



# Stephen Krashen's Five Hypotheses

Wait, you have to be kidding me. The Stephen Krashen, the man Krassen Academy is named after, is the *same* Stephen Krashen who is a giant in the world of linguistics? My mind is blown. Color me pink and yellow.

**Acquisition Learning Hypothesis** Krashen suggests that second language learners have two distinct ways of developing competence. We **acquire** language subconsciously when exposed to understandable samples, much like a child picking up their first language. In contrast, we **learn** language through the conscious study of forms and rules. Krashen posits that the vast majority of our language ability comes from this subconscious acquisition, not from conscious learning.

According to Krashen, we use our acquired language for spontaneous communication. The rules we have "learned" act as an editor, or a "Monitor," allowing us to make changes and polish our language. This type of monitoring only occurs when the learner has sufficient time, is focused on producing correct language, and knows the relevant grammatical rules.

## Monitor Hypothesis

**Natural Order Hypothesis** Krashen proposes that the rules of a second language are acquired in a predictable, natural sequence. This order is not necessarily based on simplicity; some rules that are easy to explain may be acquired later than more complex ones.

This hypothesis states that acquisition occurs most effectively when a learner is exposed to "comprehensible input"—language that is understandable but contains elements (words, grammar) just one step beyond their current level of competence. This is often expressed as "i + 1," where "i" is the learner's current level.

## Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (i + 1)

**Affective Filter Hypothesis** Krashen writes that affective factors like boredom, anxiety, or a negative attitude can raise a mental block (the "affective filter"). When this filter is high, it prevents comprehensible input from being processed by the learner, leading to poor learning outcomes.

## Critique and Impact



Critics of Krashen argue that many of his hypotheses are difficult to test through empirical research. Nevertheless, his ideas represented a **significant shift** away from traditional language classes focused on memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary. Modern classroom research confirms that comprehensible input aids student progress, but it also suggests that guided instruction is crucial for helping learners overcome plateaus in their second language acquisition, as cognitive psychology theories suggest.