literature and Culture

The focus of the program is the literature and culture of the English-speaking world, which today is nearly the entire world. The "English-speaking world" does not include only countries in which English is an official language, but includes all "Englishes."

The focus on literature and culture has several advantages. First, it is justified for its own sake: Literature can be described as applied philosophy, as the study of ethics (how are we supposed to behave?) and metaphysics (why are we here?), expressed in the form of a story, which is often not just the best but the only way of discussing some profound questions.

In addition to being educationally justified for its own sake, literature and culture include aspects of history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and philosophy.

In addition, this focus does not "compete" with subject matter teaching in the first language; in fact, it complements it, creating an opportunity for comparative studies. It also can create lifelong pleasure readers in English, ensuring continuing progress.

The program described below covers elementary school all the way to the university level.

Level 1: Natural Approach and Graded Readers

Aural comprehensible input will be provided, as is done in the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), Total Physical Response (Asher, 1994), and Total Physical Response Storytelling (Ray and Seely, 2004) methodology. Activities can include games, dance, sports, and projects. The best activities are those in which students are completely absorbed, in a sense forgetting that they are using another language (for many creative suggestions, see Brown and Palmer, 1988).

Level 1 also includes reading: At this level, students read very easy texts, such as graded readers, language experience texts (the story is dictated by the student to the teacher, the teacher writes out the story), and newspapers written for EFL students. The only criterion for texts is that they be as interesting as possible, as well as comprehensible. (Our goal is "compelling.") They need not provide cultural information or "make you a better person." Some reading can be done as sustained silent reading, as students become independent readers.

Level 2: Light Reading

The focus of level 2 is "light" authentic reading, that is, comics, graphic novels, and easy sections of the newspapers, with continuing reading of graded readers and books specially adapted for second language acquirers.

Class discussion includes the cultural background of some assigned readings as well as readings done in small groups (literature circles). Background readings are provided in the first language when appropriate and helpful, e.g. reading similar genres in the first language. Class also includes teachers reading to the class from level 2 reading material as a means of providing additional comprehensible input and stimulating interest in books.

Sustained silent reading (SSR) is provided, for short periods each day. Students can read anything in English they like (within reason), including graded readers and other reading material from level 1. They are not "accountable" for what they read during SSR (see chapter three).

Some orientation can be done at this level, in the students' first language. This will consist of a brief introduction to language acquisition theory or "how language is acquired," illustrated by case histories of successful and unsuccessful second language acquisition.

The formal study of grammar can begin here or at the next level, with a focus on aspects of grammar that are useful for editing. Instruction will also include the use of a grammar handbook and the spell-check function of the computer.

Level 3: Popular Literature

Reading at level 3 focuses on contemporary and light popular literature, including some current best sellers, popular magazines, and viewing of "lighter" films. Class discussion focuses on current culture and how values are expressed in current popular literature, e.g. gender roles, humor, how films and novels comment on issues of the day, the role of "gossip" magazines and newspapers, etc.

SSR continues, again allowing students to select their own reading, which can include reading at "lower levels."

Grammar study at this level can include some "linguistics," i.e. language universals and language change.

I predict that many students will be "autonomous" by the time this level is complete, able to understand a considerable amount of input outside

the classroom. Additional study of English after this level could be made optional, and/or move in other directions, that is, more specific to different professions and interests.

An example of autonomy

A spectacular example of autonomy is presented by Beniko Mason (2006). College students who had completed course work in which they did a great deal of reading from graded readers decided to put themselves on a program of free reading, during a time in which they were not enrolled in EFL classes. All readers took alternative but equivalent forms of the TOEFL test (the ITP TOEFL) before and after the months they spent reading (about two to four months). Gains were satisfying: The average gain per week was about 3.5 points, about the same gains made as those who travel to the US and enroll in special TOEFL preparation classes. This result shows that autonomy can be a money-saver: It is clearly more efficient to stay home and read for pleasure than to travel to an expensive TOEFL prep course abroad.

Level 4 (Lit): Contemporary Serious Literature

This is the first level of the "advanced literacy and culture" path, an option for some, but perhaps not all students of English as a foreign language. I therefore label it as Level 4 (Lit). We can also have Level 4 (Sci), a science/math path, Level 4 (Bus), a business path, etc.

Level 4 (Lit) includes the heavier and more "serious" works of current interest published in English, as well as films, newspapers, and literary and philosophical magazines. As discussed in chapter three, the approach will at first be "narrow," focusing on the work of one author or genre, e.g. the works of Kurt Vonnegut, plays by Neil Simon. As in earlier levels, SSR can include lighter reading. Only after students have experienced several authors or genres in depth will the "survey" be done.

This level, and the next, can be repeated several times, focusing on different authors and genres.

At this level, language acquisition theory can be done in some detail, reading original works in English.

Level 5 (Lit): The Classics

Students are now ready for "the classics," literature written in very different eras. To help ensure comprehensibility, the approach will be "narrow," with a focus on one author or one genre, e.g. the romance or the historical novels of a certain period (e.g. World War I, the Depression). Background readings in English and in the first language about the era and personalities involved will also help increase comprehensibility. As before, the "survey" will only be done after students have experienced several authors or genres in depth.

Level 6 (Lit): Comparative Literature

Comparative literature emphasizes universals: universal themes, universal plots, universal characters, universals of morality and ethics.

A Necessary Condition

Such a program will work, of course, only if a large supply of interesting reading is available, a super-library filled with books, comics, magazines, films and tapes. This is not an impossible dream. In fact, it would cost a lot less than we currently invest in computers that are of dubious value and become obsolete within a year or two.❶

Footnote

❶ Those who don't want to wait for listening libraries to be established might want to take advantage of eslpod.com for podcasts of interesting and very comprehensible discussions of a variety of topics, designed for intermediate English acquirers. It is absolutely free.

APPENDIX

A GUIDE FOR THE AUTONOMOUS LANGUAGE ACQUIRER (ALA)

The ALA in the Classroom

Regardless of whether the class is in harmony or not with the theory of language acquisition, the ALA is aware that the language class is not designed to make the ALA into a native-like or even very high-level performer in the language. Language classes are designed to develop intermediates, those who know enough of the language so they can continue to improve on their own, after the program has ended.

How will the ALA know if the class is in tune with the theory? In classes that are consistent with theory, the syllabus is based on topics of interest, rather than grammatical mastery; students are not forced to speak (i.e. they are not called on) but respond voluntarily; the teacher uses a variety of ways of making input comprehensible (e.g. pictures, movements, providing background knowledge in the first language); and students are exposed to a wide variety of reading material for self-selected reading.

If the class is not set up in harmony with the theory, the ALA must be aware that the method runs counter to the way the brain works and that failure and discomfort are not the ALA's fault. Nearly all classes, however, will contain some comprehensible input; the issue is whether it is worth attending a class to get only scraps of what is needed. If the class is a requirement, the best way of dealing with it is to get one's comprehensible input outside of class.❶

Here is a suggestion for the motivated adult beginner: Buy or borrow about ten beginning textbooks in the target language, based on traditional, grammar-translation methodology. Read the reading passages that are part of each chapter, glancing at the vocabulary and grammar sections only when necessary to make the passage comprehensible. Don't try to remember the specific vocabulary and grammar; just use them as a means of understanding the passage when the text itself is insufficient.

If you move from chapter to chapter in one book, you will discover that the reading sections became much too hard very soon. This is because each passage is designed to "reinforce" the new grammar and vocabulary that are the focus of each chapter. The solution is to read chapter one of *each* text, then read chapter two of *each* text, etc. By the time you get to chapter eight or nine of ten different texts, you will have developed a surprising amount of competence in the new language. Even though texts differ as to which aspects of grammar and which vocabulary they cover, there will be enough overlap, enough common vocabulary and grammar, to ensure that the texts are reasonably comprehensible and that language acquisition will take place. Of course they may not be interesting!

The ALA Outside of the Classroom

As noted earlier, the goal of the classroom is to bring students' competence to the intermediate level. The intermediate ALA needs to be adept at getting comprehensible input from the outside world, even in the foreign language situation where the language is not spoken in society to a large extent.

Interacting with native speakers

The ALA knows how to find native speakers who will provide comprehensible input and knows to avoid those who will not.

But the ALA also knows that language alone is not a good basis for friendship. Some people may provide clear, comprehensible input, but are boring, irritating, or in other ways just not right for the ALA. An ALA will be very lucky to find someone who is a real friend, and who can supply comprehensible input as well. It may be the case that all the ALA needs is one person like this to acquire the language.

Narrow listening

The technique of "narrow listening" (Krashen, 1996) shows great promise. In narrow listening, acquirers listen to recordings of several speakers talking about the same topic, something that the acquirer is interested in. Ideally, the acquirer records the tape him/herself, from friends or acquaintances who speak the language. Acquirers can then listen to the tape as many times as they like.

Repeated listening, interest in the topic, and familiar context help make the input comprehensible. Topics are gradually changed, which allows the acquirer to expand his or her competence comfortably. Narrow listening is a low-tech, inexpensive way to obtain comprehensible input.

Research done so far suggests that narrow listening can be an effective form of aural comprehensible input for the ALA. Rodrigo and

Krashen (1996) reported that students of Spanish as a foreign language were enthusiastic about narrow listening: 92% said the activity was very interesting and beneficial. Their subjects reported that selecting their own topics and their own speakers was more effective and interesting than hearing pre-selected tapes in a classroom situation. Dupuy (1999) reported a clear increase in comprehensibility with repeated hearings of narrow listening tapes for students of French as a foreign language. Students did not record the native speakers themselves but could choose the topics they listened to. Finally, Rodrigo confirmed that college students of Spanish who did additional reading and also listened to narrow listening recordings over a semester gained more in listening comprehension (Rodrigo, 2004) and grammar (Rodrigo, 2006) than a comparison group.

Note that these studies were done with students enrolled in foreign language classes. Narrow listening promises to be even more effective for dedicated ALAs who make their own recordings from people they know and on topics they are very interested in.

As noted in chapter six, the ALA now has another valuable resource: eslpod.com offers narrow listening (for free!) on a wide variety of topics, including continuing stories and passages designed to help students prepare for the TOEFL examination.

Reading

Pleasure reading would seem to be the most obvious place to get comprehensible input, and as mentioned in chapter three, there is an

abundance of research showing that it is very effective. Few ALA's appear to take advantage of it, however. Stephenson and Kohyama asked 50 university students of EFL in Japan to carry out autonomous English learning projects over one semester. Despite the fact that the suggested projects included reading books, comics magazines, and newspapers (Appendix A; http://coyote.miyazaki-mu.ac.jp/learnerdev/aya/), few students chose these options: Only two said they read newspapers, and three read children's books. Similarly, Brown (2005) asked 171 first year college students in Japan to provide suggestions on how to improve competence in English. Reading was mentioned by only 20 students (12%).

There are several guidelines that ALAs might consider when doing recreational reading in the second language:

Lower your standards

When doing recreational reading, there is no need to read classics, no need to read "quality literature."❷ There is no reason at this stage to read books that give you a special insight into another culture or that will make the ALA a "better person." It is OK to read books in translation.

This is a wonderful opportunity: The ALA can read what he or she really wants to read with no guilt. A massive amount of pleasure reading of this kind will build the competence that will make more "serious" reading much more comprehensible, assuming that the ALA wants to "move on" or needs to read difficult texts professionally.

Read narrowly.

As discussed in chapter three, rather than attempting to read widely and become "well-rounded," the ALA can take advantage of narrow reading, that is, reading a number of books by one author or about a single topic of interest.

Carry the book or magazine with you everywhere.

Few people have time to read. The ALA carries a book with him or her and assumes, correctly, that the world will conspire to give the ALA time to read through the day, while standing in line, waiting for a bus, waiting for service in restaurants, etc.

Media

In Brown's study of student preferences for independent language acquisition activities (Brown, 2005, discussed above), 51 out of 171 suggestions were related to media, 25 to TV and movies, and 16 to news on TV or radio.

As noted above, the ALA understands that language is not a good basis for friendship. Similarly, language alone is not a good basis for reading a book or watching a television program or a movie. The ALA only reads or watches something he or she is really interested in, something the ALA would read or watch in the primary language.

When there is little or no interest in the subject matter, the mind wanders. When it does not wander, the ALA's focus might be more on

language (what verb form was that?) and less on meaning. In both cases, there is less comprehensible input. When the topic is genuinely interesting, the ALA can get "lost in the book" (Nell, 1988) or become fully absorbed in the film. The ALA then enters a state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), in which only the story exists and the sense of self is diminished and can even disappear. When this happens, the ALA is not even aware that he or she is reading or listening in another language. This is when real language acquisition takes place.

The problem with media, of course, is that it can be hard for the intermediate to understand. This is especially true of films. Kyung-Sook Cho (in press) has developed a simple but powerful way of dealing with this. Cho reports that when students of English as a foreign language read a simplified version of a book corresponding to a film, the film became significantly more comprehensible. Viewing the same film twice, however, had no effect on comprehensibility. Reading a simplified version of the book makes sense: It gives the viewer some idea of the story and characters, but leaves plenty of the story left over, enough to make sure the film version remains interesting.

Conclusion

The ALA needs to have two essential characteristics: A clear idea of how language is acquired and an arsenal of strategies for getting comprehensible input from speakers, from books, and from media. The strategies presented here are, of course, not the final word. As ALA's share their successes and failures, our hope is that they will become even more autonomous.

Footnote

❶ Getting your comprehensible input outside of class can sometimes get you in trouble if you are too successful. Here is what happened to one ALA: Y. Cohen (1997) attended an English-language medium school in her native Turkey, beginning at age 12. The first two years were devoted to intensive English study, and Cohen reports that after only two months, she started to read in English "as many books in English as I could get hold of. I had a rich, ready made library of English books at home. ... I became a member of the local British library and occasionally purchased English books in bookstores. ... By the first year of middle school I had become an avid reader of English."

Her reading, however, led to an "unpleasant incident" in middle school:"I had a new English teacher who assigned us two compositions for homework. She returned them to me ungraded, furious. She wanted to know who had helped me write them. They were my personal work. I had not even used the dictionary. She would not believe me. She pointed at a few underlined sentences and some vocabulary and asked me how I knew them; they were well beyond the level of the class. I had not even participated much in class. I was devastated. There and then and many years later I could not explain how I knew them. I just did."

❷ Nell (1988) provides us with good reason to doubt that the concept of "quality literature" has much validity. He reported that people judged texts to have more literary merit if they were harder to read! In other words, "the best medicine tastes the worst" (p. 160). His subjects included librarians, university students, and university teachers.

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