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Implementing Comprehensible Input in the World Language Classroom

Anna DiSabatino

apell3@brockport.edu

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Implementing Comprehensible Input Strategies in the World Language Classroom

By: Anna DiSabatino

The College at Brockport

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Abstract

Using Comprehensible Input (CI) strategies to accomplish Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as defined by Krashen (1982) is gaining traction throughout World Language classrooms. By providing input to students that is comprehensible, yet slightly challenging, they can be introduced to new grammar and linguistic concepts that will enhance the acquisition process. However, teachers must use a variety of CI strategies in the classroom in order to be most successful. The CI strategies must also be tailored to the level that is taught; CI strategies should look different in a classroom of students at the novice level than they do in a classroom of students at the intermediate levels. The researcher conducted a survey in the World Language Department of Spencerport Central School District in Spencerport, New York in order to discover how CI strategies are being used in the classroom and how much knowledge the teachers have about Second Language Acquisition. The surveys revealed that teachers need more training in the research surrounding SLA and CI. In order to train World Language teachers on the key components of Second Language Acquisition and using CI to accomplish it, the researcher has put together a manual and Professional Development component that guides teachers through the process of selecting input that is comprehensible and using strategies in the World Language classroom regardless of the level that is taught.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition, Comprehensible Input, target language

Implementing Comprehensible Input Strategies in the World Language Classroom

Chapter 1

Problem Statement

There is currently much debate over how best to help students acquire a new language. Using Comprehensible Input (CI) strategies is quickly becoming a very important tool in second language acquisition throughout World Language (WL) classrooms. By implementing CI strategies, students have the opportunity to interact with a new language in ways that are slightly above their level, causing their interaction with the language to be slightly more challenging, but still comprehensible. By using vocabulary and grammar that they already know, students can understand new linguistic concepts. The problem lies with finding the most appropriate CI strategies that are most beneficial for all different levels of students. Strategies used in a Level 5 WL classroom may not necessarily be the best fit for students in a Level 1 classroom. There also needs to be a variety of strategies that are implemented within the classroom in order for language learning to be most effective. Too often, teachers rely on the same types of CI activities that may not give students a well-rounded learning experience and may not be most beneficial for language acquisition. For example, relying solely on specialized readings with comprehension questions does not allow students to interact with a new language in a variety of ways. Rather than repeating this same activity over and over, students should have varied input such as authentic songs, movie talks, commercials, embedded readings, picture talks, etc.

Another problem regarding CI comes with finding the best practices for each level of language learning – specifically at the novice and intermediate levels. If WL teachers rely too heavily on using only a small scope of CI strategies and activities, and do not tailor each strategy

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and activity to the level of students that they teach, then students will not reach success in language acquisition and they will not be prepared for assessments. An inappropriate use of CI strategies becomes a problem for students not only because they will have less success in language acquisition, but also because passing the final assessment is the way that WL students in Levels 1-3 receive their World Language high school credit in New York State. WL teachers must be sure to use varied instruction to teach students a new language in order to foster true acquisition and to help them succeed in their final assessments.

Significance of the Problem

The researcher currently teaches in the Spencerport Central School District located in the suburbs of Rochester in New York State. This suburban district is a medium-sized school district that averages around 300 students at each grade level. According to the NYS Department of Education (data.nysed.gov), the majority of students come from middle class families with 33% of students categorized as being economically disadvantaged. The district is categorized as being 82% white, 6% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Black or African American, and 4% multiracial. This research focuses on students who are native speakers of English and are taking Spanish and French language courses beginning in Grade 7 for Level 1 and through Level 5 in Grade 12.

The researcher conducted a survey that included 11 questions about the use of CI in the World Language classroom (see Appendix A). The survey was given to all nine WL teachers in the Spencerport School District who teach Spanish and French, ranging from Level 1 to Level 5. Four respondents teach only Level 1 to native English speakers at the Middle School and five respondents teach Levels 2-5 to native English speakers at the High School. The teachers responded to questions regarding whether they feel knowledgeable in the importance of and use of CI in a WL classroom, which strategies they currently implement in their classroom, if they

feel the use of CI hinders student performance, and if they would like to know more about the use of CI in their classroom.

Question 1 of the survey asked the respondents to identify if they have a thorough understanding of CI. Of the nine respondents, two believe they do not have a thorough understanding on CI, four believe they somewhat have an understanding but would like to learn more, and three respondents believe they do have a thorough understanding of CI. Although there were only two respondents that indicated they do not have a thorough understanding, all nine of the respondents indicated that they would like to learn more about CI. Question 10 of the survey stated that they would like to learn more about different CI strategies and their use in the classroom, and all nine of the respondents circled "strongly agree."

Questions 2 and 3 of the survey asked the respondents to discuss their use of CI strategies in the classroom. Of the nine respondents, seven indicated that they do currently use some CI strategies. Four respondents indicated that they have used movie talks in their classroom; seven respondents indicated that they use varied input; six respondents indicated that they use authentic songs; four respondents indicated that they use adapted speech; and seven respondents indicated that they use interactive readings. Although many respondents checked off many of the CI strategies on the list provided on the survey, only two respondents checked the box labeled "other" and listed more strategies that they use. This shows the researcher that although most of the respondents have a general idea of how to use CI strategies in the classroom, most need more information and guidance on different strategies that can be implemented. There are many more CI strategies that could have been provided on the survey, but only two respondents recognized that they currently implement more varieties of CI strategies in their classrooms that were not mentioned in the survey.

Question 4 stated that the respondents believe the CI strategies they are currently using facilitates language acquisition for their students. Of the nine respondents, seven agreed with the statement, but none circled "strongly agree." Although there is some belief that the CI strategies used are beneficial for their students, there is still some question about their usefulness. The following question addresses the issue of whether or not focusing on CI strategies may impede students' performance on assessments. The overwhelming answer from all nine respondents was "don't know." It seems that they are not sure if focusing solely on CI strategies may hinder students' performance.

Purpose

Teaching methods and strategies that are used in the classroom are an integral component of student learning. The ways that students receive new information can either benefit them tremendously or they can cause confusion and frustration. In the end, it is a teacher's duty to research and decide the most appropriate evidence-based practices and strategies that will facilitate student learning. Comprehensible Input is the new "trending" strategy that teachers of World Language (especially in the Spencerport Central School District) have been implementing throughout all levels of the World Language classroom. Teachers of WL need to be certain that the strategies they are implementing are actually evidence-based practices that will help the students in achieving language acquisition and that will ensure that students have the best success on assessments.

The purpose of this research is first to discover how CI can help language acquisition. Second, after looking at the research surrounding CI and language acquisition, to research more evidence-based CI strategies that can be implemented throughout all levels of the World Language classroom. CI strategies may look different in a Level 1 classroom with novice

learners as opposed to a Level 5 classroom with intermediate and advanced learners. The researcher will present multiple strategies that can be used throughout all levels of language learning.

Summary

As indicated by the surveys given to teachers of World Language, teachers are in need of more knowledge surrounding the definition, uses, and implementation of CI in the classroom. Although there is much research that supports the value of CI for language acquisition, teachers need further training on its implementation in the classroom. Many different CI strategies that are not being used can have tremendous effect   on students learning and achievement. It is the purpose of this research to discover the best CI strategies to facilitate student performance and learning.

Definition of Terms

Second Language Acquisition: the process of learning a second language after the first language is already established

Comprehensible input: language input that can be understood by language learners despite not having an understanding of all language and structures within it

Target language: new language that is studied by the learner

Acquirer: the person acquiring a new language

Teacher talk: verbal input delivered by a language teacher that is comprehensible for their students

Total Physical Response (TPR): a method of using physical movement as a reaction to input in the second language.

Chapter 2

Teachers of World Languages at the secondary level face many opposing views on the most beneficial teaching strategies that allow students to acquire a new language. Teachers must discover the best teaching practices that assist the process of second language acquisition and ensure their students' success. Comprehensible Input (CI) has recently become a buzzword for teachers of World Languages, but it can largely be misused and misunderstood. When diving into the world of CI, we must first understand the concept of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Krashen (1982) extensively explores the Theory of SLA by outlining and explaining five hypotheses for SLA. Krashen's first hypothesis notes the difference between acquiring a language and learning a language – it is called the "Acquisition-Learning Distinction" (Krashen, 1982, p.10). Language acquisition is similar to the way a child begins to learn their first language – they are not even aware that they are learning a language because it is a subconscious process. "We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a 'feel' for correctness. Grammatical sentences 'sound' right, or 'feel' right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated" (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Language acquisition is a form of natural learning – the learners pick up the language because of the way it sounds rather than learning the rules that surround the grammatical structures of the language. Language learning, however, is a conscious knowledge of a language. Learners know the rules, can point them out, and can explain and talk about them. Krashen (1982) points out that the main difference between language acquisition and language learning is that with

acquisition the learner picks up the language, whereas, with language learning the learner simply learns about the language.

It is important to understand that Krashen (1982) makes note of the fact that both language acquisition and language learning can and should happen together for SLA to occur successfully. When you think about how a small child learns their first language, they first acquire the language by listening, reading, and hearing, but later when they go to school, they expand on their first language by learning about the grammatical rules and procedures. Teachers of World Languages must also make note of this – for students to successfully acquire a language, learning about the language and its grammatical structures should play a role as well, although it should not be the focus.

Krashen's (1982) second hypothesis is the "Natural Order Hypothesis" which states the belief that the acquisition of grammatical structures occurs in a predictable order. Krashen cited a study conducted by Brown (1973) which found that children acquiring English as a first language tended to acquire similar morphemes first. For example, the plural marker /s/ (two cats) was acquired much sooner than the possessive marker /s/ (Peter's hat). However, that is not to say that certain grammatical markers should be taught before others when teaching second language learners, rather it simply informs the fact that some morphemes may take longer than others for the acquirer to catch on to.

Krashen's (1982) third hypothesis is called the "Monitor Hypothesis." The researcher has already mentioned that language acquisition and language learning should both occur in order for the acquirer to successfully acquire a new language. The Monitor Hypothesis simply states that Language Learning should be used as a 'monitor' for Language Acquisition. This hypothesis is best explained by Krashen himself: "Normally, acquisition 'initiates' our utterances in a second

language and is responsible for our fluency. Learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor, or editor. Learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance, after is has been 'produced' by the acquired system. This can happen before we speak or write, or after (self-correction)" (Krashen, 1982, p.15). Conscious learning, or learning the formal rules, should only play a limited role in SLA. When grammatical rules and language learning become the focus, language learners are constantly checking their performance and output with their conscious knowledge of the language. Focusing on the conscious knowledge of the language results in hesitancy while speaking, constant self-correction that inhibits the listeners ability to understand, and does not typically result in true fluency. The goal when teaching language acquisition and learning is to produce users of language that use language learning of grammatical structures only when it does not interfere with their communication. Learned competence of a language should be used as a supplement to acquired competence so as not to interfere too much with communication and fluency. Language acquirers should not get stuck on the rules of the language that they have learned so that it interferes and they cannot produce the acquired language.

Krashen's fourth hypothesis is called "The Input Hypothesis" which focuses on the questions 'how do we acquire language?' and 'how do we move the acquirer from one stage to another?' Krashen asks the question, "How do we move from stage i, where i represents current competence, to i + 1, the next level?" (Krashen, 1982, p. 20). Originally, our assumption has been that we first learn grammatical structures and then put it in to practice with communication, but the Input Hypothesis says the opposite – first we acquire meaning and then it develops into knowledge of structure. There are three parts of the Input Hypothesis: first, we are focused on acquiring a language rather than learning it. Second, we acquire the new language by being

exposed to the language that is one level beyond our current competence level (i + 1). Lastly, production of the language being acquired emerges over time, it cannot be taught directly. As the acquirer hears and understands more input, their ability to produce the new language will emerge over time and will not be grammatically accurate right away.

The fifth and final hypothesis that Krashen discusses is called "The Affective Filter Hypothesis" (Krashen, 1982, p. 30). This hypothesis explains that there are many other variables, which can influence success in language acquisition. Three variables that Krashen mentions directly are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Acquirers with high motivation, good self-confidence and self-image, and low anxiety tend to do the best with language acquisition. When we look at Figure 1, we can see why an acquirer may take in a lot of input, but fail to truly acquire the language. The input is being filtered through some variable that causes them not to be able to produce or acquire the language being learned. This figure shows that our goals as teachers of world languages should not only be in providing comprehensible input, but also in providing low filters that can help acquirers succeed. Providing a low-anxiety setting and input that is compelling and motivating are two ways that teachers can ensure they are keeping these filters low and help promote language acquisition.

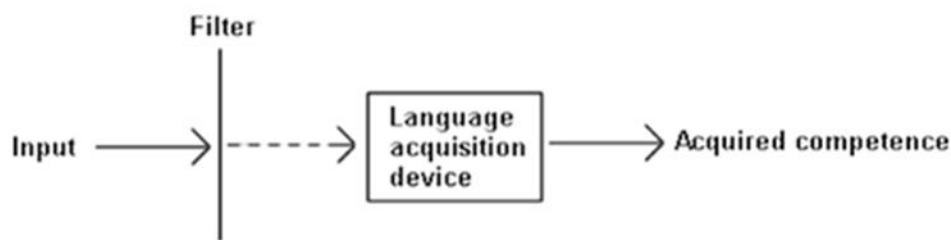Fig 1 Operation of the "affective filter".

The "affective filter", posited by Dulay and Burt (1977), acts to prevent input from being used for language acquisition. Acquirers with optimal attitudes (see text) are hypothesized to have "low" affective filters. Classrooms that encourage low filters are those that promote low anxiety among students, that keep students "off the defensive" (Stevick, 1976).

Now that we have a firm grasp on SLA and Krashen's five hypotheses, it is important to dive into how to properly teach using CI. First and foremost, Teachers of World Languages must realize that the goal should be language acquisition rather than language learning. It is also important to note, however, that language learning should still play a role in instruction. Although we focus on comprehensibility rather than grammatical structures when using CI, explicitly teaching grammatical structures should still be implemented in the World Language classroom. The question is not "should we teach grammar?" rather it should be "When do we teach grammar?" The answer to this question relies heavily on the level of the students that are being taught. Students at a beginning or novice level will need more explicit instruction and language learning since they need a good baseline of the new language to start with. Once students advance into an intermediate level, however, there should be more input and less explicit grammar teaching. Grammar teaching eventually becomes supplemental.

The most important characteristic of CI is that the input must be comprehensible. If the acquirer cannot understand the message, then there will not be any acquisition. Incomprehensible input becomes "noise" and distracts the acquirer from true language acquisition. This is where classroom teaching becomes key. A teacher can tailor the input to the level of the students following the i + 1 rule – giving students input that is just slightly above their level of comprehensibility (Krashen, 1982). The issue for most teachers comes with how to make the input comprehensible. Hatch (1979) offers some strategies to help aid teachers in making input comprehensible for their students. He suggests that teachers use clear articulation and speak at a slower rate, use high-frequency vocabulary with less slang and idioms, and to speak in shorter sentences with more syntax simplification. When a teacher is trying to make themselves

understood, they tend to make these types of adjustments automatically in the moment, but it is helpful to be consciously aware of them.

Another facet of using CI in the WL classroom is to choose input that is relevant and interesting to the students. It is very easy to think of many input examples that are comprehensible, but are also completely uninteresting and irrelevant which will hinder the SLA process (Krashen, 1982). Using input that is interesting and relevant to the students is important because motivation is directly related to SLA. Carrió-Pastor and Mestre (2013) conducted a study to establish exactly how motivation can directly affect SLA. The study used two groups of students in different classrooms – one classroom was student-based and fostered a collaborative environment with compelling input, whereas the other group was placed in an environment with a textbook and not much interaction with others in the target language. The result of the study showed that motivation played a key role in SLA – the students who were collaborating and interacting with the target language in compelling ways showed much more willingness to further their language acquisition. This is an important facet for teachers of World Languages to remember. If teachers choose input that is irrelevant and uninteresting, they will lose their students' interest and be less successful with helping their students achieve acquisition of the language. Gardner (1985) outlines three elements of motivation that teachers need to take into account: the effort of the learner, the desire that the learner has to learn the language, and the affect – the emotional response toward learning the language. All three of these factors play a part in motivating a students to acquire a language, and by choosing input that is interesting and relevant, teachers can help motivate students to become successful.

The quantity of CI that the students receive will also directly impact language acquisition. Using only five minutes of teacher talk or one paragraph of reading is not a sufficient amount of

input that will foster language acquisition. However, exactly how much CI is still to be discovered. Much of it depends on a student's motivation and readiness to learn, but it also depends on the quality of the CI (Krashen, 1982). Loschky (1994) mentions that even though an acquirer may receive large doses of the input, if they are unable to comprehend it then it will do nothing to further language acquisition. He mentions a study involving Dutch children whose only exposure to German as their second language (L2) was through television. Although they were exposed to a large quantity of the L2, most of what they heard was useless and they were unable to acquire the language (Loschky, 1994). Loschky's study demonstrates that although the children had a large quantity of input, it was largely incomprehensible and did not lead to any acquisition. Although the quantity of input matters, the quality of the input is more important to consider.

Another facet of CI that should be mentioned is the students' readiness to produce the language. In order to keep the affective filter "low" as was already mentioned in Krashen's fifth hypothesis, teachers must not insist on students to produce the language too early. Krashen argues that forcing a student to produce the language before they are ready and have enough confidence through comprehensible input they have received can result in high anxiety. Rather than forcing students to produce the language, it is important to let them produce it when they are ready to do so.

So how do we know that students can understand the CI they are being given if they are not yet producing the language? Krashen and Terrell (1983) advocate for the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach. This approach allows students to complete a physical action as a response to what they hear rather than reply verbally in the target language. For example, the teacher can ask questions such as "Who is wearing the white shirt?" "Who is wearing black

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pants?" and "Who has long, brown hair?" To answer all of these questions, all the students need to do is simply point at another student or say their name. There is no production of the language required, yet the teacher knows that the students comprehend what they hear. This can also be done with pictures. A teacher can hand out a series of pictures and ask students to point to the picture that is being described, saying, "Show me the picture of the blue boat under the moon." If the student points or holds up the correct picture, then the teacher knows the student comprehended what they heard in the target language. The whole point is that it is relatively easy to check for understanding without production of the target language while using CI. Conversely, Swain (1985, 1995) makes the claim that CI alone is not sufficient for language acquisition, and that comprehensible output is a necessary component. The output allows students to receive feedback from others – whether by the teacher or by other students.

Feedback and error correction are a contentious part of CI. First, it is necessary to realize that errors are an inevitable part of SLA and they will be made often – especially in the beginning stages of language acquisition. Krashen (1982) believes that error correction should be minimal, if used at all. His reasoning is that error correction immediately puts students on the defensive, causing high anxiety, and forces them to focus on form rather than meaning. It causes students to try to avoid mistakes, and in turn, causes them to take fewer risks. In contrast, Nowbakht and Shahnazari (2015) argue that error correction and feedback is a necessary part of language acquisition and results in improving SLA. Nowbakht et al. conducted a study of two groups of Persians learning English as a foreign language. The control group learned only by comprehensible input, without producing any output or receiving any feedback. The experimental group also received comprehensible input, but also had to produce the language and receive corrective feedback on what was produced. The results of the study showed that the

experimental group outperformed the control group on a final assessment that they were given. Nowbakht et al. concluded that the students who received corrective feedback were more successful in SLA, but acknowledged that more research is still needed. In the end, it is up to the teacher to decide the right way to move forward with corrective feedback; they must know their students and decide what is best for them.

The final conclusion of this research is that SLA takes time. True language acquisition needs more than five hours per week for ten months to occur, so teachers of world languages simply must make the most of the classroom time that they have. Mastery of SLA only occurs when the acquirer is unaware that they are using the language correctly. Although it is satisfying to be able to know and explain grammatical structures, if they cannot be used properly, then language acquisition has not occurred. Educators should be encouraged that their students can be successful in SLA given the appropriate motivation, input, and instruction (Dixon, Zhao, Shin, Shuang, Jung-Hsuan, Burgess-Brigham, Unal Gezer, & Snow, 2012). By continuing to study the ways in which students acquire a new language, teachers can continue to glean new insights on ways to better serve them.

In order to ensure that teachers of WL are equipped with the CI strategies needed for successful SLA, teachers must be trained in how to implement a variety of CI strategies that are tailored to the level of their students. The research presented in this chapter highlights the definition of SLA and good CI, and the researcher will create a manual and Professional Development session to instruct teachers on how to implement these strategies. In order to best serve the teachers, the researcher will give tips and strategies on how to tailor CI to every students' level depending on their grade level and number of years learning the language.

Chapter 3

Teachers of WL need to be equipped with a variety of teaching strategies that will ensure their students have an optimal learning experience and come away prepared for the future. The theory of Comprehensible Input has become a trending teaching style that teachers of WL have implemented in their classrooms, but the researcher has found that teachers need more knowledge about the theory of SLA and how CI can help achieve it. The surveys that were given to the World Language Department at Spencerport School District revealed that teachers in this district specifically needed more information regarding the use of CI in the classroom. In order to correct the problem, the researcher has created a product that will be used in a Professional Development setting that will be open to all Teachers of WL at the Spencerport School District. The Professional Development session will be offered as a two-hour seminar that has two parts – first, a teaching on SLA, CI, and CI strategies that can be implemented in the WL classroom at each level. This teaching will last approximately one hour. Second, teachers will have time to create their own lesson using CI based on what they have learned – teachers will have the second hour to brainstorm and collaborate with each other.

There are two learning targets for the Professional Development session. First, teachers will be able to describe the theory of SLA and CI. Second, teachers will be able to incorporate at least one new CI strategy in their World Language classroom. There are four parts to the teaching portion of the session – an explanation of SLA and CI, CI for the novice learner, CI for the intermediate learner, and putting CI in the students' hands. There will also be a manual provided that teachers can use to follow along with during the Professional Development session, and that they will be able to take with them and refer back to in the future to inform their teaching. The manual is a product that was created based on the need for more information on

SLA and CI informed by the surveys given to the World Language Department at Spencerport School District, and was created using the research presented by the researcher.

The manual starts off with a brief explanation of SLA involves Krashen's five hypotheses already mentioned in Chapter 2 of this research. Teachers will be taught the difference between language acquisition (acquiring the language) and language learning (learning about the language). The goal for teachers of WL should be acquisition, and language learning should simply be a tool used to help the students get there. The manual continues to explain that teachers should no longer first teach grammar, then practice; rather students should acquire the meaning of the input, then learn the grammar (Krashen, 1982).

The manual then goes on to explain what CI truly is. Input is what students receive (audio, text, video), and comprehensible means it should only be one level above the student's current level. It should not be too easy, nor should it be too challenging. Students can acquire more language when they are exposed to it through comprehensible input rather than simply learning about it because true language acquisition is a subconscious process. Language learning on the other hand, is a conscious process. With language acquisition, students do not have to think about how they are using the language; it simply comes out. Krashen explains this phenomenon in the Monitor Hypothesis mentioned in Chapter 2. "The Monitor hypothesis implies that formal rules, or conscious learning, play only a limited role in second language performance" (Krashen, 1982, p. 16). The manual continues to discuss what CI is and what CI is not. CI is relevant and interesting, at a level just above the learners' current level, used often, and filled with high-frequency vocabulary. CI is not irrelevant or uninteresting, too challenging for the learners, used occasionally, or filled with slang and idioms. The manual continues with the dos and don'ts of CI. Teachers should choose cultural and compelling topics, use gestures and

visuals to increase comprehensibility, and make directions comprehensible in the target language. Teachers should not translate all of the directions, simply talk at the students (students should do something with the input), and should not say "this is important so I'll say it in English." Using this phrase communicates to students that what is said in the target language is not important.

Next, the manual discusses the differences and similarities of using CI in novice-level classrooms and in intermediate-level classrooms. First, the novice level is defined as Levels 1-2 (Grades 7-9 at the Spencerport School District). Students at the novice level have limited vocabulary and may not yet be past the "silent period" – the period of time where students are unable or not ready to produce much of the target language. Due to the silent period experienced by the students, the teacher needs to be a bit more creative with the students' output. A great way to check for understanding is to use the TPR approach – Total Physical Response. Rather than having students respond by production of the target language, students will respond with some sort of action. If they complete the action correctly, then the teacher knows they understood the input. This action could be anything from pointing to a picture, standing up or sitting down, holding up a prop, or moving to another part of the room. The options with TPR are endless.

A learner at the intermediate level is defined as a student in Levels 3-5 (Grades 10-12 at Spencerport School District). A learner at the intermediate level has a much more expansive vocabulary base, although still very limited. By this level, the learner should be past the "silent period" and be able to produce some target language. The challenge, however, is that all students will still be at varying levels of output production. Some students may be able to produce full sentences and ask questions in the target language, but others may only be able to answer in words and short phrases. Since students will be at different levels of output production, the

teacher must differentiate and decide what is an appropriate way for each student to respond without raising the anxiety variable.

The biggest difference in using CI with both the novice and intermediate levels is the level of input they receive and the output that should be expected. The manual mentions the anxiety variable mentioned by Krashen. If we expect too much too soon from the students, then we can be sure that they will shut down and lose the motivation to acquire the language (Krashen, 1982). No matter what level the students are in, CI should always be presented just above the current level of the students according to the i + 1 theory mentioned by Krashen (1982) and discussed in Chapter 2 of this research. For novice learners, this may mean very basic subject + verb sentences with some adjectives or miscellaneous vocabulary thrown in. For the intermediate levels, the input should include a variety of grammar and vocabulary. The types of CI strategies used can be similar in both levels, but the levels and expected output should be adjusted accordingly.

The next part of the manual brings in different types of CI strategies that can be used within both levels of students. First, the manual starts with TPRS: Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. The idea behind TPRS is to give students the opportunity to interact with the target language through a story using a variety of interactive activities. These stories can be done in one class period or they can last an entire unit. One TPRS strategy mentioned in the manual is 'Circling' – asking the same question in different ways. The idea behind this strategy is to repeat high-frequency vocabulary over and over through a series of questions. These questions could be yes/no or true/false questions for novice learners, or they could require longer answers for intermediate learners. Another strategy mentioned in the manual is PQA – Personalized Question-Answer. There is a short video that will be played during the Professional

Development session that shows this strategy in action. PQA is a questioning strategy that turns a theme or action from the story into a personal question. For example, perhaps the main character of the story is going to go shopping at the grocery store. You can then ask a student personally, "Do YOU like to go shopping at the grocery store?" They simply need to answer 'yes' or 'no' at the novice level, or you can follow up with another question for a student that is at the intermediate level. It is important not to put a student on the spot if they are confused with what you are asking. Switch to another student and then come back, giving them time to think of the question's meaning and their own answer.

There are many other interactive activities that can be used during TPRS. During the Professional Development session, the teachers will be given sticky notes to write one activity they have used or think they could use when teaching from a story. During this part, the presenter will point out certain strategies and ask other teachers if they have heard of them or if they currently use them in their classrooms. This will start a dialogue that will get everyone thinking about the many possibilities with TPRS.

The next CI strategy presented in the manual is using Embedded Reading. The idea behind an Embedded Reading activity is that the students are exposed to multiple versions of the same short story over and over. With each new version, the story gets progressively harder to understand and more details of the story are added. The first version should be very easy for the students to understand. The second version should add some details that may be more challenging to interpret, and it should continue to increase in rigor as the versions continue. Embedded Readings should also be interactive – students should be required to produce some sort of output as they are reading each version – act it out, drawing pictures to depict scenes,

ordering the details, etc. The manual includes an example that was created by Sara Moyer, a fellow colleague who also teaches in Spencerport.

The manual continues with other multiple CI strategies that can be implemented, and the presenter will give tips on how teachers can tailor them for novice and intermediate levels. Movie talks are easy strategies to implement in any level. The teacher simply shows a short video clip, commercial, music video, etc. and questions students about what they see and hear as it goes on. It is important to know that any kind of video can really work for this – it does not even have to have any words! The point is to simply question students about what they see (or hear) in the target language. For the novice learner, it is acceptable for students to respond to questions in English, but the target language should be encouraged. For the intermediate learner, the teacher can try to have the student to continue or elaborate on what they are saying. Picture talks are done the same way, but the teacher can ask more questions about feelings and likes/dislikes. At the novice level, the teacher can ask students to point to which person has brown hair or which person is wearing an orange shirt. At the intermediate level, the teacher can ask "why" questions – 'why is there a candle in this picture?' or 'what does this object represent?' The questions should all be in the target language and students should have a chance to answer and engage with each one.

The last part of the manual introduces the idea of putting CI in the students' hands. Rather than the teacher giving students the input, the students can give it to each other. There are many ways to do this – the manual mentions three strategies. First, you can give students a list of things to do – one student reads the list, and the other does what it says, then they switch roles. Second, students receive a list of sentences/paragraphs and fill in a graphic organizer based on what they read. Lastly, the presenter will explain the idea of "running dictations." Students will

have to memorize a short sentence in the Target Language and repeat what they memorized to their peers. By the end, they will have a full paragraph and must then read it and have some form of output to produce. The point behind a running dictation is to have students memorize sentence structures, recognize grammar, and create meaning together as a group. During the Professional Development session, the session will be opened up for a discussion with the teachers about more ideas that may allow students to take more control of the input at both levels.

The last part of the manual includes advice given to the teachers. There are many websites and blogs that teachers can visit that are filled with more CI strategies that they can use in their own classrooms. During the Professional Development session, the presenter will advise the teachers to follow other teachers on social media, use Pinterest and blogs, and to collaborate with their colleagues. There is no need to reinvent the wheel – rather, it is important to discuss strategies that work, did not work, and talk about how they could be improved in the future.

The second hour of the Professional Development session will be given to the teachers to create something after learning about many CI strategies. They can use a strategy that was presented to them, or they can search online using the websites and blogs provided to them as resources. The teachers will be broken up into smaller groups based on the level they teach and they will be able to brainstorm and collaborate with each other in order to create a CI activity for their classroom. The hope is that they will try something new and continue to add more strategies that will benefit their students.

Chapter 4

The researcher sought to discover the most appropriate Comprehensible Input strategies that can be implemented in the World Language classroom. Based on a survey administered to the World Language Department at Spencerport School District, the researcher found that teachers needed more training on the basics of Second Language Acquisition and how to use CI to accomplish it. Too often, teachers are relying on the same CI strategies over and over rather than using a variety to help students achieve language acquisition. The researcher sought to create a Professional Development session and a manual that teachers can use to inform their teaching by using different strategies within their own classrooms.

The researcher also noticed a need for teachers to understand that CI should look different depending on the level of the students. Spencerport School District offers two levels of students specifically – novice and intermediate. Although many of the CI strategies can be used in both levels, the way they are implemented should look different. The researcher used many different sources and studies in order to find current research on the topic and to correct the problem by training teachers on how CI should look in each level.

There are multiple goals of this research. One goal is to correctly define the theories of SLA and CI. Another goal is to describe what CI should look like and how it should be implemented – what makes input comprehensible and why this approach is so beneficial for language acquisition. A third goal is to then develop strategies for teachers of World Languages to implement into their classrooms regardless of the level they teach. It is important for teachers to understand that CI can be implemented at all levels, but it may look different depending on the level of the students being taught.

The research makes multiple conclusions regarding SLA and CI. First, success in a language should be measured in language acquisition rather than language learning. Language learning simply shows what a student knows about the language – they can describe grammatical rules and recite some vocabulary translations. However, acquisition shows that the student is able to make meaning of the language in all its structures. Acquisition takes a lot of time – more time that a one-hour class period allows, so it is important that teachers make the most of the time they have by offering input that is comprehensible for the student in order to achieve acquisition.

In order to facilitate the process of language acquisition, comprehensible input must be supplied to the students. For input to be comprehensible, it should not be too easy not should it be too hard. The input should just be one level about the level of the students. The students should be able to understand the majority of what they hear or read, but it should also be slightly challenging. Input should be given in large quantity, but it should be high quality. It is not enough to simply speak in the target language or to play music or a video in the target language, rather it should be tailored to the level of the student so that they are able to decode what it is they are hearing.

Another conclusion made by the research is that CI must be interesting and it must be relevant. Students should be interested in what they are hearing and it should be relevant to their lives or to the world around them. By making the input interesting and relevant, it increases the motivation variable. Motivation plays a pivotal role in language acquisition. When a student wants to understand and learn, then it is easier for that learning and understanding to occur.

A final conclusion of the research is that output will look different depending on the level of the learner. Just because a learner is at the novice level, does not mean they cannot do

something with the input that they are receiving. There are many strategies that teachers can use that allow them to be sure that their students are able to understand the input they have been given without any language production. At the intermediate level, more output can be expected; students should be able to respond with some of the target language. The key here is to keep the anxiety variable low. When students are unable to produce what they are being asked to produce, the anxiety levels rise and they can shut down. It is up to the teacher to gauge where the students are in production and differentiate the output expected based on each student.

Students will benefit tremendously if teachers take what they have learned from the Professional Development session and bring it into their classrooms. Not only will they receive multiple new strategies that will make input more engaging and exciting, but they will also have more opportunity to interact with the target language. More interaction with the target language will result in better language acquisition and ultimately, the students will perform better in their language class. By making CI relevant and interesting to the students, their motivation will increase and they may not even realize that they are learning the language at all – it will just occur! This is the goal of language acquisition – that language acquisition becomes a subconscious process.

Not only will the students benefit from this research, but the researcher herself will also benefit. When the problem of implementing CI in the World Language classroom was discovered, the researcher realized that she also had many deficits when it came to knowledge of SLA and CI. By conducting the research and creating the product to be used in a Professional Development session, the researcher has expanded her knowledge and resources of SLA and CI. She is not able to bring many other strategies into her own classroom and can use what she has learned to benefit other teachers of World Languages in the surrounding area.

Final Thoughts

To close out this chapter and this research, it is important to understand that this research is ongoing. There is not a "one size fits all" with language acquisition and language learning. Upon more research and more studies, one may find that certain strategies and techniques do not work well with other populations or groups of people. It is important to understand that language acquisition is a never-ending process. Although a student may reach the fluency level, language learning does not end. It is the job of teachers of World Languages to make language acquisition compelling and exciting to their students in order that they may want to continue the process of SLA in the future after they leave the classroom.

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Appendix A

Comprehensible Input Survey

For the World Language Department at Spencerport Central School District

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability based on your personal experience with studying and implementing Comprehensible Input strategies for your classroom.

1. I believe that I have a thorough understanding of Comprehensible Input (CI).

     strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

2. I am currently implementing multiple CI strategies in my World Language classroom.

     strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

3. Please check off each of the strategies that you are currently using:

     ___ Movie talks

     ___ Varied Input

     ___ Authentic Songs

     ___ Books/Specialized readings

     ___ Adapted Speech

     ___ Interactive Reading

     ___ Other (Please list: _____)

4. I believe that the CI strategies I am using in the classroom are helping my students engage with the language in a way that facilitates their language acquisition.

     strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

5. I think that focusing solely on CI strategies have hindered/impeded students' performance on assessments.

     strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

6. I think CI should look differently in the advanced language classroom as opposed to a level 1 or 2 language classroom.

    strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

7. I am very knowledgeable on how CI can facilitate Language Acquisition.

    strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

8. I know multiple CI strategies that I can implement in my classroom.

    strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

9. I believe we can implement CI strategies while still successfully preparing students for their final assessments.

    strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

10. I would like to know more about different CI strategies and their use in my classroom.

    strongly agree   agree   don't know   disagree   strongly disagree

11. How would like to learn more about CI strategies? Check all that apply.

    ___ Video tutorials

    ___ Professional Development

    ___ Powerpoint Presentation

    ___ Learning Walks (observing other teachers)

    ___ other