**Lesson 09 : Foreign Language Learning**

**CONSCIOUSNESS AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING:**

The role of consciousness in second language learning based on input processing, both for reasons of space and because it can be argued that consciousness is primarily associated

with the input side of the nervous system.

Three issues are to be discussed: the process through which input becomes intake, related to the

issues of noticing and subliminal perception the degree to which the learner consciously controls the process of intake, the incidental learning question; and the role of conscious understanding in hypothesis formation, the issue of implicit learning. **Intake, noticing, and subliminal perception:**

The only linguistic material that can figure in language-making are stretches of speech that attract the child's attention to a sufficient degree to be noticed and held in memory.

While the concept of intake is crucial to second language learning theory, there is no consensus on the definition of intake. Krashen apparently considers intake synonymous with comprehensible input, simply 'that subset of linguistic input that helps the acquirer acquire language' an external

variable. This is quite different from Corder's original definition of intake: <... input is "what goes in' not what is available for going in, and we may reasonably suppose that it is the learner who controls this input, or more properly his intake. This

may well be determined by the characteristics of his language acquisition mechanism. [[1]](#footnote-2)

**Language Teaching Methods of Psycholinguistics Approach:**

An approach in language teaching consists of theories of the nature of language and the theories of language learning. Language teaching methods are concretization of language teaching approaches. A method of language teaching can be well understood if its fundamental theories are clearly understood. Fundamental theories in developing language teaching methods are divided into two main theories; the theory of language and the theory of language learning.

There are three fundamental theoretical views in developing the language teaching method: structural theory, functional theory, and interactional theory. Structural theory views language as a system of grammatical unit: phrases, clauses, sentences, affixes, and soon.

Functional theory views language from its function as a mean of communication: informational, emotional, persuasive, and social. Interactional theory views language as a mean to realize interpersonal relationship and as a performance of social transaction between individual and society. Each view implicates differently in the development of language teaching method.

Beside the theory of language, the developing of language teaching method is also based on the theory of language learning that related to two main questions; (1) what cognitive process that involved in language learning, and (2) what condition are needed to reach a high quality of language learning activity. Psycholinguistics has clearly answered these two questions. Therefore, psycholinguistics has been used widely as fundamental theory in developing language teaching method. Some methods which were developed based on psycholinguistic approach are described as following .[[2]](#footnote-3)

**The Natural Approach (NA) :**

The most striking proposal of the NA theory is that adults can still acquire second languages and that the ability to ‘pick up’ lan­guages does not disappear at puberty. Thus, Krashen’s contribution to Chomsky’s LAD proposition is that adults follow the same prin­ ciples of Universal Grammar. The theory behind the NA implies that adults can acquire all but the phonological aspect of any foreign lan­guage, by using their ever-active LAD.

What makes adults different from children is their abstract problem solving skills that make them consciously process the grammar of a foreign language. Therefore, adults have two paths to follow: Acquisition and learning.

**The Theoretical Basis of the Natural Approach :**

The Natural Approach is regarded as a comprehension-based ap­proach because of its emphasis on initial delay (silent period) in the production of language. What is novel is that the NA focuses on exposure to input instead of grammar practice, and on emotional preparedness for acquisition to take place**.**

**Theory of Language:**

Krashen regards ‘communication’ as the main function of lan­guage. The focus is on teaching communicative abilities. The su­periority of ‘meaning’ is emphasized. Krashen and Terrell believe that a language is essentially its lexicon. They stress the importance of vocabulary and view language as a vehicle for ‘communicating meanings’ and ‘messages’.

According to Krashen, ‘acquisition’ can take place only when people comprehend messages in the TL. Briefly, the view of lan­guage that the Natural Approach presents consists of ‘lexical items’, ‘structures’ and ‘messages’. The lexicon for both perception and production is considered critical in the organization and interpre­tation of messages. In Krashen’s view, acquisition is the natural as­similation of language rules by using language for communication. This means that linguistic competence is achieved via ‘input’ contai­ning structures at the ‘interlanguage + 1’ level (i +1); that is, via ‘comprehensible input’.

**Theory of Language Learning:**

There are two independent ways of developing ability in se­cond languages. ‘Acquisition’ is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language, ... [and] ‘learning’ ..., [which is] a conscious process that results in ‘knowing about’ [the rules of] language” .

The Acquisition-Learning distinction is the most fundamental of all the hypotheses in Krashen’s theory and the most widely known among linguists and language practitioners).

**The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis:**

According to Krashen there are two independent systems of se­cond language performance: ‘the acquired system’ and ‘the learned system’. The ‘acquired system’ or ‘acquisition’ is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful inte­raction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act.

The ‘learned system’ or ‘learning’ is the product of formal ins­truction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge ‘about’ the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules. According to Krashen ‘learning’ is less important than ‘acquisition’.

Krashen believes that the result of learning, learned competence (LC) functions as a monitor or editor. That is, while AC is res­ponsible for our fluent production of sentences, LC makes correction on these sentences either before or after their production. This kind of conscious grammar correction, ‘monitoring’, occurs most typical­ly in a grammar exam where the learner has enough time to focus on form and to make use of his conscious knowledge of grammar rules (LC) as an aid to ‘acquired competence’. The way to develop learned competence is fairly easy: analysing the grammar rules consciously and practising them through exercises. But what Acquisition / Lear­ning Distinction Hypothesis predicts is that learning the grammar rules of a foreign/second language does not result in subconscious acquisition. In other words, what you consciously learn does not ne­cessarily become subconsciously acquired through conscious prac­tice, grammar exercises and the like. Krashen formulates this idea in his well-known statement that “learning does not became acquisi­tion”. It is at this point where Krashen receives major criticism.

1. RICHARD W. SCHMIDT : The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning , The University of Hawaii at Manoa P139, 140 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Harras, K. A., & Bachari, A. D. (2009). Dasar-dasar Psikolinguistik. Bandung: Universitas Pendidikan Bandung Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)