PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY OF KRASHEN'S THEORY ON ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH REFERENCE TO ENGLISH TEACHING IN GOMA SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This article describes Stephen Krashen's theory on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and its practical applicability to English language teaching and learning. The theory contains five hypotheses which constitute the object of this study and provide the necessary orientations relevant to the discussion in this article. From each hypothesis I draw a practical application susceptible to illuminate Goma English teachers in their pedagogical action.

Keywords: Theory, Second Language, Acquisition, Applicability, Hypothesis.

RESUME

Cet article décrit la théorie de Stephen Krashen sur l'acquisition de la Seconde Langue et son application pratique dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de l'anglais. La théorie comprend cinq hypothèses constituant l'objet de cette étude et donne les orientations nécessaires se rapportant sur la discussion dans cet article. A partir de chaque hypothèse j'extrais une application pratique susceptible d'éclairer les enseignants d'anglais de la ville de Goma dans leur action pédagogique.

Mots clés : Théorie, Seconde Langue, Acquisition, Applicabilité, Hypothèse.

1. INTRODUCTION

Educationists and psychologists have put forward a host of theories on language teaching and learning to help EFL teachers to fully play their roles in the distribution of language teaching, and learners to become proficient in learning a second or foreign language.

Teaching obviously involves mastery of all those theories (methods, techniques, strategies) to attain the expected outcomes whereas learning requires a great deal of variables such as motivation, attitude, aptitude, cognition, interference, transfer, imitation, interaction, opportunities, input, environment, etc. which significantly influence language production or output. Such variables are contained in various language theories that are meant to orient teaching and learning processes.

This article has selected among those hosts of theories one that was put forward by Stephen Krashen, an American applied linguist, and has a tremendous bearing on language teaching and learning. This theory can obviously and significantly improve Goma teachers' and learners' performances in some areas of English language teaching and learning activities.

Therefore, the principal purpose of this article is to provide Goma teachers with refreshing information that could generate a positive impetus for their educative action in English. Indeed, in the light of my several visits of inspection of Goma teachers' different lessons, they revealed that most English teachers still needed clarification and encouragement in their pedagogical and methodological implementation of some English teaching areas. Presumably, very few teachers were effective and performing in the achievement of their teaching activities while others were low achieving in them. Therefore, their low teaching performances in some English teaching areas need to be remedied.

Krashen's theory provides a comprehensive understanding of some principles and issues of second language acquisition that underlie the pedagogical action. These principles and issues obviously suggest straightforward and concrete ways that can respond to some of Goma teachers' concerns in their daily language teaching process. They constitute a framework that may enlighten them about some pedagogical shortcomings to be avoided and some positive attitudes to be adopted in English teaching.

2. PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY OF KRASHEN'S THEORY ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA) WITH REFERENCE TO ENGLISH TEACHING IN GOMA SCHOOLS

Krashen's (1981, 1982, and 1985) theory on Second Language Acquisition has illuminated a great deal of educationists about some pedagogical principles underlying language teaching and learning. This theory is basically divided into five hypotheses: The Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis, The Monitor Hypothesis, The Natural Order Hypothesis, The Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Brown 2000: 271 – 281).

Let me now explain each hypothesis and point out its practical pedagogical implications in language teaching and learning in referring to the English teaching and learning processes in Goma schools.

2.1 The Learning – Acquisition Hypothesis

This hypothesis maintains that adult second language learners have two modes of learning the target language: 'Learning' and 'Acquisition'. Following Krashen (1978, 1981), 'acquisition is associated with the outcome or natural way in which a child acquires the first language without formal tuition' whereas 'learning is a conscious language development particularly in formal school – like setting' (Stern 1983: 20).

This means, in other words, that learning involves the physical presence of a teacher in a classroom who provides learners with a certain amount of language but limited in time and space. Acquisition, on the other hand, does not require the physical presence of a teacher in a classroom who offers language material. The acquirer self-teaches by being exposed to the language out of a formal classroom activity for its mastery.

The distinction made by Krashen arouses two specific problems. The first underrates the validity of formal education which does not constitute the ultimate goal of language learning. In fact, formal teaching and learning entails some restrictions which do not explore all the mazes of the language system. The evidence is that the teacher does not provide exhaustive material that can enable the learner to acquire all the facets of the language. In most cases, language learning is a long process and classroom activities alone cannot suffice to cover a comprehensive language development. As Littlewood (1981: 46) argues, 'the teaching then has a dual role: to provide learners with useful knowledge, and to engage them in purposeful communication in the foreign language.'

The second problem lies in the non-completion of education. Education indeed is unrestricted and the school setting itself does not suffice to provide all necessary material to complete it. An individual actually completes his tuition from contacts with other people, learns new terms, acquires new patterns of intonation, interests and social values, and new experiences. This means, in others words, that language learning can be acquired not only by the contact with a teacher but also through a various number of media. As Stroud (2002: 15) puts it, 'Learning a language is not an all or nothing affair, it is a process that takes time, proceeding though a series of steps where any given structure is mastered gradually in acquisition.' Therefore, in second language acquisition many learning conditions are considered, 'whether the second language is learnt through exposure to the target language in a supportive language environment in which the second language is used' (Stern op. cit. pp. 339 – 340) or 'whether the second language is learnt as a foreign language in a language class in non-supportive environment where instruction is the only source of target language input' (Stern: idem). This excerpt obviously emphasizes both the impact of classroom environment as well as that of non-classroom.

Krashen's learning – Acquisition Hypothesis may exemplify the language learning situation in Goma schools where learning is the only mode prevailing in the teaching and learning process. Learners only depend on their teachers' minor role in the classroom without any other opportunity to extend their cognitive language development. Teachers should be aware that the classroom four walls do not constitute the only ideal area for language learning. They should supplement their classroom activities with outdoor activities such as permanent interschool debates, book readings, theatrical performances or outgoing trips to the neighbouring countries like Rwanda or Uganda where their learners could be exposed direct to English with their counterparts. In addition, schools should afford purchasing radio or television sets from which learners could listen to or watch English speakers' pronunciation, intonation and other visual and auditory input and different styles of speech such as fillers or hesitation devices, etc. which significantly improve language learning. Therefore, all these ways could help teachers avoid teaching English as a subject but as a means of communication. This said, this application leads me to focus on the second hypothesis: the Monitor Hypothesis.

2.2 The Monitor Hypothesis

Brown (op. cit. p.278), quoting Krashen (1981 a), makes it explicit when he says that 'The "monitor" is involved in learning, not in acquisition. It is a device for "**watchdogging**" one's output, for editing and making alterations, or corrections as they are consciously perceived'. This means, in other words, that the monitor is used by the non-native speaker who has not yet mastered his language communicative competence and resorts to it every time when uttering a communicative function.

The use of the monitor points out the learner's inability to produce automatic and unsconscious utterances without resorting to it. It inspects and changes the output of the acquired system. It clearly shows that for non-native speakers communicative language performance in the target language is subject to the maturity the language acquirer has evolved. If the acquired system has evolved to a point close to that of a native speaker's grammar, the monitor governing the acquired system can less be employed in speech production. Conversely, if the non-native speaker's acquired system has not yet developed with sufficient experience in the learned linguistic knowledge, he will be using it with overconcern, thus preventing him from speaking with easy and quick fluency.

This state of affairs obviously illustrates the linguistic position of the Goma non-native acquirers of English who frequently resort to it before uttering linguistic functions as they cannot produce automatic utterances in English. This frequent use of the monitor implies that Goma English teachers should aim at training their learners in linguistic automatism. Naturally, this automatism is never acquired overnight but it could be attained by multiplying communicative language exercises during classroom activities. The teacher should spot the linguistic areas in which learners have more difficulties than others. For example, the use of irregular verbs and other typical forms in the use of tenses (such as progressive forms of the use of tenses) and idioms and expressions, etc. causing serious difficulties to acquirers should constitute a long process of oral and written repetitive tests launched by the teacher in order to

enable learners to master them definitely. In short, EFL teachers should make language automatism their main battlefield in English language teaching to spare their learners from resorting to use the monitor every time. This conclusion leads me to move to the next hypothesis:

2.3 The Natural Order Hypothesis

'Following the earlier morpheme order studies of Dulay and Burt (1974b, 1976), Krashen has claimed that we acquire language roles in a predictable or "natural" order' (Brown op. cit. p. 278).

The above exerpt obviously reinforces the traditional conception of the teaching process according to which language teaching and learning should pace step by step starting from the simplest language forms to the most complex or complicated ones. As Tembue (2006: 27), argues, 'For a given language some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while others late.'

According to Krashen, this view only concerns "Learning' and not 'Acquisition'. In fact, Tembue (idem: p. 27) maintains in saying that:

> *The implication of natural order is not that second or foreign language teaching materials should be arranged in accordance with this sequence but that acquisition is subconscious and free from conscious intervention; it should not follow the order found in the studies. Clearly, Krashen rejects grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition.*

What Tembue puts forward above corroborates the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which assumes that the modern conception of language teaching and learning no longer operates step – by – step teaching for fear that it may constrain learners to limited input that can hinder their language learning development. Trim (1978: 9) clarifies this argument in putting it that:

> *We abandon the aim of leading the learner step – by – step along a path from the beginning to the end of the subject. Instead, we set out to identify a number of coherent but restricted goals relevant to the communicative needs of the learner.*

Clearly, the quotation meets the modern language teaching conception in that it sees in language learning the development of the acquirer's communicative competence. In fact, the aim of teaching English does not consist in teaching about the language but in teaching English to develop communication. Naturally, this does not mean that the learner's level should be overlooked, but the input given to the learner should foster him to effectively communicate in the language. Therefore, communicative language teaching appears to be appropriate to English teaching and learning today because it assumes that language learning cannot be restricted to a certain sequence of stereotyped linguistic forms which might impede learner's communicative competence process. This view might dominate Goma teachers who strictly stick to the step – by – step teaching without widening the communicative

opportunities of their learners. The reality is that teachers are convinced that beginners should be restricted, for example, to the simple verb "BE" or "HAVE" when they start learning English. They do not figure out that training may be initiated by using any other linguistic form to train learners in communication. For example, the teacher may initiate his learners into "Greetings" and "introductions" during the initial lesson even if the learners have no preliminaries in English.

e.g. T. Good morning boys and girls.

    Ps. Good morning, sir.

    T. How are you doing?

    Ps. We are very well. (I am very well, etc. individually)

    T. Today, we are going to introduce ourselves. My name is Wema. You,

      what is your name?

    P1. My name is Sengi.

    T. And you?

    P2. My name is Luanda.

    T. And you?

    P3. My name is Kahindo, etc.

    T. Very good.

      (At the end of the lesson, the teacher may say "Goodbye".

    Ps. Goodbye, sir.

In the light of this simple and initial conversation, the verb "BE" has been introduced in a communicative way. The teacher has trained his learners in the verb "BE" without formally announcing it. Meanwhile linguistic items such as "morning" "boys", "girls", "sir" "how are you doing", "today", "introduce", "ourselves", "my", "name", "very good" and "goodbye" have equally been introduced in this lesson requiring for sure explanations to learners.

However, it is clear that all the grammatical persons and pronouns shall be taught gradually depending on communicative opportunities.

Thus, after the second hypothesis, which constitutes one of the basics of language teaching and learning, let me now focus on the third that is equally worth knowing by teachers.

2.4 The Input Hypothesis

Brown (op. cit. p. 278) describes this hypothesis as follows :

> *The Input Hypothesis claims that an important « condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer **understands** (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure 'a bit beyond' his or her current level competence : ... if an acquirer is at stage or level i, the input he or she understands should contain $i + 1$ » (Krashen 1981 : 100)*

To be explicit about this quotation, the symbols used in it mean the following:

i stands for the level of the amount of language the acquirer currently possesses.

+ 1 stands for the amount of the language the teacher should add to the level of the amount of language the acquirer possesses.

This means that the input provided to the learner must enable him to gain more than what he possessed before, i.e. **i** + **1**.

This hypothesis reinforces Johnson and Morrow's (1981 : 61) communicative language teaching when they state that, 'Every lesson should end with the learner being able to see clearly that he can do something which he could not do at the buyinning, and, that the 'something' is communicatively useful.' This means, in other words, that the input the teacher provides to the learner during any lesson should increase his linguistic ability.

Krashen's principle should illuminate the Goma teachers of English in every lesson they undertake. Actually, the teacher should make sure that the new material he provides his learners with must enrich their language repertoire and contribute positively to their communicative language competence. Before learning a lesson learner should claim that their linguistic knowledge has increased. Each language acquirer should come to the conclusion that I have really learned something that I can now use in my everyday communication. Let us now talk about the last hypothesis: The Affective Filter Hypothesis.

2.5 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

In this hypothesis, 'Krashen has further claimed that the best acquisition will occur in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent, or, in Krashen's terms, in contexts where the 'affective filter" is low' (Brown op. cit. p. 279).

As said above, success in language teaching and learning requires optimal conditions conducive to promote positive attitude to language learning. If the learning conditions are not favourable to the learner he cannot cope with any language input he is given.

Attendances at Goma teachers' different lessons have demonstrated that some teachers make their classes a hell, a place of confrontation between teachers and learners, of humiliation, domination, fear, anxiety, insults and terror while teachers should make them a place of pleasure, joy, friendship, socialization, closeness and togetherness. Their teaching should inspire sympathy and confidence and provoke laughter, enjoyment, joke, relaxation and happiness instead of stresses and strains and inhibiting feeling.

The Goma EFL teachers should be endowed with a sense of humour. If teaching a particular language item or structure requires dancing, whistling, joking or flattering, teachers should perform them to relax the mental fatigue or concentration of learners. This means that the teacher should not change the English course into a burden wheighing on the learners' mental effort to understand what he teaches. On the contrary, he should imagine strategies to make it

easy to understand and attractive. Making English attractive should constitute his major concern by investing tricks that can stimulate learners to make enough effort and to love it. For example, organizing competitions for rewards (exercise books, pens, etc. offered by the school or himself, if possible), marking the students who make efforts to perform well, etc. Every time the teacher finds out that learners' attention wanes, he should imagine strategies or change his naughty nature to relax the classroom atmosphere in order to make his English lesson vivid and attractive. It is clear that teachers' intolerable and unsympathetic behaviour would inhibit their learners' love for English. I experienced teachers' intolerable attitude during my several visits of teachers' lessons I effected in different Goma schools. Every time a student was unable to cope with a question or an exercise he/she was qualified as "stupid" or "idiot". Such insults are obviously susceptible to demotivate learners to display their enthusiasm for English.

Basically, many learners were insulted and humiliated simply because they were unable to answer particular questions or to formulate or utter some language structures. This state of affairs obviously created frustration and disengagement in language learning on the part of learners. Presumably, teachers themselves are sometimes creators of learners' disgust and disenchantment with English.

Some EFL teachers forget that they have to play the missionary or the flattering character in order to harvest the expected outputs in English. Clearly, they have double – fold task: teaching and making English interesting to learners.

3. CONCLUSION

Krashen's theory has given rise to many applications in English language teaching and learning today. Learning – Acquisition Hypothesis has instructed teachers not to rely only on formal instruction which has shown its limits but to train learners to complete their instruction out of the classroom walls. The learner should seek completion of his instruction through contacts, book readings, outgoings and visual and audio modes, etc. which are powerful means that support learning. The Monitor Hypothesis urges teachers to aim at training their learners in automatic use of language requiring intense repetitive language activities and autonomy of acting. Learners' intense training should back them not to resort to and to give up the use of the monitor in their communication. The Natural Order Hypothesis seeks to ordering linguistic input taking into account the learner's level but without blocking his natural communication development of the language. In fact, language input order would constitute hindering the learner's language communicative ability if the teacher has to stick strictly to it. The Input Hypothesis constrains the teacher to become efficient and effective in his pedagogical role of teaching English. Actually, his teaching must bear fruits in raising learners' communicative ability. Learners' language communicative ability should not remain stagnant but it must gradually progress after any lesson move. The Affective Filter Hypothesis prompts the teacher to create favourable conditions in the classroom that may drive learners to display positive feelings conducive to developing and promoting efficient language learning.

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