



The Theoretical Grounding of “Comprehensible Input”: Its Development from Krashen to the Present

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Abstract

Few constructs in second language acquisition have proven as durable, or as contested, as Stephen Krashen's notion of comprehensible input. First articulated in the late 1970s and formalized through the Input Hypothesis, the claim that learners acquire language by understanding messages slightly beyond their current level, encapsulated in the formula $i+1$, gave the field a deceptively simple answer to one of its oldest questions: what actually drives acquisition? This paper traces the theoretical trajectory of comprehensible input from its Krashenian foundations through four decades of argument, refinement, and, in places, outright rejection. It examines how Michael Long's Interaction Hypothesis and Pica's later refinement shifted the focus from input to negotiation of meaning; how Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis challenged the sufficiency of input; and how Krashen, White, and Izumi contributed to this debate. It also considers Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, VanPatten's focus on internal processing mechanisms, Gass's integration of input, interaction, and output, and Vygotskian sociocultural perspectives, particularly those of Lantolf and Donato, which challenged the individualistic assumptions of these models. Rather than presenting these positions as a linear progression, the paper reconstructs them as an ongoing theoretical debate in which each perspective responds to and reassesses earlier positions. It concludes by highlighting the implications of this debate for classroom practice.

Keywords: Comprehensible Input; Second Language Acquisition; Interaction Hypothesis; Noticing; Sociocultural Theory.

الملخص

تُعدّ قلة من المفاهيم في مجال اكتساب اللغة الثانية من حيث الاستمرارية والجدل حولها بمثل ما حظي به مفهوم المدخلات القابلة للفهم لدى ستيفن كراشن. فقد طرح هذا المفهوم لأول مرة في أواخر سبعينيات القرن العشرين، ثم جرى تنظيمه بصورة رسمية من خلال فرضية المدخلات، التي ترى أن المتعلمين يكتسبون اللغة من خلال فهم الرسائل التي تتجاوز مستواهم الحالي بقليل، وهو ما عبّر عنه كراشن بالصيغة $i+1$. وقد قدّم هذا الطرح إجابة تبدو بسيطة عن أحد أقدم الأسئلة في هذا المجال: ما الذي يدفع عملية اكتساب اللغة فعلياً؟

تتبع هذه الورقة المسار النظري للمدخلات القابلة للفهم، بدءاً من أسسها لدى كراشن، مروراً بأربعة عقود من الجدل والتطوير، وصولاً إلى الرفض الصريح لها في بعض الاتجاهات. وتبحث الورقة في كيفية قيام فرضية التفاعل لدى مايكل لونغ، وتطويرها اللاحق على يد بيكا، بتحويل التركيز من المدخلات ذاتها إلى التفاوض حول المعنى؛ وكيف تحدت فرضية المخرجات لدى ميريل سوين كفاية المدخلات؛ وكيف أسهم كراشن ووايت وإيزومي في هذا الجدل. كما تتناول فرضية الانتباه الواعي لدى ريتشارد شميدت، وتركيز بيل فان باتن على آليات المعالجة الداخلية، ومحاولة سوزان غاس دمج المدخلات والتفاعل والمخرجات، إلى جانب المنظورات الاجتماعية الثقافية المستندة إلى أفكار فيغوتسكي، ولا سيما أعمال جيمس لانتولف

وريتشارد دوناتو، التي تحدت الافتراضات الفردية التي تقوم عليها هذه النماذج. وبدلاً من تقديم هذه المواقف بوصفها تطوراً خطياً، تعيد الورقة بناءها باعتبارها جدلاً نظرياً مستمراً، تستجيب فيه كل رؤية للمواقف السابقة وتعيد تقييمها. وتختتم الورقة بتسليط الضوء على دلالات هذا الجدل بالنسبة للممارسة الصفية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدخلات القابلة للفهم؛ اكتساب اللغة الثانية؛ فرضية التفاعل؛ الانتباه الواعي؛ النظرية الاجتماعية الثقافية.

1. Introduction

Second language acquisition research has never lacked for theories of what makes learners learn a language. Grammar-translation assumed explicit rule-teaching; audiolingualism assumed habit formation through drill; cognitive approaches assumed conscious rule application. Into this crowded field, Stephen Krashen introduced a claim that was, despite its apparent simplicity, had a profound impact on the field of language acquisition: learners acquire language by understanding it. Not by producing it, not by drilling it, not by being corrected when they get it wrong, but by comprehending messages that lie just beyond what they can currently process unaided. This is the idea now known, somewhat loosely, as comprehensible input.

The claim was never allowed to stand unchallenged, and this is precisely what makes it worth revisiting. Comprehensible input did not simply accumulate supporting evidence over the decades that followed; it generated an argument, one that pulled in interactionist, cognitive, and sociocultural voices, each convinced that Krashen had identified something real but described it incompletely, or in the wrong terms altogether, and each met, at least initially, with some form of reply from Krashen or his defenders. This paper reconstructs that argument as a genuine, and substantive debate between competing perspectives, rather than reducing it to a one-sided presentation of objections. It begins with Krashen's own formulation of the Input Hypothesis and its early reception, then follows the challenges raised by Long, Swain, Schmidt, VanPatten, Gass, and the Vygotskian tradition, together with the responses and empirical follow-up work each provoked, before turning to what four decades of disagreement leave a classroom teacher able to do with any confidence.

2. Krashen's Input Hypothesis: Theoretical Foundations and Early Reception

Krashen presented the Input Hypothesis as one component of a larger architecture, the Monitor Model, developed across a series of publications in the early 1980s (Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1985). The model rested on five interlocking claims, the first of which would prove the most consequential for everything argued later in this paper. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis distinguished a subconscious process, acquisition, resembling how children absorb a first language, from a conscious process, learning, resembling explicit classroom study of rules. Krashen argued the two systems do not feed into one another: conscious learning, on his account, can never turn into acquired competence, this was, from the outset, the most vulnerable part of the model, since it appeared to rule out any developmental role for explicit instruction altogether, and it is this specific claim that Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis would later confront directly.

The remaining three components filled out the architecture around this central distinction. The Natural Order Hypothesis held that grammatical structures are acquired in a broadly predictable sequence regardless of the order in which they are taught. The Monitor Hypothesis assigned conscious learning a narrow, editing role, available only when learners have time, know the rule, and think to apply it, a mechanism meant to accommodate the obvious fact that explicit knowledge is not completely useless, only incapable of becoming acquired competence in Krashen's sense. The Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed that anxiety, low motivation, and poor self-confidence raise a mental barrier that blocks input from reaching the acquisition device even when it is, in principle, comprehensible.

It was the fifth component, the Input Hypothesis itself, that Krashen treated as the engine of the entire model. Its central claim is captured in the formula $i+1$: learners move from their current competence, i , to the next stage by comprehending input that contains structures slightly beyond that level, the $+1$. From this perspective, comprehension does not depend on learners already knowing the new structures; but rather on the context, extra-linguistic support, shared knowledge, and prior competence combining to make the message clear enough that the unfamiliar element becomes intake almost as a byproduct of understanding (Klella, 2024). Krashen was very definite about the mechanism involved, insisting that people acquire language in only one way, by understanding messages (Krashen, 1985), and treating comprehension itself, rather than any deliberate focus on form, as both necessary and sufficient for acquisition to proceed.

The Natural Order Hypothesis gave the broader model an early empirical anchor. Morpheme-order studies conducted in the 1970s, before Krashen had fully articulated the Monitor Model, found that learners from very different first-language backgrounds tended to acquire a handful of English grammatical morphemes, progressive -ing, plural -s, the copula, and so on, in a broadly similar sequence regardless of the order in which a syllabus had presented them, and Krashen took this convergence as evidence that some acquisition device was operating independently of instruction. Later researchers were more cautious about how far the finding traveled: the order held most reliably for that narrow set of English morphemes, proved considerably less stable once researchers looked at other structures or other languages.

The practical corollary of the Input Hypothesis followed directly from the theory. If acquisition depends on comprehensible input and is blocked by a raised affective filter, then classrooms should prioritize meaning over form, delay production until learners feel ready, and keep anxiety low. Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach (1983) operationalized this logic: a silent period during which learners are not forced to speak, comprehension-based activities such as Total Physical Response, and an instructional sequence built around exposure rather than explicit grammar teaching. For a field accustomed to teaching being equated with correction and drilling, the proposal that a teacher's central job was simply to make input comprehensible, and then largely to get out of the way, was genuinely radical, and it is easy, in retrospect, to underestimate how sharply it broke with contemporary classroom orthodoxy.

3. Beyond Krashen: The Argument over What Makes Input Work

The challenges that follow are best read as a sequence, each responding to a specific limitation the last had left unresolved. Long relocates the mechanism that makes input comprehensible in the first place; Swain questions whether comprehension, however achieved, is sufficient on its own; Schmidt asks whether comprehension without conscious awareness can do any acquisitional work at all; VanPatten asks what the mind actually does with input once it arrives; Gass attempts to map all of these mechanisms onto a single integrated process; and the Vygotskians, more radically, reject the individualist premise that Krashen, Long, Swain, Schmidt, and VanPatten all continue to share.

3.1 Long's Interaction Hypothesis

The first sustained challenge came from the interactionist approach, and it did not so much reject Krashen's premise as relocate it. Michael Long (Long, 1996) agreed that comprehensible input was necessary for acquisition, but he pressed a question Krashen had largely left unanswered: through what mechanism does input actually become comprehensible in real classroom or conversational settings, particularly when it initially is not? Long's answer, developed across the 1980s and consolidated in his Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), was that face-to-face interaction supplies the mechanism. When a listener fails to understand, conversation partners renegotiate the exchange, through clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and repetition, and this negotiation for meaning modifies and elaborates the input until

it becomes comprehensible (Klella, 2026). Long argued, it connects input, the learner's internal capacities, and output through what he termed selective attention, directing the learner's limited attentional resources toward precisely the linguistic forms that had caused the breakdown.

Long's evidence came largely from comparing native speaker-to-nonnative speaker conversation with scripted, simplified textbook input, and it showed that negotiated conversation generated far more of the modifications associated with comprehension than premodified, simplified input ever did (Klella & Mrghem, 2024). This was, in effect, an empirical rebuttal to a quieter assumption in Krashen's model, that a teacher or a graded reader could reliably deliver $i+1$ by simplifying text in advance. Long's data suggested comprehensibility is not something a speaker or writer can simply engineer beforehand; it has to be negotiated live, in response to signs that a listener has not understood. In this respect, Long's move was subtle but significant: he kept Krashen's comprehensible input as the necessary condition for acquisition while denying that input arrives comprehensible on its own, or that it can be reliably pre-packaged that way (Karrar et al., 2026). Comprehensibility, for Long, is achieved through interaction, not given in advance by careful simplification.

Later empirical research by Pica (1994) developed Long's ideas by examining particular interactional strategies, such as comprehension checks, clarification requests, and self-repetition. Rather than assuming that these strategies simply make conversations easier, Pica investigated whether they were actually associated with measurable improvements in learners' comprehension and language production. Her findings were more nuanced than Long's original position suggested. Negotiation consistently helped learners understand the specific linguistic item being discussed at that particular moment, but there was much less evidence that these immediate benefits resulted in lasting and transferable improvements in language acquisition. Subsequent interactionist researchers generally accepted this limitation while maintaining the broader importance of interaction (Klila, 2025). They viewed interaction as a process that makes language input more accessible and useful in the short term, but they were more cautious about claiming that improved understanding during interaction necessarily leads to long-term language development.

3.2 Swain's Output Hypothesis

Merrill Swain's challenge (Swain, 1985, 1995) was more direct, and considerably harder for the Input Hypothesis to absorb. Drawing on years of observation in Canadian French immersion programs, Swain noted a pattern that comprehensible input alone could not explain: students who had received years of rich, comprehensible input in French, taught content subjects entirely in the language, nonetheless failed to reach native-like accuracy in grammar and showed persistent, fossilized errors in production. If comprehension were truly sufficient for acquisition, this outcome should not have occurred. Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985, 1995) proposed instead that producing language, and specifically pushed output, output that stretches learners to convey their meaning precisely rather than approximately, performs functions that comprehension cannot. She identified three: a noticing function, in which the act of trying to say something reveals gaps in a learner's interlanguage that passive comprehension leaves invisible; a hypothesis-testing function, in which output serves as a trial run that can be met with feedback; and a metalinguistic function, in which talking about language helps learners control and internalize its forms.

The evidence from immersion programs was difficult to ignore, but it was not left without explanation. Supporters of the Input Hypothesis, particularly White (1987), suggested that the continued errors made by immersion learners could be explained by the nature of the input they received rather than by a weakness in input itself. In immersion classrooms, teachers tend to focus their language primarily on helping students understand the subject matter, which means that learners have limited exposure to negative evidence, that is, information showing them which grammatical forms are incorrect. As a result, they may fail to recognize consistent

problems in areas such as grammatical gender and verb morphology (Klella & Al Garaghoolee, 2026). From this perspective, the findings from immersion programs did not necessarily disprove the value of comprehensible input. Instead, they indicated that the input learners received may not have been sufficiently precise or diverse to support the acquisition of certain grammatical features. Swain, however, responded that this explanation actually supported her broader argument: if the quality, variety, and richness of input are so important, then simply understanding the message cannot be considered enough (Hmouma et al., 2026). The theory must therefore account for additional factors, such as the need for learners to produce language (pushed output), pay attention to negative evidence, or both.

Later experimental work, notably Izumi's studies (Izumi, 2002) comparing learners who were pushed to produce output about a text with learners who simply read the same text twice, lent Swain's claim further support: the group required to produce output noticed and later used target grammatical forms at measurably higher rates, even though both groups had encountered identical comprehensible input beforehand. This design isolated the variable Swain's hypothesis had identified, whether the act of production itself, and not merely additional exposure to input, was doing the acquisitional work, and the results were difficult to explain on a purely input-driven account. Where Krashen had held that comprehensible input was not merely necessary but sufficient, this accumulating evidence, from the original immersion data through White's qualified defense to Izumi's controlled comparison, suggested that input, however rich, was not sufficient for grammatical development (Swain, 1985) on its own, and that being pushed to produce language plays a role input cannot substitute for.

3.3 Attention and Processing: Schmidt and VanPatten

Richard Schmidt's intervention (Schmidt, 1990) attacked a different and, in some respects, more fundamental assumption of Krashen's model: the claim that acquisition is a subconscious process that proceeds without the learner's conscious attention. Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990) argued the opposite, that conscious noticing of a form in the input is the necessary condition for that form to become intake at all. His argument drew partly on his own well-documented experience learning Portuguese, in which forms he had been exposed to repeatedly, but had never consciously noticed, simply failed to enter his productive competence, while forms he did notice, often because a teacher or interlocutor drew attention to them, were the ones he went on to acquire. Schmidt was willing to state the position starkly: he held that learning without awareness is essentially impossible, a claim that puts him in direct opposition to Krashen's acquisition-learning distinction, since it implies that at least some conscious, learning-like attention is a precondition for what Krashen had called acquisition.

Bill VanPatten's work (VanPatten, 1996, 2004) introduced another significant shift in the debate by approaching the issue from a psycholinguistic perspective. Rather than focusing primarily on whether input should be supplemented with interaction or output, VanPatten examined how learners cognitively process input when they first encounter it. His research on input processing demonstrated that learners often rely on systematic strategies that can interfere with language acquisition (Hmouma, 2025). One example is the First Noun Principle, whereby learners tend to interpret the first noun they encounter as the grammatical subject or agent, even when this interpretation is incorrect because of the structure of the language. From this perspective, simply exposing learners to large amounts of comprehensible input may not be sufficient to promote acquisition, since learners' processing strategies can direct their attention away from the grammatical forms that teachers intend them to notice and acquire.

VanPatten's answer was Processing Instruction, a pedagogical technique that manipulates input so that learners cannot rely on their default strategies and are structurally forced to attend to the grammatical form in question in order to understand the sentence at all. Comparative classroom studies using this technique reported gains in comprehension and, notably, in production as well, even though the instruction itself never asked learners to produce anything, a result VanPatten

took as evidence that changing how input is processed can affect the developing system more directly than simply increasing the amount of comprehensible input available. The effect of VanPatten's work was to shift the argument away from the quantity or even the comprehensibility of input toward the internal mechanisms that determine which parts of comprehensible input actually get processed in the first place, a question Krashen's model had not addressed.

Two further lines of argument complicate this picture without displacing it. Susan Gass (1997) proposed an integrated model treating input, comprehension, intake, and output as successive stages of a single process, offering a shared vocabulary in which Long's, Swain's, and Schmidt's mechanisms could be located as compatible rather than competing. A more fundamental challenge came from Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000), which rejected the individualist premise all of the positions above share: Donato's research on collective scaffolding (1994) showed small groups of learners jointly constructing correct forms that no single participant possessed alone, treating acquisition as a socially distributed achievement, mediated within a learner's zone of proximal development, rather than a private, individual one. Neither line of argument overturns the debate reconstructed above so much as reframes it, in one case as a single processing pipeline and in the other as an inherently social activity, and each leaves a visible mark on the pedagogical implications that follow.

4. Pedagogical Implications

What should a classroom teacher, reading this history rather than any single hypothesis in isolation, actually do with it? When the development of second language acquisition research is considered as a whole rather than through the lens of any single hypothesis, an important pedagogical implication emerges: no individual theorist provides a sufficient or comprehensive framework for classroom practice. Adopting one theoretical position as the sole basis for instruction risks reproducing the limitations that subsequent scholars identified in earlier models, particularly those associated with Krashen. Nevertheless, a curriculum grounded in comprehensible input, extensive reading, comprehension-oriented activities, and teacher language appropriately adjusted to learners' proficiency levels can provide a valid foundation for instruction (Ayad et al., 2026). This is because comprehensible input continues to be recognized across different theoretical perspectives as a fundamental condition for language development. However, the work of Long, together with Pica's more cautious elaboration of the interaction hypothesis, indicates that input is likely to be more beneficial when incorporated into meaningful and genuinely communicative tasks (Mrghem & Klella, 2026). Activities such as information-gap tasks, jigsaw activities, and pair-based problem-solving can create opportunities for communication breakdowns, negotiation of meaning, and interactional modification. Thus, input should not be understood merely as language transmitted from teacher to learners, nor should comprehensibility be assumed simply because instructional texts have been simplified or graded.

The findings associated with Swain, supported and further examined through Izumi's experimental research and considered alongside White's qualified defense of aspects of Krashen's position, provide additional justification for incorporating opportunities for pushed output into classroom instruction. Learners should be engaged in tasks that require them to express meanings with sufficient linguistic precision to ensure successful communication. Such production can encourage learners to recognize limitations in their existing linguistic knowledge, while feedback can assist them in evaluating and modifying their developing hypotheses about the target language. At the same time, the nature and diversity of the input to which learners are exposed remain important. Sufficient variation in linguistic forms is necessary to ensure that features such as morphological marking receive meaningful exposure and do not remain underdeveloped because learners have limited opportunities to encounter or process them.

The combined insights of Schmidt and VanPatten further suggest that teachers should not leave the process of noticing entirely to learners. Although language acquisition cannot be reduced to conscious attention to grammatical forms, learners’ attention can be strategically directed toward features that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Techniques such as input enhancement, including the visual highlighting of target forms in written texts, can increase the salience of particular linguistic features. Similarly, structured-input activities can be designed so that successful task completion requires learners to attend to specific grammatical forms. These approaches offer teachers a means of integrating attention to form within meaningful language use without returning to the isolated and decontextualized grammar instruction that Krashen’s model sought to challenge.

The dictogloss activity provides a practical illustration of how these theoretical perspectives can be integrated within a single instructional procedure. In a typical dictogloss activity, learners listen to a short text presented at a relatively natural rate, allowing them to process comprehensible input without receiving the text in a highly fragmented manner. They subsequently work collaboratively to reconstruct the text using notes taken during the listening stage. This reconstruction process creates opportunities for pushed output, as learners must formulate language accurately enough to reproduce the intended meaning. It also promotes negotiation of both meaning and linguistic form as learners discuss alternative formulations and resolve differences in their reconstructions. In the process, gaps in learners’ grammatical knowledge may become more apparent, thereby creating opportunities for noticing. The collaborative reconstruction also reflects the concept of collective scaffolding associated with Donato, since learners can jointly construct linguistic forms that may not have been accessible to any individual learner working independently.

A subsequent comparison between the learners’ reconstructed text and the original provides an additional opportunity for attention to form. Through this comparison, learners can identify differences between their own production and the target language and become more aware of specific linguistic features. Gass’s integrated perspective provides a useful framework for understanding the pedagogical value of such an activity because the different stages of the task; comprehension, collaborative reconstruction, comparison, and revision, allow input, interaction, noticing, and output to operate as interconnected dimensions of the learning process. Rather than requiring teachers to select one theoretical approach over another, such an activity demonstrates how complementary insights from different theories can be incorporated into a coherent instructional sequence.

The sociocultural perspective further emphasizes the importance of situating these instructional practices within meaningful and collaborative classroom environments. Group work, scaffolded interaction, and tasks that involve support from teachers or more capable peers can create conditions in which learners operate within their zones of proximal development. Donato’s research on collective scaffolding is particularly relevant in demonstrating that successful linguistic performance does not always depend upon the presence of a single knowledgeable individual. Through interaction, learners can collectively construct linguistic forms and meanings that may be beyond the independent capabilities of individual group members. However, such benefits depend largely on task design. Simply placing learners into groups does not necessarily produce meaningful collaboration; activities must be structured in ways that require learners to engage in substantive interaction and joint problem-solving rather than completing essentially individual tasks alongside one another.

Taken together, the historical development of second language acquisition theory suggests that comprehensible input should be regarded as an essential foundation, but not as a complete

explanation of language acquisition. Effective pedagogy should therefore integrate comprehensible and varied input with opportunities for meaningful interaction, negotiation of meaning, pushed output, attention to linguistic form, noticing, feedback, and collaborative scaffolding. From this perspective, the language classroom should be conceptualized not merely as a setting in which learners are exposed to the target language, but as a dynamic social and cognitive environment in which learners process input, interact with others, produce language, identify gaps in their linguistic knowledge, receive feedback, and collaboratively develop greater control over the target language. Such an integrated approach is more consistent with the cumulative evidence from second language acquisition research than an instructional model based exclusively on any single theoretical hypothesis.

5. Conclusion

Comprehensible input has survived four decades of criticism not because Krashen's account went unchallenged, but because the challenges themselves kept confirming that he had located something real, even as they rejected his explanation of how it works, and because Krashen and his defenders kept answering back rather than conceding the field. Long did not abandon comprehensible input; he explained how it gets produced through interaction, and showed that simplification in advance cannot reliably substitute for negotiation in real time, a claim Pica's later work qualified without overturning. Swain did not deny that input matters; she showed that it is not enough on its own, a claim White's defense complicated and Izumi's experimental work subsequently reinforced. Schmidt did not dispute that comprehension drives acquisition; he insisted that comprehension without noticing does not, a point Krashen contested but never fully dislodged. VanPatten did not argue against input; he asked what the mind actually does with it. Gass did not propose a new mechanism so much as a shared map on which the others' mechanisms could all be located. The Vygotskians did not deny that learners need linguistic experience; they relocated where that experience comes from, treating it as jointly constructed rather than privately received, a position Donato's classroom evidence lent considerable weight even as cognitively oriented researchers pushed back on its methodological commitments. Each critique narrowed and complicated the original claim without discarding it, and Krashen's own replies, however incomplete a defense they ultimately provided, kept the original hypothesis a live participant in the argument rather than a historical curiosity superseded by what came after. What emerges from this history is not a single correct theory to be adopted in place of Krashen's, but a considerably richer and more defensible picture than any one hypothesis offers alone: acquisition is driven by comprehensible input, made comprehensible through negotiated interaction rather than advance simplification, consolidated through pushed output, dependent on conscious noticing to a degree still under debate, filtered through internal processing mechanisms that determine which input actually gets used, and, at every stage, socially mediated rather than individually achieved. For a field this contested, that degree of convergence, even a convergence built out of forty years of disagreement between Krashen and nearly every major theorist who followed him, is itself a substantial finding. The argument, moreover, is not merely historical: meta-analytic reviews continue to report reliable effects for interaction-based instruction across a large accumulated body of studies (Mackey, 2012), and usage-based accounts of frequency-driven learning have since reopened, in updated terms, the very question of unification Krashen first raised (N. Ellis, 2002), evidence that the debate reconstructed here is still shaping the field rather than settling into a closed chapter of its history. Any serious account of language teaching, and any doctoral researcher entering the field today, still has a great deal to learn from it.

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