AN OVERVIEW OF SLA THEORIES WITH A FOCUS ON THE AFFECTIVE FILTER

HYPOTHESIS

By

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Abstract

For many years foreign language acquisition has been a focal point of linguistic research. Theories of language learning is composed of essentially five major fields of thought (although there are many more theories, along with subtheories, correlational theories, methods and approaches) and a consensus has yet to be reached as to which one is the most accurate, for whom, in which context, what they are called or even how each one should be defined. This study aims to work with the five major ones, and dive deeper into each of them, with a specific focus on the Affective Filter Hypothesis, in order to apply these ideas in an English as a foreign language educational setting in which I currently work. This study hopes to implement theory in a way that makes second language learning more enjoyable and attainable for students, teachers and researchers.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) has slowly started to become a more relevant aspect of everyday life. With the globalization and digitization of markets and supply chains, along with relatively cheaper airfare for the middle class, the industrialized world is becoming smaller and smaller everyday making the aspects of language attainment ever more important. Five major theories exist on language learning (behaviorist, innateness, cognitivist, social interactionist/constructivist and naturalist), each of which attempt to explain how we learn language (Menezes, 2013). A vast amount of information exists on how we learn language, but a consensus has yet to be determined as to which theory is most accurate. Ultimately, all of these theories are connected in some way and can be used to help advance the study of SLA. The Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH) is one such theory, that in this study, is of particular interest. The following literature review will discuss the five major theories of SLA with an emphasis on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. These theories will then be applied in an English as foreign language classroom in Southern Germany.

Literature Review

Background

SLA and language attainment have been topics of interest for researchers for many years, and copious sources as well as theories exist. One finds numerous ideas about how and where language attainment takes place. In the 1950's, theories on language learning and particularly, second language attainment, started gaining more attention (Birdsong, 2004). Over the past sixty-five or so years many theories on language learning have been developed but there is still no consensus as to which theory is the most accurate. Few theories have been explored to the point of all knowing so there is no general agreement as to which one is most correct (Long, 1990). For the purposes of this study, five major theories have been reviewed and applied in an English as a foreign language classroom setting. Special emphasis has been given to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and its implications for English as a foreign language in Germany. As a means for gaining more background information, the following literature review will outline the five major language acquisition theories (behaviorist, innateness, cognitivist, social interactionist/constructivist and naturalist) as well as why these theories are of particular interest for this project. The majority of these theories were developed by individual scientists and social scientists (including psychologists and linguists) but have since been refined or added to by other researchers, including education researchers.

Behaviorist

Starting chronologically, behaviorism will be the first theory that is fully explored. Beginning in the 1940's behaviorism became a dominant force in both psychology and language acquisition theory (Hulin & Na, 2014). Behaviorism and its roots in language learning can be traced back to Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner (Skinner, 1999 & Pavlov, 1927).

Initially, behaviorist theory started out as a field of thought that looked to explain habit formation and not specifically language learning theory. One of the more well-known behaviorist studies can be attributed to Pavlov and his use of dogs (Pavlov, 1927). In this particular study, dogs were used to show the impacts of classical conditioning on behavioral response. Classical conditioning, also referred to as Pavlovian or respondent conditioning, occurs when two events that are naturally connected are added with a 3rd neutral stimulus and after a period of time the 3rd neutral stimulus alone can recreate a behavioral response (VanPatten & Williams, 2006). In Pavlov's study, dogs were given food at the same time a bell was rung. Eventually, after enough frequency, the dogs would begin to salivate with just the sound of the bell and without the presence of food. B.F. Skinner added to this theory by suggesting that reinforcement is needed in order to cement and change behavior to the desired outcome. This would later become known as operant conditioning. Within operant conditioning there are thought to be three types of responses: neutral, reinforcer and punisher. A neutral response occurs when behavioral, environmental responses neither increase or decrease the chances of a behavior being repeated. A reinforced response occurs when behavioral, environmental responses increase the chances of a behavior being repeated. Finally, a punisher response occurs when behavioral, environmental responses decrease the chances of a behavior being repeated (Skinner, 1938). Behaviorists believe that language development (for both L1 and L2) works much in the same way. In this theory language development is attributed to external environmental factors and the human behavioral response to such factors (VanPatten & Williams, 2006). Behaviorists believe that actions associated with language use can be traced back to solely external factors meaning that no internal mechanisms are taken into account (Menezes, 2013; VanPatten *et al.*, 2006). It is believed that sounds that receive positive praise will be repeated whereas sounds that receive a negative or neutral response will not (VanPatten & Williams, 2006). Many behaviorists also

believe that language can be habitually formed with positive reinforcement and corrective

feedback (Pica, 2003). That is if a task is completed enough times than it will eventually

become habit. If a task is not repeated frequently the behavior can become extinct (VanPatten

& Williams, 2006). For this reason, active participation as well as repetition is deemed

especially crucial.

One aspect of behaviorist theory that is of interest and showcases the importance of

repetition is known as the audio-lingual method or the aural-oral approach. This method was

first developed by Charles Fries who founded an English language institute at the University

of Michigan in the 1940s-1950s (Fries, 1945). Initially, this theory was developed with the

idea of bringing language learning to the masses (Liu & Shi, 2007). It was thought that since

abstract reasoning was not required, anyone could do it somewhat mechanically. The audio-

lingual method states that dialogues and pattern drills can be used for language learners to

develop quick and automatic responses to stimuli (Fries, 1945; Mart, 2013). This allows

pattern recognition to take place and become an automatic habit. It is thought that with

enough repetition and slight tweaking of patterns language can become orally habitual, but

this will only occur with enough speaking practice (Morley et al., 1984). Language learning

is considered a mechanical process and is thus dependent on imitation, modeling, repetition,

mimicry and pattern drills (Dolati, 2012 & Liu et al, 2007). Advocates of the audio-lingual

method believe that grammar should be taught early so that errors are avoided (R. Ellis,

2006). It is believed that errors need to be corrected immediately so that they are prevented

from becoming habit (Dolati, 2012; R. Ellis, 2006). It is thought that learning a language is a

step-by-step process so learning the structure is important (Dolati, 2012). The audio-lingual

method helps students to learn language patterns via repetition. More specifically, these

patterns of the language are made orally habitual, meaning that students are given a stimulus

that results in a specific behavioral response. Linguists that accept this theory believe that

language will not be learned if it is not oral-aural in the beginning (Morley *et al.*, 1984). It is also believed that the use of native language should be avoided and only the target language should be used in the classroom (Mart, 2012).

This idea is of particular interest to this study because of its ties to international language schools. In this method, speaking is given priority for language learning as well as the use of only the target language (Fries, 1945; Mart, 2013). Surprisingly, even today, many language schools use this idea as a foundation for foreign language teaching. In many language schools around the world it is forbidden for the instructor to use the native language of students. It is also thought to be beneficial if the teacher has no knowledge of the native language. This method of teaching was very popular in the 1980's but in more recent years it has been given little significance. Nevertheless, some studies have found this method to be making a comeback in the language teaching world. A 2013, study found that SLA learners did, indeed, benefit from task repetition (Bei, 2013). This study found that fluency and accuracy increased with repetition but not necessarily complexity (Bei, 2013).

As with all theories the audio-lingual method and behaviorism have seen their fair share of criticism. One of the main criticisms of both these theories is the lack of empirical foundation (Morley *et al.*, 1984). Many critics believe that there are a lack of studies supporting the existence of behavioral theory. Some even went as far to say that certain studies jumped to conclusions without proper evidence. Another criticism is that behaviorism is in direct opposition to other, more recent theories, such as Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar (Liu & Shi, 2007). Many of the main, established theories of language learning are in direct conflict with one another. To accept one is not necessarily to accept another. With the behaviorist theory this is very much the case because of its lack for the need of internal mechanisms in language learning (Menezes, 2013).

Regardless, the behaviorist theory was one of the first theories that came about in regard to language learning and is thus a foundational piece of the puzzle. It is necessary and essential for understanding the dynamic field of SLA. Behaviorism theory has been useful for both past and present-day researchers whose aim it is to unveil the complex world of language learning. Second language acquisition questions are controversial and because of this as of yet no general conscious is available (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016). Many theories are difficult to reject because they seem reasonable but incomplete (Menezes, 2013). New findings are constantly appearing and building off of previously obtained knowledge. Even though little evidence has been found to support behaviorist theory and many behaviorist theory learning strategies have been deemed as outdated it is still useful to understand the underlying principles of this theory. Behaviorism provides a good foundation for further research into the world of language learning. For the purposes of this inquiry, behaviorism has been used to provide the basic groundwork of research into the intricacies of SLA.

Innateness

The second theory that has been investigated is the innateness theory of language learning. This theory states that language learning begins first and foremost with innate properties in the mind, meaning a system for grammar learning underlies all human languages (Ellidokuzoðlu, 1992). Noam Chomsky believed that language was too complex and too quickly learned to be explained by imitation alone (Chomsky, 1965). This would become known as Plato's problem: How do people acquire so much knowledge when the learning environment is limited? (Segalowitz & Lightbrown, 1999). To further explain this phenomena Chomsky proposed the idea of the existence of a structure in the brain that allows humans to learn and process language. It is believed that all humans possess a language acquisition device (LAD) or a universal grammar (UG) structure that enables them to learn and process language (Kirby, 1999). LAD is responsible for initial development of language

abilities (Menezes, 2013). The universal grammar structure consists of two parts: a set of

universals that apply to all languages and a set of language-specific properties that are not

determined and vary language to language (Kirby, 1999). All languages have creative aspects

in common and universal grammar accommodates this creative side by expressing deep

seeded regularities. Chomsky believed that modern linguistics had not accounted for

universal grammar or this so-called creative aspect of language (Chomsky, 1965). It is

thought that language is not random and that it embodies some sort of pattern that makes

learning possible (Kirby, 1999). This pattern can account for natural order of thoughts and

words (Chomsky, 1965).

　　　With that being said there are, of course, still differences between individual

languages. These differences can be seen within the different parameters of an individual

language. The principles and parameters model states that there is a difference between the

principles that underline all languages and the parameters. The parameters reflect the

different ways in which individual languages showcase these principles (Segalowitz &

Lightbrown, 1999). As a result, different languages have different set parameters which in

turn make them more closely related or more distantly related. It is believed that these

parameters can have an impact on the acquisition of language. How exactly this works is still

open to interpretation.

　　　The idea of UG and its existence has become one of contention amongst linguists,

psychologists and other scientists in the field of SLA. Some researchers believe that UG is

only necessary for L2 acquisition where as others believe it is necessary for both L1 and L2

procurement. There are also scientists that believe that UG is present only in L1 acquisition

and still others that believe that UG has no influence in SLA (Segalowitz & Lightbrown,

1999). Due to these differing opinions the accessibility of language via UG can be broken

down into the following three categories: direct accessibility, indirect accessibility and

inaccessibility. Direct accessibility advocates believe that learners set parameters via UG to

learn both L1 and L2. Learners make full use of UG even the parts that are not necessarily

present in their native language (Hulin & Na, 2014). Most psycholinguists believe that in

order for one to be true so does the other so in other words what works for L1 must also work

for L2 (Segalowitz & Lightbrown, 1999). Indirect accessibility supporters, on the other hand,

think that when language parameters are different between L1 and L2 it is not possible to

access this lost piece. Therefore, this group believes that UG has zero influence on SLA but

UG works through grammar usage of the mother tongue. Indirect accessibility believers think

that parameters within the mother tongue can be manipulated but not parameters of L2. Most

linguists favor this position. The third and final grouping is inaccessible. Inaccessibility

proponents believe that there is no influence from UG and that all tasks are processed through

psychological devices and/or cognitive strategies (Hulin & Na, 2014). As one can see from

above there is still a lot of dispute as to the impact of UG on both L1 and L2 acquisition. It is

still not entirely clear what impact (if any) UG has on language acquisition. Even Noam

Chomsky himself has begun to question the authenticity of his previous claims of a rich,

innate universal grammar (Hauser *et al.*, 2002). This in itself is of interest considering he is

thought to be the father of UG. Many opponents of UG and innateness believe that external

input may in fact be adequate. What appears to be a learning environment with limited data

input may actually support a large amount of retention (Segalowitz & Lightbrown, 1999).

Regardless, the theory of innateness and within it the idea of UG has been helpful to

establishing new ideas about the way that language is obtained. Without this building block

other theories of SLA might not have emerged. A quote from Hulin & Na (2014) sums it up

best: "That is to say, UG in SLA is a remarkable contribution to the history of linguistics and

will be essential reading for students and scholars of linguistics, specialists in SLA and

language teacher-educators" (p. 5). Chomsky and his contributions to the theory of innateness

should be considered foundational and thus necessary for understanding language learning as a whole. Even though the concept lacks full consensus it has still helped to guide linguists, scientists and teachers on their path to understanding language processing. Without the idea of UG other theories would most likely not exist.

This theory is considered anti-behaviorist and is thus in direct opposition with the theory above (Searle, 1974). Nevertheless, contention is helpful in establishing new ways of thinking. Like, behaviorism, innateness has helped pave the way for the ideas of today and will still be relevant in the future. Limited research has been able to prove the occurrence of UG and it is still not fully understood the processes that take place if UG exists (Segalowitz & Lightbrown, 1999). Innateness, like many facets of SLA, is not fully known yet, it has still been impactful in the world of linguistics. For the purposes of this study innateness has been used to provide a broader framework into the inner workings of SLA.

Cognitivist

The third theory that has been researched is the cognitivist theory of language acquisition. The roots of cognitivist theory can be traced back to the works of Jean Piaget and his thoughts on cognitive development in children. Piaget believed that knowledge was developed spontaneously whereas learning was provoked and thus inherently unspontaneous. Piaget further broke down development into four stages: sensorimotor or pre-verbal (birth-2 years), preoperational (2-7 years), concrete operational (7-11 years) and formal or hypothetical operational (11years and older).

The first stage is when a child uses senses and motor abilities to understand the world. This stage is largely reflexive behavior and results in the beginning constructions of what Piaget liked to call schema (Piaget, 1964). Schema or the plural schemata are mental structures in the brain that individuals use to adapt to their environments (Heo *et al.*, 2011; Piaget, 1964). When a child is born, they have few schemata but over time they adapt to have

more. The schemata do not change as a result of time they just become more developed. When a child realizes the differences between new and old schema adaptation takes place (Heo *et al.*, 2011). This leads to further development.

In the second stage the appearance of representational intelligence begins. This is the stage where language starts to develop as well as the use of symbols. Children also start to have a clearer understanding of past and future. From there children progress into the third stage. In the third stage symbols are used to logically solve problems but not verbally expressed hypotheses. In this stage abstract thought is still in the process of developing. The fourth and final stage of cognitive development is when reasoning is constructed in order to solve all problems including hypotheses (Heo *et al.*, 2011; Piaget, 1964). This is the stage in which abstract thought becomes fully developed. All of these stages are a result of mental or internal factors. These stages of development also contribute to the development of complex language systems over time.

Cognitivists consider language learning to be a psychological process (Ortega, 2011). In essence knowledge exists in the mind, learning is an individual achievement and learning takes place based on environmental aspects (Ortega, 2011). Learning is a mental process which leads to automatization through structured pattern practice. Thinking is a successive adaptation of assimilation to the environment and as a result the mental structures in the brain reorganize (Heo *et al.*, 2011). Language, specifically, becomes accessible only after analytical processes. It is thought that as a learner absorbs more information this new information is added to prior knowledge in order to create more complex sentence structure (Schulz, 2019). This in turn results in the attainment of language.

Within the field of SLA, the cognitivist theory is governed by the same standards as all cognitive learning. Over the past two- or three-decades researchers have explored the idea of language learning as a psychological process (N. Ellis, 2006). As a result of this many

SLA textbooks (even today) are formatted in a way with this in mind (Schulz, 2019). This method has been shown to be successful in terms of student goal obtainment. One study found that focused L2 instruction resulted in target orientated gains meaning that students showed improvement in terms of goal attainment (N. Ellis, 2006). Cognitivist theory has had a strong influence on the field of SLA for numerous years (Atkinson, 2011). It could be said that it has made lasting impressions that have helped present day researchers to further understand language and its development.

With that being said, this theory is in contrast with other social-based SLA theories, in which they view learning as a social accomplishment (Ortega, 2011). The divide between cognitivist and social based SLA theories has emerged within recent years. In the past, the field of SLA was viewed through the perspective of a cognitive lens. This has begun to change with the development of new ideas and perspectives. These new social viewpoints have been quick to point out certain problems that exist within the cognitive perspective. Like the previous two fields of thought cognitivism has seen its fair share of critics. One of the main criticisms is that cognitive research has not unpacked the same new theories as more recent research. These new perspectives have led researchers to believe that language learning is supported by experiences and is in general bigger than just grammar. It is thought that cognitivist theory does not account for change and individuality in terms of language attainment. Historically, cognitivists have viewed language attainment very one dimensionally and this way of thinking has been slowly becoming more and more obsolete Presently, many linguists and scientist are taking into account situational context and the idea that everything is in constant flux. This has led researchers to develop ideas that are useful, insightful and unique to the field of SLA (Atkinson, 2011).

However, the field of SLA has contributed greatly from the cognitivist perspective. The cognitivist perspective, like all of the foundational theories of language learning, have

helped scientists, social scientists and educators to discover new and ever-evolving ideas. The field of SLA is, even today, is still open to interpretation and further development. This progress would not exist without the input that cognitivist scientists provided. Therefore, in order to fully understand language acquisition, it is important to understand the cognitive perspective. The cognitivist outlook is still used today and will be used in the future for scientists to further expand their thoughts on SLA. Limited studies have proven the existence of cognitivism but that does not mean these ideas are any less valuable (R. Ellis, 2010). The goal of SLA should be to eliminate theories that are unsatisfactory while at the same time utilizing these ideas to further expand on current research (R. Ellis, 2010). The world of SLA and language attainment is still very much in need of clarification but without these founding theories we would be very lost. For the purposes of this study, cognitivism has provided an important perspective and background into the field of SLA.

Social Interactionist/Constructivist

The next theory that has been explored is the social interactionist/constructivist theory of language learning. The beginnings of social interactionist theory can be seen as early as the mid 1970's. During this time a man named Lev Vygotsky proposed an idea called the zone of proximal development. This theory states that when a learner interacts with supportive peers their level of language becomes more advanced (Vygotsky, 1978). This idea further developed into what social interactionists believe to be the most important concept for language attainment and that is social interaction. In suggesting these new insights, Vygotsky, became what many deemed as the "New Piaget" in the field of language learning (Evensen, 2009).

Social interactionists believe that input, especially comprehensible input, is a necessary and key factor to language acquisition (Ghorbanian & Jabbarpoor, 2017). In more defined terms, social interaction or intrapersonal activity promotes language procurement

(Chapelle, 2006). Language learning is thought to be a socially mediated process and is helped by social interaction (Menezes, 2013). These researchers believe that in order to truly accomplish language learning one must be engaged in face-to-face communication, but the interaction must occur at the correct level. This type of collaboration helps learners to move from one level to the next. Having interactions at the correct level helps learners to see gaps in current knowledge and thus allows for reflection. This reflection assists pupils in further language procurement and allows for scaffolding to take place (Menezes, 2013). If the input is too difficult or not difficult enough than learning will not take place (Ghorbanian & Jabbarpoor, 2017). Proponents of this theory believe that modified input is good and allows for learning to take place. Modified input usually takes place between native speakers and non-native speakers. When these two people interact, the native speaker, automatically adjusts their comprehension level in order to fit to that of the non-native speaker. When this is done correctly the learner is able to practice word expression which in turn helps with language production (Menezes, 2013). Therefore, social interactionists believe that language expression is very powerful and valuable. Consequently, this idea has led to the creation of the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2008).

The output hypothesis began its descent into the language world during the 1980's. During this time the word 'Output' was used to describe the outcome of the language acquisition device (LAD). At the beginning output was considered to be a noun but more recently the definition has changed to that of a verb or a process. This implies the action that the word entails. The output hypothesis states that expressing language either in written or spoken form helps the process of SLA (Swain, 2008). Without the output hypothesis there are thought to be three parts and they are as follows: noticing/triggering function, hypothesis-testing function and the metalinguistic function (Saengboon, 2004). The noticing/triggering function is produced when the learner experiments with language production (either vocally

or in their mind) and realizes that they do not know how to say exactly what they want to say. This part helps pupils to see where they are lacking skills and can possibly help them to discover something new about their second language that is different from their native language. The hypothesis-testing function is formed when learners attempt language as a test run. Generally, this occurs after feedback has been given. It is believed that students who are given the opportunity to correct output usually do so and for the most part successfully. The third and final function is the metalinguistic. The metalinguistic function is the idea that using language to mirror language produced by others helps with language attainment (Swain, 2008). This thought can be traced back to Vygotsky and his sociocultural theory. In his theory Vygotsky (1978) states that learning is a social process. Overall, the output hypothesis puts forth the necessity of language production for the furthering of language acquisition. The output hypothesis was proposed to further expand upon Krashen's Input hypothesis. This idea will be discussed in full by the end of this paper.

Of course, like all the other foundational theories of language learning, there are criticisms. One of the main criticisms associated with this theory the idea that learners are like computers (Saengboon, 2004). Opponents of the social interactionist theory believe that people should not be compared to computers because they are inherently different. Another criticism of social interactionist theory is that there has been no conclusive evidence to suggest the usefulness of comprehensible input (Davies & Elder, 2004). This in itself is problematic because the basis of this theory is the importance of comprehensible input.

This theory builds off some of the other foundational theories in the sense that speaking is given priority. Like with the behaviorist theory, speaking and hence interaction is considered best practice for language teaching. The social interactionist theory, like previous theories, has been helpful in establishing new thoughts on SLA. Even though it is not widely accepted it has still been useful to researchers, teachers, linguists and scientists. The social

interactionist theory is a foundational theory that is important to understanding SLA. Due to the setting of this research project and the teaching methodology utilized this idea can be deemed as significant.

Naturalist Approach

The final theory that has been thoroughly investigated is the Naturalist theory also known as The Natural Approach. This theory was of special interest because of its ties to the affective filter hypothesis. The affective filter hypothesis will be analyzed in the subsequent pages. Naturalists believe that language is best learned by understandable message exposure. Listening comprehension is key for language retention whereas grammar has a limited role (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). It is believed that grammar will emerge on its own with correct comprehensible input (Saengboon, 2004). Language is acquired when people receive the correct level of comprehensible input that is in turn processed through the LAD. The LAD generates rules in accordance with innate processes which helps to determine what input is processed (Krashen, 1985). It is thought that overtime grammar skills will develop with the right comprehensible exposure (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). This context helps to explain this phenomenon (Krashen, 1985).

Another aspect of the Naturalist approach is what Krashen (1985) referred to as the input hypothesis. This hypothesis states that language acquisition can only take place when comprehensible input (CI) is understood (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). In more specific terms acquisition takes place when the CI is equal to $i+1$ meaning the level is just above the learners' current level (Dolati, 2012). When the level of comprehensible input is higher or lower than $i+1$ limited acquisition will take place. It is thought that obtainment occurs after enough exposure to spoken and written language. Eventually, speaking emerges after this

exposure (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). Naturalists believe that speaking cannot be taught but is a result of competence building (Krashen, 1985). Speaking in turn encourages conversation which can result in even more comprehensible input procurement (Krashen & Terrell, 1995).

The Krashen's input hypothesis is included in the following five interrelated theories: The acquisition learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Hanak-Hammerl, 2003). The acquisition learning hypothesis states that there is a difference between learning and acquisition. Learning is a conscious act whereas acquisition is subconscious. The monitor hypothesis suggests that with each learner there is a system that acts as an editor or monitor. The editor makes small changes in order to change what the learner produces. In order for this to occur the student needs three things: time, form focus and rule knowledge. The natural order hypothesis expresses the idea that humans acquire rules of language in a certain, predictable order. Like discussed above, the input hypothesis states that it is important for learners to understand language that is a bit beyond current knowledge. It is essential that students are challenged without being overwhelmed. Finally, the affective filter hypothesis declares that it is easier to obtain language when one is not tense, angry, anxious or bored (Hanak-Hammerl, 2003). Naturalists believe that all humans are equip with what is referred to as an affective filter. The affective filter is a mechanism that can allow or prohibit language input from occurring (Yuhui & Sen, 2015). When the filter is high, then input is decreased and when the filter is low input is increased. The level of the filter is impacted by a variety of psychological and emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation and/or confidence (Krashen, 1985). It is believed that students with optimal attitudes have a lower filter and students with subpar attitudes have a higher filter (Hanak-Hammerl, 2003). This idea will be discussed in more detail in subsequent pages.

As with the other theories the naturalist approach has had its fair share of both praise and criticism. In terms of praise one study found that language acquisition is severely delayed when hearing children have two deaf parents (Long, 1983). The input hypothesis predicts this phenomenon. When students have a lack of comprehensible exposure than language obtainment is delayed (Krashen, 1985). Nevertheless, in general, the input hypothesis has been regarded as highly controversial. Those that question its validity believe that Krashen is unclear in regard to what are considered conscious and unconscious processes (Hanak-Hammerl, 2003). This makes it hard to fully understand the acquisition learning hypothesis in which, learning and acquisition are defined. Another aspect of this theory that is not entirely clear is how $i+1$ is defined. Many linguists believe that this is defined as comprehensible input that leads into a slightly less comfortable zone. $i+1$ is one of the core parts of naturalist theory and is thus of great importance. The fact that it is not clearly defined makes it difficult to understand what is necessary for language acquisition.

With that being said naturalist theory has helped scientists, linguists and researchers to more clearly see processes that are involved in language procurement. Without these developments some other hypotheses would not have been created. The output hypothesis was developed as an expansion on Krashen's input hypothesis. Like all SLA theory, the naturalist theory has been a necessary piece of the puzzle. The naturalist theory was developed as a result of other foundational SLA theories. Much of what Krashen suggested was developed from the works of Chomsky and the innateness theory (Krashen, 1985). Both of these thoughts showcase the importance of collaboration in the world of SLA. All of these foundational theories have their share of problems but without them we would not know as much about language learning as we do today. Language acquisition is a topic that is complex and ever changing. New ideas are constantly being established to combat this issue but these ideas have to be developed from somewhere. Most new ideas in SLA are developed

as a result of research into the foundational language learning theories. The naturalist approach is one of those theories and for the purposes of this project it was used to further explore the labyrinthine that is SLA.

Summary

SLA is a field in which we find many theories and subtheories that are often contested while also simultaneously overlapping and contradictory, making them difficult to sort out. But it is worth the effort. Behaviorist, Innateness, Cognitivist, Social Interactionist/Constructivist and Naturalist theories have been intensively researched to further understand their connections to my current EFL setting in Southern Germany. All of these theories come to various conclusions regarding language acquisition. Some believe that language is acquired via innate properties of the mind (Chomsky, 1968). Whereas others believe that language is acquired from environmental factors and behavioral reactions to those factors (VanPatten & Williams, 2006). With regards to this project special attention has been paid to the Affective Filter Hypothesis and the idea that language is obtained via exposure (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). All of the previously explored theories have been deemed as essential for this project. Understanding the foundation and history of SLA is important for both current and future research.

Affective Filter Hypothesis

Background

Since the 1970's language teaching has taken on a decidedly more humanistic approach. Many educators, researchers and linguistics at this time began to view language learning more holistically meaning that both cognition and affect were of importance. This idea developed into what is now known as positive psychology (PP). In more defined terms positive psychology is the study of human strengths and what makes life good. PP aims to help people lead better lives and focus on how people flourish (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). It is thought that attention to affective factors can make a teacher more effective and helps with whole person development (Ni, 2012). These ideas eventually made their way into the development of the affective filter hypothesis.

The affective filter hypothesis was first proposed under the name affective delimiters by Dulay and Burt in 1977 and was further investigated by Stephen Krashen (Dulay *et al.*, 1977; Zafar, 2009). The affective filter hypothesis belongs to a grouping of interrelated Naturalist theories that Krashen developed in the 1980's. As stated above, the affective filter hypothesis states that all humans are equip with an affective filter. The affective filter is a mechanism that effectively allows or prohibits language input (Yuhui & Sen, 2015). The affective filter can be thought of as a mental block that prevents learners from utilizing

language input (Krashen, 1985). When the filter is high input is decreased and when the filter is low input is increased. Essentially, input is stopped before it can reach the LAD and be processed if the filter is too high. When learners have a low filter, input is able to go deeper, making its way into the LAD and from there be acquired (Du, 2009). The level of the filter is affected by a variety of emotional and psychological factors such as anxiety, motivation, attitude and/or confidence. Each of these factors will be discussed in detail in the following pages. It is believed that learning a language is easier and more attainable when one is relaxed, happy and engaged (Hanak-Hammerl, 2003). Students that show these characteristics are generally able to attain language more easily and quickly than those who do not (Du, 2009; Krashen, 1985). This idea of different filter levels can also account for contrasts amongst individual learners in language attainment. It is also thought that older learners have a higher filter than younger learners. After puberty the filter may never go all the way down to zero again. This can provide an explanation for the lack of adult learners who attain native like status (Krashen, 1985).

Affective factors are thought to be very important in SLA and have thus been investigated for this project. Understanding these affective factors is of the uttermost importance for understanding the affective filter and what is thought to happen as we learn language. Some researchers believe that affective factors (emotion, feelings, mood, attitude) are the most important aspects for SLA (Ni, 2012). The following affective factors will be thoroughly explored: motivation, attitude, anxiety and self-confidence.

Motivation

Motivation is thought to be one of the most important affective factors for language learning if not the most important (Du, 2009). Gardner (1985) defines motivation as the following: "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity." In other words, effort

and desire are combined in order to achieve goals. There are thought to be two kinds of

motivation both of which are fulfilled by different factors. The first type is integrative or

intrinsic motivation. This is what is more commonly referred to as the good kind of

motivation. People that are intrinsically motivated are interested and willing to reach a

particular goal. This motivation comes from within not from something external. For

language acquisition this means that students enjoy the target language and are willing to

participate to reach a goal (Du, 2009). The second type of motivation is instrumental or

extrinsic. This is what is more commonly referred to as negative motivation. People that are

extrinsically motivated do things do so in order to receive something external like a prize. For

language acquisition this means students only want to pass a test, travel, study in a foreign

country or be promoted (Du, 2009). The second type of motivation is thought to be the lesser

of the two because people are not internally driven. Learners that are intrinsically motivated

are more likely to succeed because it is something that they want to do and not something

that they get out of it. It is thought that motivation helps to drive and direct behavior in

language learning. It also influences how foreign language strategies (FLL) are used, the

amount of input received, the level of proficiency and how long language is maintained after

learning ceases (Ni, 2012).

One study found that motivation is a 33% contributor to success and failure in

language acquisition (Jakobovits, 1970). This same study found that intelligence contributed

only 20% and aptitude contributed the same amount as motivation (33%). Since motivation is

thought to be a third of the contribution to language attainment and a higher factor than

intelligence it is important that educators recognize this in order to help with student success.

Some reasons behind lack of motivation are: students have no interest, no confidence, not

good teaching methods, negative emotions against target language and thoughts that the

language is useless to learn (Du, 2009). Other studies have found that motivation directly

influences the amount of input students gain and thus influences level of competence. Being

motivated allows for more focused language study and in turn higher retention (Ni, 2012).

For EFL students specifically, motivation is low due to the classroom environment (Nath *et*

al, 2017). In many classrooms around the world rote memorization is still used as a means of

language attainment. Many students find this to be boring which ultimately impacts

motivation levels.

Motivation is an important affective factor according to the AFH. Many researchers

believe that it is the most important factor in terms of emotional factors. Understanding how

motivation impacts students learning is something that is necessary for both teachers and

learners to be aware of. With proper motivation retention rates increase and language

attainment becomes more easily achievable (Jakobovits, 1970). Motivation and its impacts

are something that is often times overlooked by educators but its importance cannot be

reiterated enough.

Attitude

The next affective factor that is of interest for this project is attitude. According to

Cambridge dictionary attitude is defined as follows: "a feeling or opinion about something or

someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this." In more layman's terms attitude is

how we feel about certain activities. Attitude and motivation are emotions that are closely

tied together. Some people would go as far to say that attitude impacts motivation. If

someone has a poor attitude about learning a language, they most likely will not be motivated

to learn it. Some studies have shown that learners with a positive attitude learn more quickly

because attitude is closely linked to level of commitment. Students with a high level of

commitment are more likely to continue with their studies. Positive attitude has also been

linked to level of class participation. Those with a positive attitude are more likely to

participate than those with a negative attitude. High levels of participation, in general,

contribute to a higher grade (Du, 2009).

Attitude, like motivation, is an important affective factor. When attitude is positive

students are more likely to reach goals because of high levels of participation. Many students

do not enjoy learning a second language so this potentially could contribute to rates of

failure. Being happy and positive have been shown to help with language attainment (Du,

2009). This is interesting to note because in many classrooms this idea is not taken into

account. Perhaps, this is one of the missing links to the puzzle that is SLA.

Anxiety

The third affective factor that is of interest for this study is anxiety. According to the

Miriam-Webster dictionary anxiety is defined as the following: "apprehensiveness,

uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill." Anxiety occurs

when one is scared for what is to come. It is believed that anxiety is one of the more common

factors that learners face in both formal and informal settings. In SLA, there is a specific type

of situational anxiety that is referred to as "language anxiety." Language anxiety occurs when

a student is trying to learn an L2 and use it. This sometimes occurs in the form of classmate

comparison. Classmate comparison is when a student is constantly judging their ability based

on the ability of others. This is thought to occur because of the competitive nature of humans.

The anxiety will decrease once a student sees him or herself as adequate (Ellis, 1994).

Students with anxiety are so focused on their own fear that they cannot accomplish learning

goals in class. This lack of concentration can reflect poorly on class performance. Students

are also sometimes unwilling to cooperate and participate in class. This, too, can have a

negative impact on class grades and scores. Within the realm of anxiety there are three types:

communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of evaluation (Du, 2009).

Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension occurs when an individual has "a level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (Du, 2009). This type of anxiety is especially detrimental to SLA because of the necessity that exists for communication. In language learning, communication is vital and to be afraid to participate is harmful for acquisition. Some personality traits predispose individuals to acquiring this type of anxiety. Such traits include quietness and shyness. Many sufferers of communication apprehension have a desire and the ability to participate but are inhibited by introversion. Studies have found that 20% of all college students suffer from communication apprehension (Du, 2009). Broken down a different way, one in five students suffer from this disorder. It is believed that this type of anxiety may impact only certain types of communication (Du, 2009). The thought here is that students may feel this only when taking foreign language classes but not in other contexts.

Test anxiety

Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person experiences distress before, during or after an exam. This distress is so severe that it impacts performance and/or interferes with learning. This disorder can develop for a variety of reasons. One reason is former negative experiences. Thinking about something bad that happened in the past can trigger an episode. Another cause is fear of completely blanking on a test or fear of this happening again. A third prompt is fear of the anxiety itself and the final trigger is lack of preparation. This final set off is a result of poor time management, study habits and lack of organization. This type of anxiety can occur outside of SLA but is thought to be very common within it (Du, 2009).

Fear of negative evaluation

The third and final type of anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation occurs when students are overly concerned with other people's opinions. Sometimes this happens when students feel they cannot perform correctly in a social setting. This type of anxiety is common in SLA because many students believe that their language skills are poor. This results in students believing that they will be evaluated as such (Du, 2009).

All of these subtypes of anxiety are important for educators to understand because of how much they can deter language learning. Studies have found that low levels of anxiety are conducive for better classroom concentration (Ni, 2012). This in turn can lead to better retention. Numerous studies have shown that at the beginning of language learning many students express that they have a high level of anxiety in terms of going to class and using the language. Many students have also expressed the fear of being laughed at (Nath *et al.*, 2017). These views are relatively common in the world of SLA. Unfortunately, they have been shown to be detrimental to student success, so it is important to try to combat these feelings. Anxiety is an aspect of language acquisition that can be managed when handled appropriately.

Self-confidence

The fourth and final affective factor that is of interest for this project is self-confidence. Self-confidence in the Merriam-Webster dictionary is defined as, "confidence in oneself and in one's powers and abilities." Students that have a lot of self-confidence believe that they can do anything, and this is reflected in their language usage. Self-confidence is believed to be the most important personality trait in regard to language learning (Du, 2009). Those that lack confidence have a hard time expressing themselves in a second language. Many students that do not have confidence are fearful, shy and not willing to express their

opinions in class (Ni, 2012). Within self-confidence there is what is known as the self-esteem/ I can do it principle.

Self-esteem/ I can do it principle

This principle states that learners that believe in themselves are able to successfully accomplish assignments (Brown, 2001). This allows learners to try new things and find new ways of learning. In other words, students are able to take risks which can result in them being rewarded. Learning new ways to do things and taking risks have been associated with overall student success (Ni, 2012). Many researchers believe that teachers should be trying to create an environment that strengthens students' confidence. When students believe in themselves success generally follows. Some people have a theory that those who believe they can do and will.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the impacts of self-confidence on learning. Prior to many of these studies, students reported a low level of self-confidence. This was also linked to poor proficiency and lack of oral communication skills. In general, after participation in the study students reported feelings of higher self-confidence. These levels of self-confidence could then be linked to higher levels of language comprehension (Nath *et al.*, 2017). These findings suggest the value that self-confidence holds in terms of language acquisition. Being a confident person has merit for all aspects of life but especially in the world of language. Those that lack the confidence to engage have a difficult time obtaining language. This ultimately will impact other affective factors as well. Studies have shown that motivation, in particular, is closely linked to self-confidence (Du, 2009). This should be of concern for educators due to the importance of both motivation and self-confidence for language acquisition. As previously stated, motivation is thought to share a third of the responsibility for language attainment (Ni, 2012). This is a large amount, so it is for that to be taken into account.

Self-confidence is a factor that is important for many aspects of life. It is especially important for language learning. When one is confident the limits are endless in terms of achievement. It is thought that those that are self-confident can even overcome other affective barriers (Du, 2009). As an educator, fostering self-confidence should be a top priority. The other affective factors that were previously discussed should also be put at the top of the list. Motivation, attitude, anxiety and self-confidence have all been shown to be influential affective factors that impact language acquisition. All of these factors influence the affective filter which makes language procurement possible. When the affective filter is low then language attainment is more achievable then when it is high. All of these factors help to influence filter level which influences our ability to understand language.

With that being said, a few studies have been conducted on different forms of instruction that are thought to be beneficial to filter lowering. Some of these instructional forms are relatively new because of their usage of technology. The following instructional forms will be discussed in regard to the affective filter hypothesis: movies, music, social media, closed-captioned television (CCTV) and humor.

Movies

It has long been thought that the usage of film can help students to acquire language skills. Many beginners start to learn language by engaging in this way. More recently, this idea has been adapted to assist in helping lower one's affective filter. It is thought that movies allow students to relax which consequently lowers their affective filter. Once this occurs, students are more easily able to acquire new language skills (Nath *et al.*, 2017). Films have been shown to be especially useful in contexts where the teacher is not a native speaker. When learners watch movies or shows in their original language it helps them to hear the language in a new way. For many students, second languages are taught by non-native speakers. In some cases, this can be good because teachers have the same background as

students. In other cases, this can be detrimental because the pronunciation is not always one hundred percent accurate. This is where movies can come into play and be extremely helpful. Not only do films help with pronunciation they also help students acquire new vocabulary. Hearing words and being able to connect that with images is very useful for students. Contextual evidence in films allows for further acquisition. Another way in which films are thought to be helpful is in discussion. Movies give students a common thread which allows for in depth discussion. These discussions can take place both formally and informally. It is believed that this type of conversation has a positive impact on language acquisition (Nath *et a.l*, 2017). Overall, films have been found to provide a relaxing and positive atmosphere for students. This idea is becoming more common place in language teaching and is especially useful for EFL.

CCTV

The use of closed-caption television or more commonly known as subtitled television is an instructional element that is commonly used in SLA instruction and more specifically EFL instruction. Past studies have shown that CCTV is an influential tool based off the theory of AFH (Huang & Eskey, 1999). It is believed that students who are exposed visually and aurally to a target language are more likely to have increased levels of competence. More specifically, it is thought that students will score better on listening comprehension examinations. A study conducted by Huang & Eskey in 1999 proved just that. They showed that students who were exposed to CCTV were able to score significantly better on a TOEFL listening test than those who were just exposed to the audio. This study has helped to shed light on the benefits of CCTV in SLA classrooms. Like, films, CCTV has been proven to benefit students due to its ability to lower student anxiety and increase motivation. CCTV allows students to acquire both visual and aural data which helps them to obtain necessary

language skills. This all takes place in a low stress environment and that can help to lower students' affective filters (Huang & Eskey, 1999).

Music

Music is another instructional element that is widely used in the realm of language teaching. Many studies have been conducted on the usage of music in language classrooms and the results have been mostly positive. Music, like films, are thought to be universal connectors. No matter what culture a student is from music exists within it. Songs are an integral part of the language experience, so it makes sense to utilize them in the classroom. One study found that songs helped to provide a safe, positive and relaxing environment (Schoepp, 2001). This type of environment has been shown to positively impact student outcomes (Nath *et al.*, 2017). Music is thought to be all encompassing because of its connections to the four different areas of learning (reading, writing, speaking and listening). These areas of learning are promoted after exposure to music (Schoepp, 2001). It is thought that music also helps with pattern recognition, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm and parts of speech (Lin, 2008). Songs can be used as a gateway into each of these areas which allows students to obtain a wider range of skills while at the same time having fun. Most people enjoy listening to music, so this is thought to be a great way to make language learning more relevant and accessible. Listening to music can also be used as a fun way to implement language outside the classroom. Some studies have shown that listening to music is an enjoyable homework activity for students (Nath *et al.*, 2017). Music has the potential to have a calming and relaxing impact on classroom atmosphere. The affective filter hypothesis theory ties nicely into this idea. When learning goals are combined with positive emotions a higher level of language acquisition can take place. Music exists in all languages so this would be fairly easy to implement throughout the world. This idea would be particularly

helpful to EFL learning because some of the most popular music in the world is sung in English.

Social media

The next model of instructional forms that will be discussed in detail is the use of social media. This is a relatively new idea because social media has not existed for very long. Some studies have shown that using social media can lower one's affective filter (Chotipaktanasook, 2016). It is believed that using social media creates a low stakes environment in which the learner can explore their language skills. Social media is commonly used throughout the world and its impacts on current events can be widely seen. Social media apps in conjunction with other teaching methods can help supplement SLA. Many students, especially young ones, find this to be a great way to introduce relevance to learning. Social media can help students to be more confident and more motivated to learn a new language (Chotipaktanasook, 2016). Both confidence and motivation, as stated before, are important affective factors in the language acquisition process. The usage of certain social media sites allows for students to interact with people throughout the world. This not only helps with new language procurement but can provide an insight to the culture of that language. Students are given the opportunity to interact with people from all different language levels and this can be helpful in the challenges it provides. Like music and movies, social media can help students to feel less uncomfortable about SLA. For the most part, social media has been shown to positively impact student learning experiences (Chotipaktanasook, 2016). When used appropriately, students are able to practice and obtain new language which can further their learning. Social media, like music and films, can be applied to almost all language learning settings throughout the world but it also has a strong influence on EFL. The study mentioned above was one that promoted English learning via social media usage.

Humor

The final instructional form that will be discussed is the use of humor in the classroom. Traditionally, humor has been seldomly used to generate learning. In many classrooms, even today, the student teacher relationship can be viewed as distant. Teacher personality is thought to be an affective factor that can either hinder or help student language acquisition. More recently with the discovery of affective factors and their influence on language attainment it is thought that a teacher should try to become a facilitator as opposed to an authoritarian (Bilokcuoglu & Debreli, 2008). Humor is one way that this new dynamic can be introduced. Humor has been shown to reduce fear and promote motivation. It can be used to manage student behavior, build positivity, decrease anxiety and increase interest. All of these benefits are thought to be helpful in lowering the affective filter. Pedagogical humor is an instructional tool that is rarely discussed in the context of language learning. This is interesting because of its links to lowering anxiety. Anxiety is one of the most common factors that impacts student achievement and humor has been shown to help reduce anxiety in the classroom setting. Humor helps students to feel more relaxed and that has been shown to increase participation. This is especially true for students who are introverted. Additionally, studies have shown the benefits that humans receive from laughter and humor helps us to utilize this in the classroom. Humor has also been shown to help students better remember things and be creative in new ways (Bilokcuoglu & Debreli, 2008).

However, there are potential drawbacks to humor when used inappropriately. It is thought that humor can be detrimental when it is too mature, insulting or sarcastic. It should also be used moderately and for a specific purpose. If these ideas are kept in mind the benefits of humor usage outweigh the faults. Humor is inevitability apart of life and can be applied to all cultures (Bilokcuoglu & Debreli, 2008). It can be used as a connector between

students and teachers to help further facilitate learning. Like, the other instructional methods, humor can easily be introduced into the classroom and help benefit students.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the affective filter hypothesis since its conception in the 1980's, some of which have already been discussed in the prior paragraphs. A few of these previous studies will be revisited in more detail. Accordingly, only a limited number of findings could be presented in this paper. The following pages will compare and contrast more of these findings and their importance to the affective filter hypothesis. The results considered will be a mixture of both old and new conclusions.

Findings

The first study that I will discuss is one that was conducted at the University of Taiwan from 2007-2008 (Lin, 2008). This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to come to various conclusions regarding the impact of the affective filter on student learning. In this study, student centered activities were used in order to enhance student confidence and ultimately language acquisition. Initially, Lin (2008) believed that students were perhaps distracted by emotional factors and this could have a negative impact on student learning goals. He also believed that students might not be learning properly due to poor teacher methods and/or their own attitude. Using affective factors as guidance, a study was created in which game play, music and films were used to stimulate student learning. In previous studies, game play was found to help students feel more relaxed and confident. Songs have also been found to be a good motivator and helpful with obtaining the four main areas of language (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Prior to the study, participants were polled and asked if they thought that these methods would enhance their learning. 80% of these students answered yes (Lin, 2008). Going into the study the majority of students had a positive attitude. After the implementation of these teaching strategies students were questioned again. During this survey the breakdown was as follows: 83% of students said that

the pedagogies in general were very relaxing, 95% said that they could tell the teacher was trying to reduce anxiety, 68% said they felt free to communicate (Lin, 2008). Qualitative results show that the use of game, music and films helped to reduce anxiety and increase the positivity of student attitude. With the reduction of anxiety and the increase in positive attitude it could be inferred that the affective filters of students were lowered and this allowed for further language retention. In order to more clearly see the changes that occurred, students were tested before and after the class. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was used to analyze student levels. The TOEFL results where compared from before and after and were found to be significantly different meaning that the implementation of these activities helped to increase student English level. Therefore, this study was able to come to the conclusion that activities that help to relax and motivate students also help them to learn more fully. Lin (2008) believes that teachers should familiarize themselves with affective filter pedagogies and utilize them in the classroom. Based off his study, the effectiveness of affective filter pedagogies in the classroom can be seen.

The next study that will be discussed is one that used out-of-class activities to help students achieve a lower affective filter. For the purposes of this particular study, out-of-class activities were defined as: things students do at home in their free time. More specifically out-of-class activities are watching movies, listening to music, reading or writing for leisure and playing games. This study was conducted in Malaysia where rote memorization and exam-orientated goals are commonly used to teach English. Nath *et al.* (2017) believed that these learning goals may be one of the reasons that student achievement in English was so low. Using a case study design, the out-of-class activity of movie watching was used to decrease student anxiety and increase student motivation and self-confidence. Prior, to this study, it was believed that an autonomous, stress free environment was perfect for informal learning. Before the study took place, students were surveyed, and it was found that

motivation levels were low due to the classroom setting being boring, stressful and confusing. However, students were able to see the importance in English language competence. The motivation level prior to the study was therefore not high but it also not zero. Students were also asked about their anxiety levels and many stated that they had a high level of anxiety associated with going to English class and speaking English. Many students feared that they would be laughed at by their peers. The final question asked to students before the study was conducted was in regard to self-confidence. This, like motivation, was found to be very low and thought to be linked to low levels of proficiency. Self-confidence was found to be the lowest in terms of oral communication. After the study was conducted, students were asked the same questions again. In terms of motivation students reported an increase. They found the use of film to be interesting and exciting, which consequently increased their desire to learn. Anxiety levels were reported as decreasing after movie viewing. The third factor, self-confidence, was reported as being almost unchanging. A few students stated that their confidence slightly increased, but the majority said it stayed the same. As previously stated above, film usage has been linked to increased levels of language competence. Movies allow learners to acquire new vocabulary in an interesting and exciting, low stakes environment (Nath *et al.,* 2017). This study, like the previous one, showed some linkage between student achievement and affective factors. Unlike the study above, this study only utilized qualitative methods so there are no test scores to see hard data. One criticism that could then be stated about this study is that it is difficult to measure levels of anxiety, motivation and student confidence. Interviews can be helpful with providing insight, but other methods help to see a bigger picture. Overall, this study helps us to see what students enjoy in terms of learning methods. It can then be said that movies, at least, help to make language learning more enjoyable for students.

The final study that will be discussed is one that was slightly touched on before. This study was conducted at the Language Academy at the University of Southern California (USC). Thirty students in an intermediate level English class were given a TOEFL style listening examination directly after watching a show called *Family Album*. *Family Album* was used for this study because of its use of sequence language. Sequence language is when the level of vocabulary and the difficulty of grammar increase over time. This helps students to build on what has previously been introduced. Two groups existed within the study. One was the control and the other was the experimental group. The experimental group was given closed captions whereas the control was only allowed to watch the program. After watching each episode twice students were then asked to explain their perceptions of the episode. This study found, via TOEFL test, that the group that was given closed captions scored significantly higher than the group without. From these results it was concluded that CCTV is beneficial for listening comprehension and potentially for SLA (Huang & Eskey, 1999). This study, like the above two, showed indications of linkage between affective pedagogical methods and student achievement. It can be said that subtitled entertainment may be even more beneficial to student learning than just normal television. Having both visual and aural input could be deemed as significant and thus very important.

All of these studies have shown the benefits of using affective pedagogical methods in the classroom. When students are confident, calm and motivated it is believed that language learning becomes easier. There are many researchers, linguists and scientists that believe in the power of the affective filter but there are also critics. SLA is a field with many different faucets of thought so there is a fair amount of discourse amongst researchers. In the case of the affective filter hypothesis there are specific criticisms which will be discussed in the preceding pages.

Criticisms

One of the main criticisms that exists in regard to the affective filter hypothesis is the idea that everything is too generalized. Krashen's use of generalizations allows him to more loosely define key terms and ideas. For example, it is not entirely clear what is meant by subconscious/conscious, acquired/learned and implicit/explicit (Zafar, 2009). With no clear definition of these important terms it is hard to fully test the hypotheses that are laid out. The lack of testability is another criticism that researchers have put forward. The nature of the filter is not clearly defined which in turn makes it difficult to test. It is still not known or stated how exactly the filter determines what information is screened in and out. Some studies have shown the existence of nearly native like adult learners with the omission of one or two grammatical errors. One study found a Chinese woman to be nearly native like in English with the exception of the correct use of the third-person singular (Gregg, 1984). This complicates Krashen's hypothesis where he claims that it is nearly impossible for this to occur (Krashen, 1985). It also brings up, again, the question of how the filter chooses what is screened in and out. The final criticism that many have for Krashen is his viewpoints on child language acquisition. Krashen suggests that children are benefited in a way that adults are not. He believes that children lack the presence of the filter. In this viewpoint, Krashen forgets that children, like adults, are also afflicted by affective factors but they still learn language. This brings us back to the same question of the settings of the filter and their need for further explanation (Krashen, 1985; Zafar, 2009).

In general, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is thought to lack empirical evidence. Many studies have been conducted but few have proven beyond the shadow of a doubt the existence of the affective filter and its impacts. The model appears to be testable but vagueness of it all makes explicit testing difficult. With more clearly defined terms it would, perhaps, be easier to see the full validity of the affective filter hypothesis.

AFH, like all things, has its praisers and critics. SLA in particular, is riddled with theories that provide only a snapshot of what is truly going on. It is believed that many theories in SLA are not all encompassing, and this has led to countless debates as to which is the most accurate. No one is entirely sure how language acquisition works but discussion and debate can help create new ideas which could potentially solve this dilemma. In SLA, many great theories and ideas have been suggested. AFH is one of those theories. Some researchers believe that a combination of theory is necessary in order to fully understand language acquisition and perhaps this is correct.

Summary

Since the 1980's the affective filter hypothesis has been impacting the world of SLA. This theory brought about the idea that all humans are equip with a filter that allows or prevents language from being processed and acquired. When the filter is strong, we acquire limited amounts of language and when the filter is weak, we acquire more. The strength of the filter is impacted by affective factors. As discussed above, some of these affective factors are motivation, attitude, self-confidence and anxiety. All of these affective factors can either help or hinder language acquisition. With the introduction of certain teaching methods affective factors can be lowered or increased in order to help SLA. As previously stated, these teaching methodologies include CCTV, film, music, social media and humor. These pedagogies have been found to have a positive impact on SLA. Advocates of the affective filter hypothesis believe that with the correct pedagogical methods and knowledge language teaching could be transformed. This idea helped to transform the world of SLA and has since provided us with numerous new theories about language learning.

For the purposes of this project certain affective factors have been taken into consideration in order to guide teacher pedagogical methods. The following sections will discuss how affective pedagogical methods could guide teaching methods in an English as

second language classroom in Southern Germany. It is my hope that this study can be used to help both current and future students on their language learning journey.

Application

Background

Second language learning and its relevance to culture have sparked researchers' interest for numerous years. This has resulted in the creation of numerous theories which were previously discussed in detail. Specifically, in Europe SLA, is not only of interest but a necessity. Within Europe, numerous languages are spoken, and it is not uncommon for people to be fluent in two or three different languages. Most European countries introduce foreign language learning starting in grade five. Today, it is becoming more and more common place to introduce a second language as early as grade two. In Germany, the same can be said. Most students here begin learning an L2 in grade two. Depending on where in Germany the school is located the first L2 is either French or English.

English has become one of the main languages taught due to its global relevance. For the purposes of this study this is of interest due to my current setting in Southern Germany. As an EFL teacher, figuring out ways to implement English in a dynamic and beneficial way is necessary for student success. The research that has been previously conducted has served a purpose greater than that of intrigue. After extensive theory research it is my hope that I can now implement some of these theories in a real classroom. The theory of the affective filter is one idea that I believe has had an impact on students in Germany. In order to more fully understand the impacts of the affective filter on German students the following pages will discuss previous studies that have been conducted on this subject matter. This will then be followed by a discussion on current and future application.

Findings

Even though SLA has been of interest in Europe for decades the amount of research regarding the feelings and attitudes of students is limited. More specifically, widescale studies about student attitude toward English are rare (Edwards & Fuchs, 2018). Regardless, the studies that have been conducted have drawn interesting conclusions. One such study was conducted in 2015 and sought to find out the attitudes towards English in both Germany and the Netherlands. Using a questionnaire survey technique, researchers were able to discover how around two-thousand Germans felt about English. Each country sample was broken down into two groups and they were defined as follows: DE1, DE2, NL1 and NL2. DE is short for Deutschland (Germany) and NL is short for the Netherlands. Both groups with the number one were determined to be the negative groups and those with the number two were the positive groups. The negative groups harbor bad feelings about English and the positive groups view English in a better light. It was found that these two different groups, positive and negative, had more in common across country than within country. This means that the two negative groups had similar opinions to each other. The same can be said in regard to the positive groups. These results were expected.

Prior to receiving responses, participants were asked to give their level of English and 90% of participants said they felt as though they had a reasonable knowledge of English. After this, respondents were asked about their feelings towards English and more specifically their confidence in the status of their L1. Germans were overwhelmingly more confident in their L1 status than the Dutch. Germans did not believe that English posed a threat to the German language. The same could be said regarding employment and L1. In Germany, L1 status is more important than English when it comes to finding a job. This discovery, for me, was unsurprising because of the culture of Germany. German culture is highly valued and is

thus protected. One way of doing this is by making the German language a necessity. For foreigners, it is difficult to find a job without basic knowledge of the German language.

In general, Germans seem to be very self-assured and confident about most things and the German language is one of those. On the other hand, the speaking of English is one area that this confidence is not felt. This idea will be discussed in more detail within the next study. This study also found that while the majority of German participants did not feel a loss of identity while speaking English, they did use less humor and were more introverted. Both countries agreed that speaking both English and L1 were an advantage. More precisely, knowledge of the English language is helpful for gaining employment. Overall, it can be stated that English is a useful additional language but not a threat to the German language. The warnings of an English language invasion are therefore unwarranted and are the opinions of a minority group within Germany (Edwards & Fuchs, 2018). The next study that will be discussed is also in regard to affective factors but with more specific classroom results.

In the second study that was conducted in Germany, film was utilized as a supplemental motivational stimulus for EFL. Seeger (2011) conducted an autoethnographic case study in a small rural village in Lower Saxony. As a side note, Autoethnography is believed to be controversial due to its potential researcher bias as well as lack of scientific base. This should be noted because of its potential to impact certain results. On the flip side, Autoethnography has also been found to be extremely beneficial. Autoethnography hopes to merge art and science together to create meaningful research (C. Ellis *et al.*, 2011).

In this study, two grade nine and one grade eight EFL classrooms were used to introduce film. Movies were added to the book curriculum with the intent of raising motivation and intercultural competence. *Bend it like Beckman, Omagh* and *Billy Elliot* were the specific films chosen to enhance book curriculum. Within EFL classrooms in Germany students are usually taught just grammar by non-native speakers. EFL teachers in Germany

are not required to study or do work abroad so for many the natural context is also lacking. Few teachers have had real experiences with real life language and are not familiar with English's variances. So that is why it is believed by many, even today, that natural language is too complex for students to understand and is thus fully disregarded. The teaching profession is highly bureaucratic in Germany and is practically impossible for foreign teachers to gain entry. Due to this context, students have limited exposure to natural English and have difficulties understanding and utilizing English in everyday situations.

This is where the idea and use of film comes into play. Film has been shown to be an authentic introduction to native language. It has been linked to enhanced listening skills and with subtitle use enhanced reading skills. Due to curriculum restrictions many teachers are not able to utilize this type of methodology. There are also those that do not want to. These teachers view film as not pedagogic and suitable for entertainment purposes only. Others still, believe that preparing materials and viewing films takes up valuable class time that could be used for something more productive. As a result of these factors, this study was one of the first of its kind conducted in Germany.

The results of this particular study were of interest because of its connections to motivation and pedagogical methods that are believed to help lower the affective filter. Film, as previously discussed, has been found to have both a calming and influential impact on student's motivation. This study, specifically, hoped to see how motivated students would become in response to film viewing and if that in turn impacted student learning outcomes. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods the researcher analyzed the impacts of authentic input on an EFL classroom in Lower Saxony, Germany. What was found was very impactful to AFH and numerous other studies. From observation and qualitative data, the researcher found that while-viewing the films students were deeply engaged and impressed. After viewing parts of the film, there were post-viewing activities in which students were

asked to engage with things they had just seen. During these sessions it was discovered that students had an interest and willingness to do work that went beyond mere film consumption. It was also found that untidy language was not too difficult for students when presented in the correct context. It is believed that films are one of the contexts where this technique works best. In terms of quantitative data, comparative tests were used. Unfortunately, these tests relied on intuition and basic content due to the extensive break between viewing and testing. In addition, no pre-tests were conducted which could potentially lead to mixed results due to the lack of a baseline. The comparison between course book and the film could potentially also lack merit due to differences. Keeping these things in mind the results should be carefully considered. Nevertheless, it was found that the impacts of long-term film viewing were significantly higher than the course book. This finding is interesting, but another study would need to be conducted to fully validate it.

In terms of observational data, it could be said that students' level of interest increased by a large amount due to this new source of educational content. It has been found that enthusiasm is in direct connection with motivation levels. Motivation levels are in turn connected to the lowering of the affective filter. Potentially, film could be used in the future as a motivator for authentic English learning.

Both of these studies were utilized as background information for my current setting in Southern Germany. As an EFL teacher it is my hope that I can use these findings for the betterment of my students. The following pages will discuss the ways in which I hope and the ways in which I have applied the AFH.

Current Application

As an EFL teacher in Southern Germany, I have had to experiment and learn a lot of language teaching methodology. Due to my limited exposure to SLA prior to moving to Germany, much of what I now know is a result of experience. When I first started teaching

SLA, I knew very little about grammatical structures in English. EFL teachers in language schools in Germany are not required to have any sort of background in linguistics which potentially could be detrimental to student achievement. Fortunately, I was able to learn a lot, especially with the help of this research project. Before even studying AFH my teaching philosophy was very much in line with its beliefs. Since researching more about it, I have been able to see connections that I previously could not. Apart of my personal teaching philosophy is this idea: if you want to learn something you do and if you do not want to learn something you do not. I think this pattern of thought is very much in line with the motivation aspect of the affective filter hypothesis. When teaching I always try to keep this idea in mind and try to find ways to make students want to learn. Some of the ways in which I have done this is by making connections to the students' environment and background. I have always been a passionate proponent of community-based education. I think that community-based education is very helpful in motivating students. In the beginning of my teaching career, in Germany, I had limited knowledge of Germany and German culture. After a bit of a learning curve, I was better able to implement community-based education in my adult language classrooms. I found this to be extremely beneficial to students and was helpful for them in forming what in German is known as an "Eselsbrücke". Literally this translates to "donkey bridge" but in actuality it means a connection. These Eselsbrüken are very helpful to students in both remembering various aspects of the English language and having motivation.

One specific learning tool that I have used in my classrooms from day one is game play. Even though this was not previously discussed in detail game use has been found to be beneficial in lowering the affective filter (Lin, 2008). When I first started using games in my classes I was not aware of its connection to the affective filter. My reasoning behind game use was that I wanted students to be able to interact in a fun and non-threatening environment. From what I have learned these personal philosophies are deeply intertwined

with the affective filter hypothesis. Another reasoning for game use is perhaps my

background in elementary education. When teaching children game use is something that is

used frequently (especially with youngers). Unfortunately, it seems as though game use is

forgotten the older we get, so many of my adult students are surprised when they realize this

is the route I take. Initially students are a bit taken a back, but I have consistently gotten

positive feedback regarding game use. Of course, there are still those few students that never

fully buy in. Some of these students, like many EFL teachers in Germany, believe that

grammar is the only way to learn language. On the other hand, the majority of students say

that game use is exciting and entertaining. So, I have chosen to use these students experiences

to guide my instruction. As discussed before, positive attitude has been shown to directly

impact student outcomes. I believe that when English class is regarded as fun and not boring

this helps to increase positive attitude. Positive attitude can then be used to increase language

acquisition.

Another learning methodology that I have more recently started to utilize is the use of

film, more specifically the use of movie trailers. Since the majority of big-name films are

originally in English this a beneficial tool for ESL. Some students have a hard time being

motivated in English. For some, it is particularly difficult to concentrate on what I say

because I only speak to in English. This environment is very different for most students

because in English classes in school the teacher predominately explains everything in

German. Before finding films, I tried various other methodologies like games but found that

for some students these were not particularly motivating. At one point in my class the topic of

movies came up. I realized that this could potentially be where some might have interest. So,

during our one-hour sessions I began allowing students to watch one English speaking movie

trailer and afterward we would other activities. So far it seems as though this has worked out,

at least partially, the motivation problem. Like the previous methodology, I used prior

experience to guide my teaching. I realize now that this was in line with the affective filter hypothesis model.

The final ideology that I have previously utilized is the idea of a calm and relaxing classroom atmosphere. In general, I have always felt like learning spaces should feel safe and that students should have the right to decide when and how they would like to participate. This personal philosophy is perhaps derived from my own negative experiences as a student in which I felt like I was forced to participate. In these situations, I always felt uneasy and hated going to these particular classes. Therefore, I believe that my students deserve the respect to decide when they want to participate (as long as it is appropriate). This idea, like the other two, is ultimately in line with the AFH. When students have low levels of anxiety it has been shown that conditions for learning improve as well as self-confidence (Ni, 2012). As a teacher, I feel as though it is my job to create an environment in which students can thrive. I believe that creating a relaxed environment can help to achieve this goal.

I think in Germany a relaxing classroom atmosphere is especially important because students appear to lack confidence. This is unusual because, generally speaking, Germans are a fairly self-assured group of people. Almost every non-native English speaker I have met here has at one point or another said that their English is not very good. This statement has always surprised me because the majority of people that express this thought have very good English and have taken high levels of English. Perhaps this pattern of thought is perpetrated due to the lack of confidence boosting in English classroom settings. The majority of the time the way English is taught in Germany disregards all affective factors (Seeger, 2011). This potentially could be one of the reasons why Germans are not confident. It is my goal to help change confidence levels and I believe that implementing more aspects of AFH will help me to do that. The following paragraphs will discuss future implementation.

Future Application

As a result of this project, I have obtained countless insights into SLA theory and practice. After learning about the major five theories I still feel the strongest connection to the affective filter hypothesis. I think that the AFH is even more relevant given my current setting. With that being said, I hope that I can use this new information to create an even better learning environment for my students. I plan to implement various new methodologies that I have become aware of thanks to this project. These specific implementations will be discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

The first methodology that I hope to more fully utilize in the future is the use of humor. Humor has been shown to be beneficial in many settings, but specifically in the classroom (Bilokcuoglu & Debreli, 2018). I think to a certain extent I utilize humor but not to my full potential. I think it is important to be aware of the benefits of humor and also the boundaries. Humor is good when utilized in a tasteful way but also has potential to be detrimental (Bilokcuoglu & Debreli, 2018). I think that it is necessary for teachers to be aware of this line. Laughter has been shown to have the power to help us to forget our fears. I think that this could be very useful in a class where the students have extreme anxiety and feel uncomfortable. I would hope that jokes and wittiness could help them to feel more at ease. My goal is to create a comfortable environment and I believe that humor use can help with that. Although, humor must be approached with caution because of lack of cross-culture transference. Potentially, humor would be better suited for learners at a higher level.

The second pedagogy that I hope to at some point utilize is the use of music. Learning music is a lot like learning language so I think it has potential to be extremely useful in the classroom setting. I do think that it is useful to try out because I believe that music has the potential to influence classroom mood. As previously stated, classroom atmosphere has the potential to either increase or decrease student anxiety (Lin, 2008). I think that music can be a

good relaxant, and this could help to lower the anxiety levels of certain students. I hope in the near future to test this theory to see what takes place.

The third and final idea that I hope to implement is the idea of increasing in self-confidence. I think that this factor is especially important in my current setting. From what I can tell, German students lack proper confidence to succeed to the fullest. I think that this confidence needs to be fostered from an early age. It is unfortunate that strategies to strengthen self-confidence are not being currently utilized in most EFL settings in Germany. I hope in the future I am able to change this and help create more confident English speakers.

Summary

At the moment, English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. Due to its global relevance the teaching of EFL has become ever more important. Therefore, the utilization of current pedagogical methods is even more important. Within Germany, language is still taught, in many ways like it was forty years ago (Seeger, 2011). Ultimately, this breaks down to rote memorization and students feeling bored in class. Lack of motivation has been shown to have negative impacts on student learning. On the flip side, studies have shown the various ways in which students benefit from methodologies utilizing the affective filter hypothesis. Within these methodologies, students are brought into an environment that increases motivation and decreases anxiety. These methodologies and experience were used as guides to implement classroom instruction in various ESL classrooms in Germany. It is my hope that more of these pedagogical methods can also be used in the future to help guide my own English instruction and perhaps the instruction of others.

Conclusion

SLA, in recent years, has started to become more connected to us all. This is especially true in countries where the L1 is not English. The world is continuing to get smaller everyday with increased globalization. Ultimately, this means that language and communication is becoming of increasing importance. Since language is becoming ever more important the way in which we learn it is also gaining increased relevance. For foreign language teachers, language learning theory is very important to understand and utilize in the classroom setting. This project was created in order to help myself and other foreign language teachers that lack a background with linguistics. This project discusses the five major theories that exist on language attainment (behaviorist, innateness, cognitivist, social interactionist/constructivist and naturalist) and more specifically, the affective filter hypothesis. As discussed before the AFH states that language learning is impacted by a filter in our brain. When the filter is high retention is low and when the opposite is true retention is high. It is believed that various affective factors such as motivation, anxiety and confidence impact filter levels (Krashen, 1985). It has been found that when students are in a relaxed, motivating and confidence boosting environment more learning takes place (Lin, 2008). AFH served as a guideline for teaching in an EFL classroom in Southern Germany. More specifically, the use of film, music and calm classroom environment were thoroughly discussed. Based off AFH, further new pedagogical practices will be utilized in the future to advance student learning. My current teaching ideology is pretty well aligned with AFH theory and this project has helped me to see that more clearly. With the background knowledge gained from this experience, I hope to help my students to advance to the next level in language attainment. I believe that the learned experiences from this project will help to make that possible.

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