Testing Krashen’s Input Hypothesis: 
A Case Study in a Male Czech Adult 
Acquiring English

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Author's statement

I state that this piece of work is my own and does not contain any unacknowledged work from any other sources.

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Introduction

In this dissertation, I will examine the Input Hypothesis developed and refined by Stephen Krashen in the late 1970s and 1980s. This hypothesis is a part of a larger second language acquisition theory proposed by Krashen (sometimes called Monitor theory). To introduce it very briefly, this theory predicts that if a second language learner receives enough comprehensible input, he or she will acquire the language; it is not necessary to produce any output. Using a case study approach I will investigate whether this claim is valid.

The subject of my study is a male Czech adult working as an au-pair in England. He will be referred to as ‘R’ for ethical reasons of not compromising his identity.

The dissertation is divided into several sections. The first part introduces Krashen’s second language acquisition theory and serves as a theoretical background to the whole study. It looks one by one at the five hypotheses that together make up this theory: the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. The examination of the five basic hypotheses is concluded with a presentation of a special case of the Input Hypothesis, the Reading Hypothesis, which elaborates on the idea that reading can also serve as a source of comprehensible input. This is followed by an introduction of main points of criticism that have been raised against Krashen’s theory – in terms of both its content and its methodological shortcomings.

The next section identifies the aim of my study and introduces the methods that I used to measure my subject’s level of English at the beginning of the study,
progress he was making throughout and the final evaluation of what he had achieved by the end of the period studied.

Following this is a description of the subject of this study. This provides general information on his age, education etc. A special part is devoted to his experience with English, both as regards the formal teaching he received in the language and his experience with it outside school.

The next part describes the situation which I researched: this includes a description of the subject's level of English prior to the study and a description of what he experienced during this study, concentrating on the input he received and the situations in which he used English.

The final section deals with the results of the study. It evaluates the progress the subject made throughout the period under research and offers an analysis of the data I gathered through the various methods used. This is the section where the specific claims of the Input Hypothesis will be either proved valid or invalid.

Finally, a note on the terms used. Sociolinguistic literature distinguishes between a foreign language and a second language: a second language is a non-native language that has an official role in a country, while a foreign language is a non-native language that has no official status in a country (Kachru 1992), for example, English in India versus English in the Czech Republic. However, the term commonly used in applied linguistics for both is 'second language', not implying the possible sociolinguistic difference; it is the term that I will use in this study.

Following abbreviations will also be used: SLA (second language acquisition), L1 (first language, mother tongue), L2 (second language, target language); other abbreviations are explained when first used.
Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition

Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition was refined over a period of time and is presented, among other works, in Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985, 1989, 2003a; Krashen & Terrell 1983). The theory consists of five basic hypotheses (the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis) and the Reading Hypothesis, which is a special case of the Input Hypothesis; I will examine these one by one. I will also look at the evidence that Krashen offers in support of his theory. Finally, the main points of criticism raised against Krashen will be presented.

The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis

We need to start with the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis as Ellis (1985: 261) rightly points out that the acquisition/learning distinction lies at the heart of Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition and Krashen himself (1989: 8) describes it as a ‘cornerstone’ in his theory. It states that there are two independent ways of learning a second language.

Krashen (e.g. 1981, 1982, 1985) describes acquisition as a subconscious process virtually identical to the one used in first language acquisition. It involves the naturalistic development of language proficiency through understanding language and through using language for meaningful communication (Richards & Rodgers 1986: 131). The acquirer is usually not aware of acquisition taking place or the results of it. Acquisition occurs as a result of participating in natural communication where the focus is on meaning (Ellis 1985: 261).
Learning, on the other hand, is described by Krashen as conscious knowledge, 'knowing about' language. Learning occurs as a result of conscious study of the formal properties of the language.

Neurolinguistically speaking, 'acquired' knowledge is usually located in the left brain hemisphere in the language areas and it is available for automatic processing. 'Learnt' knowledge, on the contrary, is metalinguistic in nature. It is also stored in the left hemisphere but not necessarily in language areas; it is available only for controlled processing (Ellis 1985: 261). Thus 'acquired' and 'learnt' knowledge are kept separate in the brain and therefore, Krashen deduces, learning cannot lead to acquisition (Krashen 1982).

With this in view, Krashen claims that error correction affects learning, not acquisition; it leads to rethinking and adjusting conscious rules.

According to him, acquisition plays a far more central role than learning in second language performance. Conscious rules only perform one function: editor or Monitor (see the Monitor Hypothesis below). The acquisition/learning distinction is summarised in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACQUISITION</th>
<th>LEARNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>similar to first language acquisition</td>
<td>formal knowledge of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'picking up' a language</td>
<td>'knowing about' a language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subconscious</td>
<td>conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implicit knowledge</td>
<td>explicit knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal teaching does not help</td>
<td>formal teaching helps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Acquisition/learning distinction (Adapted from Krashen & Terrell 1983: 27)

Krashen also does not agree with theories that restrict acquisition only to children:

Some second language theorists have assumed that children acquire, while adults can only learn. The acquisition-learning hypothesis claims, however, that adults also acquire, that the
ability to 'pick up' languages does not disappear at puberty. This does not mean that adults will always be able to achieve native-like levels in a second language. It does mean that adults can access the same natural 'language acquisition device' that children use. (Krashen 1982: 10; a similar statement in Krashen & Terrell 1983: 26)

Krashen here draws on Chomsky's concepts of universal grammar and language acquisition device. Briefly summarised, Chomsky describes the linguistic faculty as a 'language acquisition device' that contains knowledge of linguistic universals. These are innate and provide children with a starting point for acquiring the grammar of the language that they are exposed to. It can be argued that the same device also operates in second language acquisition, as is the case with the Universal hypothesis (see e.g. Ellis 1985: 14).

The Natural Order Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that grammatical structures are acquired (but as Krashen & Terrell [1983: 28] point out not necessarily learnt) in a predictable order. It is based on the assumption that acquirers of a given language tend to acquire certain grammatical features early and others later: '[T]he agreement among individual acquirers is not always 100%, but there are clear, statistically significant, similarities' (Krashen 1982: 12). To be absolutely clear, the Natural Order Hypothesis does not state that every acquirer will acquire grammatical structures in the exact same order. It states rather that, in general, certain structures tend to be acquired early and others tend to be acquired late. It also allows the possibility that structures may be acquired in groups, several at about the same time. (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 28)

First based on the studies of acquisition of English as a first language, consecutive research established that 'children acquiring English as a second language also show a “natural order” for grammatical morphemes, regardless of
their first language' (Krashen 1982: 12). A study by Bailey, Madden & Krashen (1974) found out that adults also showed a natural order of grammatical morphemes. However, this natural order seems to appear reliably when adults are focused on communication but not necessarily when they are given grammar tests (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 29).

As regards the acquisition of English as a second language (for both children and adults), the average order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes is summarised in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ING (progressive)</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
<th>COPULA (to be)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUXILIARY (progressive)</td>
<td>ARTICLE (a, the)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRREGULAR PAST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGULAR PAST</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;RD&lt;/sup&gt; PERSON SINGULAR (-s)</td>
<td>POSSESSIVE ('s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Average order of acquisition (Adapted from Krashen & Terrell 1983: 29)*

In his most recent book (2003a: 2), Krashen talks about ‘three amazing facts’ about the natural order phenomena. They are:

1. The natural order is not based on any obvious features of simplicity and complexity. Some rules that look simple (e.g. the third person singular) are acquired late. Others that appear to linguists to be complex are acquired early. This presents a problem to curricula designers who present rules to language students from ‘simple’ to ‘complex’. A rule may seem simple to a linguist, but may be late-acquired.
2. The natural order cannot be changed. It is immune to deliberate teaching. We cannot alter the natural order by explanations, drills and exercises. A teacher can drill the third person singular for weeks, but it will not be acquired until the acquirer is ready for it. This explains a great deal of the frustration language students have.

3. One might suppose that the solution to our problems is simply to teach along the natural order: we need only to find out which items are acquired early and teach those first. The third amazing fact is that this is not the solution: the natural order is not the teaching order (see the Input Hypothesis for explanation).

**The Monitor Hypothesis**

The Monitor Hypothesis attempts to explain how acquisition and learning are used. The hypothesis states that when we produce utterances in a second language, the utterance is initiated by the acquired system and the conscious learning is employed only later to make changes in our utterances after the utterance has been generated by the acquired system. This may happen before we actually speak or write, or it may happen after (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 30; see Figure 1). Krashen claims (2003a: 2) that language is normally produced by using acquired linguistic competence. Here conscious learning has only one function: that of a Monitor or editor.

However, it is difficult to use the Monitor: in order to use it successfully, three conditions must be met. First, the acquirer must know the rule, which is a very difficult condition to meet, as Krashen points out:

Research linguists freely admit that they do not know all the rules of any language. Those who write grammar texts know fewer rules than the linguists. Language teachers do not teach all the rules in
the texts. Even the best students don’t learn all the rules that are taught, even the best students don’t remember all the rules they have learned, and even the best students can’t always use the rules they do remember: Many rules are too complex to apply while engaging in conversation. (Krashen 2003a: 3)

The second condition for the successful use of the Monitor is that the acquirer must be thinking about correctness, must be focused on form. This is not easy to do: it is hard to think about both form and meaning at the same time (Krashen 2003a).

Third, the acquirer must have enough time to apply the Monitor but

[for most people, normal conversation doesn’t provide enough time for the use of the Monitor. A few language experts can Monitor while conversing, but these are very advanced acquirers who only need to Monitor an occasional rule here and there, and who have a special interest in the structure of language. (Krashen 2003a: 3)]

According to Krashen (2003a: 3), research shows that Monitor use is only obvious when all three conditions are fully met and claims that ‘for most people, this occurs only when we give them a grammar test!’.

We see the natural order for, for example, grammatical morphemes when we test students in ‘Monitor-free’ situations where they are focused on communication and not form. When we give adult students ‘pencil and paper grammar tests’, we see ‘unnatural orders’, a difficulty order that is different from the child second language acquisition order (Krashen 1982: 16-17).

When students are focused on communication, they are not usually able to make extensive use of their conscious knowledge of grammar, the Monitor, and their error patterns primarily reflect the operation of the acquired system (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 31).
A very important point about the Monitor hypothesis is that it does not say that acquisition is unavailable for self-correction. We often self-correct, or edit, using acquisition, in both first and in second languages. What the Monitor hypothesis claims is that conscious learning has only this function, that it is not used to initiate production in a second language. (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 31)

Although the Monitor is weak, it is not useless. Some conscious knowledge of language is helpful as acquisition does not, typically, provide the acquirers with 100% of a language: there is often a small residue of grammar, punctuation and spelling that even native speakers do not acquire, even after extensive aural and written comprehensible input (Krashen 2003a).

But we pay a price for the 'modest amount of accuracy' we get from monitoring (Krashen 2003a: 3): research shows that when we focus on form when speaking, we produce less information and we slow down (Hulstijn & Hulstijn 1984). Krashen (2003a) advises to use the conscious Monitor when it does not interfere with communication, when we have time, as in the editing phase of writing.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1:** Model of adult second language performance (Adapted from Krashen 1981: 7)

*Individual variation in Monitor use*

**Monitor over-users** try to use the Monitor all the time, always checking their output against the conscious knowledge of the language. Krashen identifies two different causes for this.
Many people, victims of grammar-only type of instruction, have simply not had the chance to acquire much of the second language, and may have no choice but to be dependent on learning. (Krashen 1982: 19)

The other cause has to do with personality: some people may have acquired quite a lot of the second language but simply do not trust their acquired competence and prefer to use the Monitor.

Monitor under-users have not learnt or prefer not to use the conscious knowledge even when the three conditions are met. These people self-correct by a 'feel' and rely completely on the acquired system.

The optimal Monitor users employ the Monitor 'when it is appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication', e.g. in writing or planned speech.

Optimal Monitor users can therefore use their learned competence as a supplement to their acquired competence. Some optimal users who have not completely acquired their second language, who make small and occasional errors in speech, can use their conscious grammar so successfully that they can often produce the illusion of being native in their writing. (This does not imply that conscious learning can entirely make up for incomplete acquisition. Some unacquired rules will be learnable and others not. The optimal user is able to fill part of the gap with conscious learning, but not all of it.) (Krashen 1982: 20)

The Input Hypothesis

The Input Hypothesis addresses the question of how we acquire language. This hypothesis states that we acquire (not learn) language by understanding input that is a little beyond our current level of acquired competence (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 32). This has been recently expressed lucidly by Krashen (2003a: 4): 'we acquire language in only one way: when we understand messages; that is, when we obtain "comprehensible input"'. This strong claim is repeated in other places where Krashen states that 'comprehending messages is the only way language is
acquired' and that 'there is no individual variation in the fundamental process of language acquisition' (Krashen 2003a: 4).

For this reason, Krashen often uses the term 'comprehension hypothesis' (2003a) to refer to the Input Hypothesis, arguing that 'comprehension' is a better description as mere input is not enough; it must be understood.

Krashen also acknowledges that this idea is not new with him:

In the field of second-language acquisition, James Asher, Harris Winitz, and Robins Burling proposed similar ideas years before I did, and in the field of literacy, Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman had proposed that we learn to read by reading, by understanding the message on the page. (Krashen 2003a: 4)

Consistent with the hypothesis is then the claim that listening comprehension and reading are of primary importance and that the ability to speak or write fluently in a second language will come on its own with time. Speaking fluency is thus not 'taught' directly; rather, speaking ability 'emerges' after the acquirer has built up competence through comprehending input. (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 32).

The Input Hypothesis builds on the Natural Order Hypothesis and answers the question of how we move from one stage of acquisition to another. In other words, it is concerned with how we move from $i$, where $i$ is the acquirer's current level of competence, to $i+1$, where $i+1$ is the stage immediately following $i$ along the natural order. The answer to how we can understand language that contains structures we have not yet acquired is 'through context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic information' (Krashen 1982: 21).

**Corollaries of the Input Hypothesis**
The first corollary of the Input Hypothesis states that if we provide students with enough comprehensible input, the structures they are ready to acquire will be
present in the input. We do not have to make sure that they are there, we do not have to deliberately focus on certain points of grammar (Krashen 2003a: 5). This means that the input does not need to be finely tuned (Figure 2), containing only \( i+1 \); it can be roughly-tuned (Figure 3), containing a net of structures and \( i+1 \) among them (provided, of course, the input is comprehensible).

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{speaker} & \downarrow & \\
\text{natural order} & 1 & 2 & 3 & \ldots & i+1 & \ldots \ 96 & 97 \ldots \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 2: Finely-tuned input (Adapted from Krashen & Terrell 1983: 33)

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccccc}
\text{speaker} & \swarrow & \nearrow & \searrow & \\
\text{natural order} & 1 & 2 & 3 & \ldots & i & i+1 & \ldots \ 96 & 97 \ldots \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 3: Roughly-tuned input (Adapted from Krashen & Terrell 1983: 33)

To return to the third ‘amazing fact’ about the Natural Order Hypothesis, with comprehensible input-based language teaching the syllabus is not based on the natural order, it is not based on any grammatical order: students will acquire the language in a natural order as a result of getting comprehensible input (Krashen 2003a: 6).

The second corollary states that speaking fluency cannot be taught directly. Speaking does not directly result in language acquisition: ‘talking is not practising’ (Krashen 2003a: 5). The ability to speak is the result of language acquisition, not its cause. However, speaking can be useful and help acquisition indirectly as it leads to conversation, which is an excellent source of comprehensible input; it can also help lower the Affective Filter (see below) by making one feel more like a user of the language, a member of the ‘club’.
Summary of the Input Hypothesis
Let me provide a following short summary of the Input Hypothesis, based on Krashen (1982: 21-22).

1. The Input Hypothesis relates to acquisition, not learning.
2. We acquire by understanding language that contains structures a bit beyond our current level of competence $(i+1)$. This is done with the help of the context or extra-linguistic information.
3. When communication is successful, when the input is understood and there is enough of it, $i+1$ will be provided automatically.
4. Production ability emerges. It is not taught directly.

To conclude this section, I will quote what Krashen calls ‘mystical’ facts about language acquisition.

First, language acquisition is effortless. It involves no energy, no work. All an acquirer has to do is understand messages. Second, language acquisition is involuntary. Given comprehensible input and a lack of affective barriers (...), language acquisition will take place. The acquirer has no choice. In a theoretical sense, language teaching is easy: All we have to do is give students comprehensible messages that they will pay attention to, and they will pay attention if the messages are interesting. (Krashen 2003a: 4)

The Affective Filter Hypothesis
This hypothesis states that ‘attitudinal variables relating to success in second language acquisition generally relate directly to language acquisition but not necessarily to language learning’ (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 37-38).

Among the affective variables mentioned are: motivation (usually integrative but also instrumental), good self-image and self-confidence, and, perhaps most importantly, the best situations for language acquisition are those which encourage lower anxiety levels (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 38).
Affective factors are considered to be directly related to second language acquisition and achievement because they appear, in general, when communicative tests are used, tests that focus on the acquired rather than the learnt system.

The Affective Filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter – even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for second language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, they will also have a lower or weaker filter. They will be more open to the input, and it will strike 'deeper'. (Krashen 1982: 31)

As Krashen points out (1982: 32), the Affective Filter Hypothesis can help explain why a certain student of a second language who receives a great deal of comprehensible input still does not reach a native-like competence: it is due to the high Affective Filter that prevents the input from reaching the language acquisition device (Figure 4). Put simply, for this type of an acquirer input does not become intake (intake is defined as the input that reached the language acquisition device).

\[
\text{input} \rightarrow \text{filter} \rightarrow \text{language acquisition device} \rightarrow \text{acquired competence}
\]

*Figure 4: Operation of the Affective Filter (Adapted from Krashen & Terrell 1983: 39)*
Reading as Comprehensible Input: The Reading Hypothesis

A special case of the Input Hypothesis is the Reading Hypothesis as Krashen states (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 131) that the Input Hypothesis does not distinguish between aural and written input. This hypothesis claims that comprehensible input in the form of reading also stimulates language acquisition:

> Reading is responsible for much of our competence in reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and advanced grammatical competence. (Krashen 1994: 46)

Krashen (2003a: 15) maintains that free voluntary reading ‘may be the most powerful tool we have in language education’. It increases both literacy and language development and has significant impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and writing (Krashen 1993).

Free reading may, according to Krashen (2003a), be important for transition from ‘the elementary level to authentic language use, and from “conversational” language ability to “academic” language ability’ (2003a: 15).

Krashen argues that free voluntary reading works because ‘it is a form of comprehensible input delivered in a low-anxiety situation’ (2003a: 15). He goes on to say that it is an enjoyable activity that also nurtures language acquisition and desirably lowers the Affective Filter.

Krashen further specifies (1982: 164) the criteria this kind of reading must meet: It is extensive and concerns subject matter that students would read in their first language for pleasure. It is completely voluntary and readers have the option of, for example, skipping whole sections that they find either too difficult or less interesting. The only requirement is that the reading is comprehensible and that the topic is something students are genuinely interested in, that they would read in their first language.
Free voluntary reading is 'an extremely powerful form of comprehensible input, and it is delivered in a low-anxiety environment' (Krashen 2003b: 103). This concept of free voluntary reading as being a form of comprehensible input combined with low Affective Filter (thus having good chances of becoming intake) is especially relevant to my research as a significant amount of input my subject was getting was provided by the books he was reading.

The problem with reading in a foreign language is, however, that it is hard to find texts that are both interesting and comprehensible, especially for beginning students who find authentic texts too difficult (2003a: 25).1

Krashen quotes a number of studies (e.g. Elley 1998; Stokes, Krashen & Kartchner 1998; Shin 2001) that provide evidence for free voluntary reading as a means of increasing second-language competence. He maintains (1989: 90) that research overwhelmingly supports the hypothesis that reading exposure alone has a strong effect on the development of language abilities.

Most recently (2004), Krashen has again restated the Reading Hypothesis and supported it by fresh evidence from a variety of studies. In this article, he also shows how the findings of those studies can be applied to stimulate second language acquisition, together with the implications they have for language pedagogy in the form of programmes encouraging teaching techniques such as sustained silent reading, in-school free reading, self-selected reading or narrow reading.

1 In connection with this, Krashen mentions an interesting concept of 'handcrafted books': these are books written by intermediate students, corrected by the teacher, and are to be read by beginners. The writers must not use a dictionary because if they do not know a word, it is likely that the students they are writing it for will not know it either (Krashen 2003a: 26).
Krashen's evidence for the Input Hypothesis

This section presents evidence Krashen gives in support of his theory and is based mainly on Krashen (1985). It is also supplemented from other sources (Krashen 1981, 1982, 1994, 2003a; Krashen & Terrell 1983).

1. **People speak to children acquiring their first language in special ways**: This kind of speech is variously known as ‘motherese’ or ‘caretaker speech’ and has several interesting properties. Its most important characteristic is that it is not a deliberate attempt to teach language (Krashen 1982: 22) but is motivated by the caretaker’s desire to be understood. It is structurally simpler that the language adults use with each other and appears to be roughly-tuned to the linguistic level of the child. It concentrates on the ‘here and now’ rather than on the remote and abstract. All these characteristics give caretaker speech the qualities of comprehensible input and they are clearly successful in helping children acquire their first language, which leads Krashen to statement 2.

2. **People speak to L2 learners in special ways** and these are essentially similar to the caretaker speech. And since caretaker speech helps L1 acquisition, speech with similar qualities should help L2 acquisition, the argument goes. The ‘simple codes’ falling into this category are termed (a) ‘foreigner talk’ – language native speakers use to non-native learners of the target language; (b) ‘teacher talk’ – language used by teachers in L2 classrooms; (c) ‘interlanguage talk’ – speakers of various first languages communicate in a common target language.

   Foreigner talk and teacher talk are usually slower, with shorter sentences and simpler syntax, contain repetition and restating, are adapted and roughly-tuned to the learner’s level. They are also motivated by communication. All this improves the comprehensibility of the input.
Interlanguage talk is also meant for real communication and is a form of simple input, but Krashen asks for certain caution here:

It remains, however, an empirical question whether the possible advantages of interlanguage talk balance the obvious problems: the ungrammaticality of much of the input, and the possibility that the input may be too simple and not be progressive enough for the intermediate or advanced acquirer. (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 35)

3. L2 learners often go through an initial silent period: It has been observed (e.g. Fourcin 1975; Rodriguez 1981), especially with children acquiring a second language, that they often stay silent at first when they arrive in a new country and start to talk at a later stage. During the silent period ‘the child is building up competence in the second language via listening, by understanding the language around him’ (Krashen 1982: 27).

This is expanded on in Krashen’s plea that L2 students be allowed silent period in classrooms; requiring that they speak before they are ready may actively harm them:

Adults, and children in formal language classes, are usually not allowed a silent period. They are often asked to produce very early in a second language, before they have acquired enough syntactic competence to express their ideas. According to a hypothesis first proposed by Newmark (1966), performers who are asked to produce before they are ‘ready’ will fall back on first language rules, that is, they will use syntactic rules of their first language while speaking the second language. (Krashen 1982: 27)

The concept that Krashen proposes here is that the problem in second language acquisition is not L1 interference; rather, students resort to L1 when they try to say something in L2 for which they do not know enough of L2. Thus the problem is not ‘interference’ but ‘ignorance’ – the lack of acquisition of a target language rule that is needed in performance. ‘Transfer from L1 to L2 is due to ignorance rather than to the inevitable transfer of habits’ (Cook 1993: 55).
4. The comparative success of younger and older learners reflects provision of comprehensible input: Based on a large number of studies (e.g. Scarcella & Higa 1982), Krashen came up with a view (now widely held; Cook 1993: 56) that adults are better at short-term L2 learning and children at long-term L2 learning, the reason being that

(...) older acquirers progress more quickly in early stages because they obtain more comprehensible input, while younger acquirers do better in the long run because of their low affective filters. (Krashen 1985: 12)

This is claimed to be so because older learners have greater experience of the world, can use their L1 to overcome communication problems in L2 more easily, and are better at conversational management (Cook 1993: 57). The child's eventual superiority in second language acquisition is hypothesised to be due to affective factors; specifically, Krashen assumes that the Affective Filter increases in strength at around puberty (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 46).

5. The more comprehensible input the greater the L2 proficiency: Some research results (e.g. Walberg, Hase & Pinzur Rasher 1978; Murakami 1980; Oiler, Perkins & Murakami 1980) show that a larger amount of exposure to L2 leads to proficiency. Like age, however, the length of exposure is not a causative variable itself; ultimately it depends on the amount of comprehensible input the learner had access to; sheer exposure without comprehension is often useless to acquisition.

6. Lack of comprehensible input delays language acquisition: Here Krashen interprets studies which found out that children of deaf parents are sometimes delayed in language development because of the lack of appropriate comprehensible input.
7. **Teaching methods work according to the extent that they use comprehensible input**: Krashen claims that the Input Hypothesis is consistent with the results of teaching methods comparison experiments which show that approaches that provide substantial quantities of comprehensible input (such as Asher’s Total Physical Response) do much better than the older approaches (e.g. audiolingual method) (Krashen 1982: 30).

Krashen (2003a) summarises some of the more recent studies and asserts that comprehensible input-based methods do very well indeed in comparison with other methods:

> When tests are communicative, students in these classes typically do considerably better than those in traditional grammar-based classes. When grammar tests are used, there is either no difference, or comprehensible input students are slightly better. (Krashen 2003a: 8-9)

8. **Immersion teaching is successful because it provides comprehensible input**: Immersion language teaching is a form of teaching that uses a second language as the medium of instruction in school; again, the factor that guarantees success of these programmes is thought to be the comprehensible input that the students get.

Similar effect is achieved in ‘sheltered subject-matter teaching’ in which non-native university students are taught academic subjects in the target language in circumstances designed to make it comprehensible to them. This is derived from one important concept: subject-matter teaching, when it is comprehensible, is language teaching because it provides comprehensible input (Krashen 2003a: 12).
Criticism of Krashen’s SLA theory

The criticism of Krashen’s theory goes along several lines, mainly its content and its methodological scientific construction. In this section, I will briefly look at the main arguments presented against the Input Hypothesis and the whole second language acquisition theory as advanced by Krashen.

The first area of criticism is directed towards the acquisition/learning distinction. To start with, Krashen does not specify what he means by ‘conscious’ and ‘subconscious’; these terms are not defined (McLaughlin 1987: 21).

Cook (1993: 63) adds that although the acquisition/learning distinction is in some form held by many SLA researchers, the evidence supporting it is hard to find. Thus it remains an assumption, rather than a hypothesis. The same position, namely that the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis is not acceptable because it cannot be tested in empirical investigation, is held by Ellis (1985: 264; 1997: 55).

Linked with the above is the criticism of Krashen’s no-interface position, that is, a position which holds that learning does not become acquisition. For Krashen, the argument that conscious learning does not become unconscious acquisition is based on three claims (Krashen 1982: 83-87):

1. Sometimes there is ‘acquisition’ without ‘learning’ – that is, some individuals have considerable competence in a second language but do not know very many rules consciously.

2. There are cases where ‘learning’ never becomes ‘acquisition’ – that is, a person can know the rule and continue breaking it.

3. No one knows anywhere near all the rules.

McLaughlin (1987: 21) argues that although all these arguments may be true, they do not constitute evidence in support of the claim that learning does not
become acquisition. To this, Gregg (1984: 81) adds that the claim actually runs counter to the belief of many second language learners and quotes examples from his own experience of learning Japanese, concluding that if acquisition means error-free rapid production, ‘not only that I “learned” these rules (...) I “acquired” them’. The ultimate problem here is again that Krashen does not make clear what is meant by ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’ According to Cook (1993: 64), the claims for no-interface between acquired and learnt knowledge ‘seem to have insufficient evidence of their own to outweigh the obvious counter-evidence’. Ellis (1997: 57) is firm in his assertion that a direct interface may occur.

Another problematic area is Krashen’s appeal to the Chomskian Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Krashen (1985: 1) states that acquisition ‘is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language’, and also postulates that adults have access to the same LAD that children use.

Gregg (1984: 80-81) points out that Krashen gives LAD a much wider scope of operation than is normally the case in Chomsky’s theory. Krashen seems to equate LAD with acquisition of any sort but, as Gregg observes, this is certainly not in the spirit of the inventor of the term: Chomsky (1980) argues that the mind is modular, that is, LAD is but one of various ‘mental organs’ that interact with each other and with input data to produce linguistic competence. Conceptual knowledge, real-world knowledge, common sense and pragmatic competence are all necessary for understanding and using language, but they are not part of LAD.

According to Chomsky, LAD is a construct that describes the child’s initial state, before the child receives linguistic input from the environment; LAD is constrained by innate linguistic universals to generate grammars that account for
the input (McLaughlin 1987: 23). It is not clear how this concept of LAD can be applied to adults. Not only are adults not in the initial stage with respect to language but they are also endowed with more fully developed cognitive structures. In McLaughlin's opinion (1987: 24), the claim that adults acquire languages in the same way as children do rests on a faulty understanding of LAD.

Moving on to the Monitor Hypothesis, we encounter criticism of similar nature. Both McLaughlin (1987: 24) and Gregg (1984: 82) reject the view that learning, and consequently Monitor, is only available for use in production and not in comprehension. Krashen provides no evidence for his claim and Gregg again uses examples from his experience with Japanese to show that this is a rather counter-intuitive notion.

As regards the three conditions for the Monitor use, Krashen sometimes does not include 'time' (Krashen 1985), which suggests that this is probably not a decisive criterion. The 'focus on form' condition is questioned by Widdowson when he asks:

Is it not possible to focus on form because you want to make your meaning clear, because you want to be more communicatively effective? Why should focusing on form not be consistent with focusing on the message or on content, which is supposed to preclude the use of the monitor? (Widdowson 1990: 21)

Gregg (1984: 83) also calls this a false distinction because, with a few exceptions (e.g. the third person singular present ending -s), focusing on form is focusing on content.

The 'know the rule' condition is also attacked by Gregg; to show his point, I need to quote him in more detail.

Condition 3, 'know the rule', is of course correct in a sense, but again only in a rather trivial way; it is less restrictive a condition than Krashen suggests, since the language learner's idea of a rule
need not coincide with the linguist’s. If I want to use the verb /asob/ in the past tense, I must say asonda. Assuming that I haven’t ‘acquired’ this form yet, I can make appeal to my conscious ‘learning’, which might supply any of the following ‘rules’: the past tense of /asob/ is asonda; the past tense of verbs ending in /bi/ is /nda/; the past tense of verbs ending in /bi/, /mi/, or /ni/ is /nda/; the past tense of verbs ending in a labial consonant is /nda/, etc. None of these rules is correct, as far as a linguist is concerned; that is, while they are all observationally adequate, none of them attains descriptive, let alone explanatory, adequacy. Still, they all do the job of getting the right sounds uttered. When Krashen reminds us that ‘Linguistics has taught us that the structure of language is extremely complex, and they claim [sic] to have described only a fragment of the best known languages’ (1982: 16), or when he asks rhetorically, ‘How many rules did Jespersen (ever) know, how much of English have scholars such as Noam Chomsky described?’ (1982: 92), he is simply missing the point. (...) Still, these objections to the formulation of the three conditions on use of the Monitor are not necessarily objections to the conditions themselves. What follows from these conditions? According to Krashen, ‘for most people, even university students, it takes a real discrete-point grammar-type test to meet all three conditions for Monitor use ...’ (1982: 18). Which is to say that under normal conditions, the Monitor cannot be used. Since the Monitor is the only way in which conscious knowledge of rules (‘learning’) can be used, conscious knowledge of the rules is of no use as far as acquisition is concerned. But if conscious knowledge of the rules is of no use for acquisition, then it makes no sense to say that there are two ways, ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’, to gain competence in a second language. Therefore, the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis is false. (...) The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis and the Monitor Hypothesis taken together are self-contradictory; since Krashen offers no evidence for either of these hypotheses, it is hard to reconcile the contradiction (...) (Gregg 1984: 83-84)

McLaughlin (1987: 28) also questions Krashen’s concept of ‘rules’ and how it is applied to the individual variation in the Monitor use. He argues that everyone uses rules because speech is a rule-governed process: one would not get very far by throwing words together at random (although the rules that speakers use may be incorrect from a linguist’s point of view). He then asks what it means to say that some people are ‘over’ users and some ‘under’ users of the Monitor. Everyone uses rules; the differences Krashen observed in his case studies seem to
relate to differences in ability to use and articulate the specific grammatical rules that were learnt in the classroom.

The reasons Krashen gives for differences between child and adult language acquisition are challenged too. Cook (1993: 62) states that the dissimilarities are often attributed to the differences in cognitive, social, or physical development; it is not clear that comprehensible input is the crucial factor.

McLaughlin (1987: 38) observes that the 'here-and-nowness' of caretakers' speech to young children should mean that they in fact get more comprehensible input than older learners. He also adds that more explanations for the superiority of older learners are possible, for instance, the availability of superior mnemonic devices, the need to speak about more complex and demanding topics, and the ability to profit from correction and training in grammar.

The Natural Order Hypothesis does not escape criticism either. Krashen's arguments for this hypothesis are based largely on morpheme studies that have themselves been criticised on various grounds (e.g. whether they in fact compared comparable structures) and which by focusing on final form tell us little about acquisitional sequences (McLaughlin 1987: 35). Research indicates that there is individual variation and that there may be several different developmental streams leading to target-like competence, to which Gregg (1984: 85) notes that the possibility of more than one stream in effect vitiates the Natural Order Hypothesis.

McLaughlin (1987: 35) concludes that if the Natural Order Hypothesis is to be accepted, it must be in a weak form, which postulates that some things are learnt before others, but not always. Lacking a theory of why this is the case, such a hypothesis does not tell us much.
In the case of the Input Hypothesis, McLaughlin challenges the evidence that Krashen provides in support of it: he states that although Krashen acknowledges that alternative explanations could not be excluded in every case, he nevertheless argues that the Input Hypothesis has validity because it provides an explanation for all of these phenomena — to which McLaughlin adds:

What Krashen does is not provide ‘evidence’ in any real sense of the term, but simply argues that certain phenomena can be viewed from the perspective of his theory. (McLaughlin 1987: 36)

Both McLaughlin (1987: 39-40) and Cook (1993: 60) criticise the fact that the crucial concept of ‘comprehensible input’ is actually not defined by Krashen and that his explanation is circular: anything that leads to acquisition must be comprehensible input, so comprehensible input is whatever leads to acquisition. The theory lacks an explicit independent specifications of the linguistic forms used in comprehensible input and of the types of situational help that make them comprehensible — its most central aspects.

In addition, the claim that output does not help acquisition is viewed as problematical. Gregg (1984: 80-81) shows the lack of evidence for the claim that speaking does not help acquisition, besides the oft-held belief that practice is indeed helpful to L2 acquisition. He states that

there is no a priori reason to assume that a learner systematically ignores his own utterances. If output is available as input, and if Monitoring can increase the incidence of correct utterances of a given structure, then it would seem that output is being used to further acquisition, and thus that the Monitor can be used for acquisition. (Gregg 1984: 88)

But that would of course run counter to the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis that maintains that ‘learning’ does not become ‘acquisition’.
For instance, Swain (1985) concluded her study of immersion programmes by stating that comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input.

The claim that we acquire through extra-linguistic knowledge (that is, that extra-linguistic knowledge helps us decode structures at \( i + 1 \) level) is also questioned by Gregg:

I find it difficult to imagine extra-linguistic information that would enable one to ‘acquire’ the third person singular -s, or yes/no questions, or indirect object placement, or passivization. Of course one may understand a given utterance without understanding all of the structures of the input; indeed, this happens all the time. But it by no means follows from this that one has acquired the unknown structure. (Gregg 1984: 88)

Furthermore, Gregg (1984: 89-90) and McLaughlin (1987: 43-45) claim that no one has shown that caretaker speech makes any significant contribution toward the acquisition of grammar by a child, and no one has shown that the existence of caretaker speech has any bearing whatsoever on second language acquisition. Cook (1993: 61) states that there is no necessary cause-and-effect relationship between special speech and effective learning.

White (1987: 102) questions the all-powerful concept of simplified speech by arguing that there are many complex properties of language that do not show up in simple sentences. By talking to learners only in simple sentences, one is depriving them of input which is crucial.

She also argues for the value of incomprehensible input as a crucial source of evidence in SLA, pointing to a more general problem – the non-presence of negative evidence in the input – by giving the following example:

For example, the English dative alternation involves many verbs which have two possible complements, such as give:

1a. John gave some money to the hospital.
1b. John gave the hospital some money. There are also many other words, of similar meaning, which allow only one of the two complements.

2a. John donated some money to the hospital.
2b. *John donated the hospital some money.

[The] point is that if learners made the assumptions that forms like (2b) are possible, there would be nothing in the input to show them that they are mistaken. (White 1987: 104)

Gregg finishes his examination of the Input Hypothesis by this attack:

If Krashen wishes to argue that acquisition requires comprehensible input, no one could object. But he seems to be saying something more specific: that for children learning their first language or adults learning a second language, acquisition is caused by understanding the input. In the absence of any evidence supporting this claim, and in the absence of any theory explaining how we proceed from understanding to acquisition, the Input Hypothesis must be rejected. As it stands, the Input Hypothesis has no more explanatory power than Molière’s doctor’s explanation that opium makes one sleepy by virtue of its dormitive powers. (Gregg 1984: 90)

Finally, let us look at the Affective Filter Hypothesis. McLaughlin (1987: 52-53) states that although there is a general agreement that affective factors play a critical role in second language learning, it is questionable whether it is necessary to postulate an affective filter to explain the research findings in this field. Krashen would need to specify which affective variables, singly or in what combinations, and at what levels, serve to ‘raise the filter’ (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991: 247).

One problem is that if the Affective Filter is responsible for incomplete mastery of a second language, it is necessary to explain why the Filter does not work for children (Gregg 1984: 92). It is rather strange when we remember that Krashen does not allow for any differences in LAD between children and adults. Children do have affect but all children acquire their first language.

Why would the Affective Filter not let in only certain features, such the third personal singular -s? How does it determine what parts of language to let in?
How does it recognise different parts of language? That would mean that the Filter has access to some kind of grammatical theory, but that is precluded by Krashen's model because the Affective Filter is independent of LAD (Gregg 1984: 94).

Cook (1993: 58) observes that Krashen is concerned with the properties of the input, rather than with the processes of the mind, thus leaving the process of acquisition as mysterious as ever.

To summarise this section, Cook (1993: 65), Gregg (1984: 94-95), McLaughlin (1987: 55-58), Gass & Selinker (1994: 148-151), Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991: 245-249) conclude that there are serious flaws in Krashen's second language acquisition theory: undefined or ill-defined terms, little direct evidence for any of the hypotheses (research Krashen uses in support of his theory was largely conducted with different aims), the hypotheses are linked through chain of inferences and are not falsifiable, and finally any theory of second language acquisition must include some sort of linguistic theory. Nevertheless, they also stress that this is not to say that Krashen is wrong in his prescriptions about language teaching.

Although I agree with a number of points raised by Krashen's critics that were discussed above (e.g. undefined terms, lack of evidence, the problem of falsifiability), I think, nevertheless, that his theory of second language acquisition is essentially correct.

Falsifiability - the possibility of proving that a particular claim is not true - is, following Popper (1959), one of the crucial criteria for a hypothesis to be termed 'scientific'.
While it is probably up to cognitive psychologists to prove whether there are indeed two forms of language knowledge (acquisition and learning) or whether learning can become acquisition (no-interface versus interface theories), while the use of the Monitor, especially as regards its employment in comprehension as well as the conditions required for its activation, may be controversial and while the natural order of acquisition in terms of a given sequence may be questioned on the grounds of individual variation, the general assertion – that for successful acquisition of a second language one needs to receive enough of roughly-tuned comprehensible input and be 'switched on' to let it in (influence of affective variables regardless of whether they be termed 'Affective Filter' or not) – is, in my view, valid.

In my opinion, the main issue open to question is Krashen's claim that learners' output is not important for successful second language acquisition, a claim that is disputed by many second language researchers (see e.g. Ritchie & Bhatia 1996 for an overview of the theories that stress the importance of learners' output) and that, as Gregg noted (see above), runs counter to the intuition of many second language learners who believe that speaking practice is necessary for language acquisition to take place.

This question – whether it is possible to acquire a second language when there is enough comprehensible input but when one does not produce any significant output - is what I set out to explore in my study.
Methodological issues

Aim of the study

Having presented both Krashen’s theory and its criticism, I want to make clear what I intended to achieve in this study. To begin with, it must be stated that I did not mean to enter the discussion between Krashen and his critics to decide who is right. My aim was not to come up with a definite conclusion to the problems associated with the theory.

On the contrary, my aim was to examine a broad claim, following Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, that it is possible to acquire language when there is enough comprehensible input available and that learner’s output is not a significant factor in that.

The study was designed to suit this purpose then: the research situation met the criteria stated above (the subject received comprehensible input but produced very little output) and I investigated whether that would lead to any progress in the subject’s proficiency in the second language being acquired.

Measures for establishing progress

I decided to establish the subject’s progress (if any) over the period of study by using several criteria in order to get a more plastic picture of the situation than if I had used just a single method.

I used my observations to compare his ability to handle various situations where communication was required at the beginning and at the end of the study. This included a list of tasks he was able to accomplish successfully at the end of the study but that had been problematic (or even unthinkable, e.g. a job interview) at the beginning.
A major factor was also his perceptions about what he could actually do using the language and his confidence to approach unknown tasks.

As a significant part, probably the most significant, of his input was in the form of reading, I also used his self-reports on how he understood the texts and if he felt there was any progress in his comprehension of the works.

Finally, a more objective tool was employed: I compared the scores he achieved in the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (see below for more information about this test) in the course of this study.

**Methodology**

The aim of this study was to observe, in the widest sense of the word, the subject (referred to as R) in a situation in which he received a great amount of comprehensible input but at the same time produced minimum output, and see what effect this would have on his acquisition of English. As explained earlier, Krashen predicts that this is an ideal situation which, because it meets the criteria set by his theory, should lead to language acquisition.

The methodology was suited to the purpose of my research: I used various techniques to have the widest possible framework, so that I would be able to include all relevant information. It is an advantage of a case study approach that it does not claim any particular methods of data collection (Merriam 1988: 10).

I used a methodology that is qualitative in nature (as opposed to quantitative methodology); this provides a holistic description and analysis of a single instance (Yin 2003: 2).
Case studies are particularistic in that they focus on a specific situation or phenomenon; they are descriptive; and they are heuristic—that is, they offer insights into the phenomenon under study. (...) Qualitative inquiry is inductive—focusing on process, understanding, and interpretation—rather than deductive and experimental. (Merriam 1988: 21)

Yin (2003) establishes four criteria for judging the quality of a research design. A case study must have construct validity: this should be ensured by using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and having key informants review the draft of the case study.

Another criterion is the internal validity of the study: the researcher should address rival explanations when making inferences and use logical models when making them.

A common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalisations and therefore lack external validity: Yin (2003: 37) comments that such critics contrast case study and survey research, which relies on statistical generalisation, whereas case studies rely on analytical generalisation linking a case study to a theory.

The final criterion is reliability: the objective is to be sure that if the same case study was conducted again, the same findings and conclusions would be arrived at. It is important to realise that 'the emphasis is on doing the same case over again, not on “replicating” the results of one case by doing another case study' (Yin 2003: 37). This reliability can be ensured by careful documentation and developing a case study database.

Although a case study does not allow for generalisations in the statistical sense (as mentioned above), it is nonetheless a useful approach because, if it is conducted properly and if it provides sufficient details, it has a high potential of 'relatability', that is, researchers or practitioners in a similar situation may find
the case study relevant to the problem they are dealing with if they are provided with sufficient data that will help them decide if the two situations are identical or similar.

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 10-14) provide an alternative to the traditional qualitative/quantitative distinction: they talk about longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. A longitudinal approach (which they identify with a case study) in the field of second language acquisition research involves observing the development of the linguistic performance, usually of one subject, over a span of time. A cross-sectional approach studies the linguistic performance of a large number of subjects; the data are usually elicited and collected at only one session. Using this terminology, my study is longitudinal.

As I did not have a set of criteria to manipulate and observe the outcome, as would be the case with experimental studies, I decided to choose the case study approach to the problem because its width allowed me to include all phenomena and ‘let the situation decide’ if they were relevant to my study or not. This is in my view better than choosing the criteria a priori because there is a danger that one chooses those that are not relevant to what one wants to discover.

Methods

I used a range of methods for collecting data for my study, a strategy called triangulation: this means that dissimilar methods are combined to study the same unit, the reason behind this strategy being that

[T]he flaws of one method are often strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies. (Denzin [1970: 308] quoted in Merriam 1988: 69)
Interviews

Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information (Merriam 1988; Yin 2003). Unlike in surveys, the interviews are guided conversations rather than structured queries (Yin 2003: 89). For me, it meant both following my line of inquiry and asking the actual questions in an unbiased manner, not forcing the subject to adopt a particular position and maintain a friendly and non-threatening environment.

I used mainly open-ended questions rather than those requiring straightforward yes/no answers. The interviews had a conversational format and the questions I asked were aimed at both objective facts and the subject's opinions.

Primarily, I used the interviews to elicit R's views and reactions to the situations where he had to use English. This offered subjective insights into his perceptions.

The interviews were recorded, with the consent of the subject, so that I could go back to a particular piece of information that came up in an interview and which was only later discovered to be relevant to the research topic.

A disadvantage of interviews is that, as they are verbal reports, they are subject to bias, poor recall and poor or inaccurate articulation. However, this was not a major problem as this was not the only method used and the data were supplemented from other sources as well.

Finally, I need to state that the interviews were conducted in Czech (English was used for examples of specific utterances) so that the subject would be able to express all potentially relevant information, not being limited by his level of English.
Self-reports
Self-reports largely occurred during interviews. They were especially important for revealing information about his past experience with English, to which I did not have any other access. I also asked the subject regularly for self-evaluation of the progress he made in English or how successfully he felt he had handled a specific situation requiring him to use English.

Direct-observation and participant-observation
I observed the subject on a number of occasions to be able to judge his level of proficiency in English. These included family situations, shopping or job seeking.

I used both direct observation and participant-observation techniques. These provide detailed and comprehensive description of the subject’s behaviour (Lars-Freeman & Long 1991: 16). They are especially useful as the scope of the researcher’s perspectives is not restricted: I could look for patterns in naturally occurring data.

Direct observations involved unobtrusive shadowing of the subject in performing his daily tasks (e.g. shopping, interaction within the family, and later also looking for a job). Observation is helpful because an outsider will notice things that are routine for the participants, for this reason they may fail to produce them in self-reports. As Merriam (1988: 91) reminds us, it is important to note not only what happened but also what did not happen, ‘especially if it ought to have happened’.

In the situations named above, I also sometimes acted as a participant, for instance, repairing communication breakdowns when asked to or stimulating the situations so that the subject had to respond to it, which enlarged my bank of data. I think this is invaluable in giving the researcher an insider’s perspective on the situation; it also gave me certain control of the situations so that they could be
modelled to suit the needs of the study. At the same time, I was aware of the major problem associated with participant-observation, the potential bias that could be produced by the researcher being personally involved in the situation studied (Yin 2003: 94).

I recorded my observations by taking detailed notes immediately afterwards; it was not possible to take notes during the observations because that would be disruptive to the situations observed and would impede their naturalness.

**Documentation**
During my research I collected a variety of documents (by this I mean any written material accessible for re-examination) from which I drew some of my data. The most important use of documents is ‘to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources’ (Yin 2003: 87), although it must be noted that the documents may not always be accurate or unbiased.

Documents I gathered and analysed during the course of this study were diverse. I worked with the transcripts of the various recordings made during interviews and observation notes that I was taking throughout the whole period.

Further, I asked the subject to keep a list of books that he had read and films he had watched so that I could go through the books and watch the films to get an idea of what kind of input he had been exposed to. For the same purpose, I also kept radio programmes of the stations he had listened to. All this information was contained in a simple diary the subject was asked to keep, in which he noted down times and number of hours of his various English input sources during a day (e.g. name of a radio station and number of hours he listened to it).
I also examined other examples of the language he had to engage with actively in various official documents, such as job application forms or Home Office forms.

The subject’s self-report notes were used mainly as his retrospective account of what kind of experience he had with English prior to the beginning of this study.

Finally, I also analysed the results achieved in language tests (PET) completed by the subject to get objective, comparable data on the progress he had made.

All the data were gathered with a two-fold purpose in mind: first, they were records of what happened, subject’s opinions, my observations etc., and second, those in English, besides being used for their content, were also a source of linguistic data, a databank of target language forms used by the subject.
Subject

General information

The subject of this study is R, a twenty-three year old male. His mother tongue is Czech, a Slavic language. He went through standard education attending primary and secondary schools (Secondary Business School). Then he went on to study at university and was awarded a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Religious Studies. After this, he decided to take a year off to improve his English and went as an au-pair to Britain. He plans to continue his studies at a master's level when he returns to the Czech Republic.

Besides English (see below), he also learnt German for four years at secondary school and attended a French evening course for a year during his university studies, but he describes his knowledge of both German and French as 'really elementary'.

As a part of his university curriculum requirements, he also attended classes of Old Greek and Old Hebrew that were aimed at reading skills and passive knowledge of these languages.

Although there are not entirely objective measures to define psychological factors (Schmidt 1983: 142), I will try to provide some observations of his personality. He is a rather introvert person but is highly perceptive of the feelings and thoughts of others around him. At the beginning of the study, he was worried about making mistakes in English and did not want to take 'unnecessary risks' by engaging in communication when he did not have to. On the other hand, he did not appear to have been affected by a culture shock (Schmidt 1983: 143) of suddenly finding himself living in a foreign country, without family or friends.
As for his motivation to learn English, it seems that the instrumental motivation played a prominent part as he wanted to improve his English mainly in order to be able to read academic books related to the areas of his interest (Philosophy and Religious Studies) in the language.

**Experience with English prior to the study**

It is important to include information about the subject’s experience with English before he arrived in Britain as it provides useful insights into his level of proficiency prior to the study. This section is largely based on his self-reported data but I also drew on my experience with English classes of similar nature, having been educated in the same school system. I am also familiar with the textbooks he mentioned.

I looked at the formal English instruction that he received as a part of his education within the state system (primary, secondary, tertiary) and at the contact he had with English outside the formal classes that may have influenced his proficiency in English.

*Formal instruction*

R started learning English at the age of ten as a part of compulsory language classes in the fifth grade of primary school. The English language classes were held three times a week in the form of forty-five-minute lessons. The language of instruction was generally Czech and the textbooks used were also Czech.

The teaching methodology was based on the traditional grammar-translation approach with virtually no communicative activities requiring pupils to produce the target language. Also missing was any training in listening skills. Nor was there enough of comprehensible input, for example, in the form of graded reading materials. These English language classes continued in the same nature for
another three years until he reached the end of the compulsory primary education in the eighth grade, at the age of fourteen.

After primary school, he continued with English lessons at secondary school; this again lasted for four years. The classes were given four times a week in forty-five-minute lessons. The English teaching itself continued in much the same form as before. Again, the instruction was predominantly in Czech and the textbooks used were Angličtina pro jazykové školy I and II; teaching methods were based on the grammar-translation approach. A rare exception to this was a substituting teacher who used Headway Elementary for a short period of three months.

As R attended a secondary business school, some of the vocabulary studied was business but otherwise General English was taught throughout. At the end of the four-year period, he sat the Czech school-leaving examination (maturita) in English.

His final grades in English at both primary and secondary school, as well as in the maturita, were always A’s.

Immediately after finishing business school (there was no ‘gap year’), he went on to study at university level where he enrolled in Philosophy and Religious Studies bachelor’s programme. A foreign language was a part of the university requirements for students who did not have a foreign language as one of their specialisations and he took a one-year once-a-week English course offered by the university. There for the first time he encountered a form of teaching that could generally be called ‘communicative approach’, along with a focus on more advanced aspects of grammar. Training was also given in basic academic English skills, such as social studies vocabulary and reading strategies.
He never attended any special extra-curricular courses, such as in a language school, that would provide any further instruction in English in addition to his school lessons.

*English outside school*

R also encountered English outside the formal classes, for the most part spontaneously in the form of subtitled films, songs and computer games. A substantial part of this was formed by *Magic: The Gathering*, a fantasy card game which requires players to understand definitions on cards that are in English; as the game is usually played with several hundreds of cards, this was not a case of simply memorising the content of a few cards. He was engaged in this activity for several hours a week between the ages of twelve and eighteen and thus it had some relevance to his English.

When he started to attend university, he began to read academic texts in English but this did not form a substantial part of his study programme: during the four years of his study at bachelor's level he read about three English books in the field of Religious Studies.
Situation under research

Level of English at the beginning of the study

I will first provide a description of R’s English upon the arrival in Britain. As mentioned in the previous section, he had studied English for several years before this. However, the instruction that he had received was largely not aimed at developing communicative competence in the language: he was able to ‘recite’ various grammatical rules but was not able to put them to practice in the actual situations in which they were required. This had a negative effect on his confidence to use English: his self-assessment was ‘My English is very poor’.

At the beginning of the study, R’s level of English could be described as ‘pre-intermediate’ in terms of grammar and vocabulary or reading, but listening and speaking skills were rather ‘elementary’.

Besides my observations that I used to evaluate his level of proficiency, I also made use of Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET) to gain more objective information. The results of the tests concurred with my evaluation: he generally performed relatively well on the tasks that were directly linked to a specific grammatical or vocabulary item but scored very low on skills questions, particularly listening and speaking.

Scores on PET

A detailed description of the test will follow in the final section of this study; here I will provide only a summary of R’s results. At the beginning of the study, the subject completed four PET tests (PET 1).

The results of the four tests were consistent: on average he scored 50% on each. As mentioned above, the weak areas were especially listening and speaking.
(going as low as 30%). In a real exam situation, his grade would be a Fail (see below for the PET grading system).

**Input and use of English during the period of the study**

Let me now describe the situation under research. The research was conducted between September 2003 and May 2004. During that period, R was an au-pair in north-west England, near Leeds. In the family, the father was English and the mother was Czech; they had two daughters, two and three years old.

As the parents wanted the children to be bilingual, they were looking for a Czech au-pair, which could compensate for the prevailing English influence that the children were surrounded by. This was also welcomed by R who did not feel confident enough to stay with an ‘English-only’ family because of what he described as a poor command of English.

R established a good relationship with the family and got on very well with them. He was required to use only Czech with the children and the mother was also happy to use Czech with him. The only English he had to speak in the family was with the father but that was not very often as the father spent several days each week away from home on business trips. His general domestic duties then did not require him to use English at all. It is safe to state that, in general, he did not have to produce any significant amount of English output.

On the other hand, he received a great amount of input, most of which was comprehensible, which made him an ideal subject for this study. As stated above, there was a limited input from the family. Most of his input came in the form of reading books, listening to the radio and watching films.

As ‘comprehensible input’ is not defined specifically by Krashen (see above), for example, by particular linguistic features that it has to contain, the
comprehensibility of R’s input was established mainly by the subject’s self-reports, that is, what he perceived as comprehensible.

There is of course the problem that one may genuinely believe that he or she understands something when it is not the case. To reduce the possibility of this, I also used my observations to see whether he understood the input by asking comprehension check questions or by observing whether he did what he was asked to do.

Besides the comprehensibility of the input, it was also important that it was provided, again as reported by the subject, in low-anxiety situations; this should ensure a low Affective Filter. According to Krashen, this is a necessary condition for the input to reach the language acquisition device and become intake.

It is also important to note that during this study the subject did not receive any formal teaching in English: he did not attend language courses nor did any self-instructed grammar or vocabulary study. Occasionally, he would use a dictionary to help him with reading.

Reading
The books he read could be divided into two groups. The first group (Table 3) was formed by leisure reading, mostly various kinds of sci-fi and fantasy works. I include the number of pages read in order to give a clear picture of the amount of the reading he did.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norman Mailer</td>
<td>The Naked and the Dead</td>
<td>721 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Asimov</td>
<td>I, Robot</td>
<td>249 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Coelho</td>
<td>The Valkyries</td>
<td>246 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Light Fantastic</td>
<td>285 p.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Books read - fiction
In the second group (Table 4), there were books dealing with the subjects of Religious Studies or Philosophy, areas that he is interested in. It is important to stress that these books were also a form of pleasure reading, rather than something that he had to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry Chadwick</td>
<td>The Church in Ancient Society (170 p.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.J. Kidd</td>
<td>A History of the Church (80 p.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert V. Sellers</td>
<td>Two Ancient Christologies (264 p.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertrand Russell</td>
<td>History of Western Philosophy (842 p.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James F. Bethune-Baker</td>
<td>Nestorius and His Teaching (232 p.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedrich Loofs</td>
<td>Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine (132 p.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Books read - academic

**Listening**
As for the listening skills, he regularly listened to two radio stations for several hours every day. One of these was BBC Radio Five Life which is characterised by life discussions on various current social and political issues, parliamentary debates, news and sports coverage, including live football, rugby, cricket and tennis matches.

The other station that the subject regularly listened to was Radio Aire (named after the river running through Leeds). This is a local Leeds-based commercial radio station, mainly playing contemporary pop music and broadcasting local news.

**Films**
A substantial part of the input was also provided by various English-language films. The subject watched them several times a week (at least twice a week, but generally five times a week). At first, he watched them with English subtitles but soon became confident enough to watch them without this support.
Results

The final evaluation of the progress R made throughout the nine-month period of his stay in Britain was based on the data gathered through the methods specified in the methodology section: interviews, self-reports, observations and documentation.

The evaluation based on the tasks he was able to perform by the end of this study was especially revealing of the subject’s progress in English. As the Czech Republic joined the European Union on May 1, 2004, the Czech nationals gained the right to work in Britain. R decided to take up a regular job, a situation which posed him with new challenges – filling in application forms, handling job interviews, arranging appointments over the telephone. All that was done successfully and he got his first job as a hotel porter, which, among other duties, included interaction with hotel guests.

Not only was he objectively able to perform all these tasks well but it was also interesting to watch his confidence in using English grow.

Interviews and self-reports

I will analyse the data from interviews and self-reports in the same section because, as I stated in the methodology section, the self-reports largely occurred during the interviews. Also, let me restate that the interviews were conducted in Czech so that the subject would not be limited by his level of English; English was used to provide examples of specific language use.

One area of my investigation in the interviews dealt with the subject’s attitude to ‘volunteering’ to speak, when he was not forced to, because of his feelings of insecurity, should he make a mistake in his performance (this was also an issue,
of course, when he was invited to speak, for instance, when asked a direct question to which he had to respond).

At the beginning of the study, he reported that he avoided every possible occasion where he would have to speak. For example, he would rather go shopping to a supermarket (where he could find himself what he wanted to buy) that was further away than go to a local shop where he would have to speak to a shop assistant directly and ask for things over the counter.

Also, when he was asked by somebody, for example, stopped in the street and asked for directions, he would not let the person finish and protect himself from any further communication by 'sorry, I don't understand', even though he reported he did understand the people to a large extent. All this because he did not want to appear 'stupid' and because he thought that his English 'was not good enough'.

I think the examples given above demonstrate his general attitude to using English at the beginning of the study. Slowly, however, in the course of the study he started to feel differently about these issues. Both the interviews and the self-reports made clear that he gradually dropped the 'I don't understand' technique and genuinely tried to negotiate meaning. He also stopped avoiding speaking situations and, for instance, did not plan his duties according to the amount of speaking involved (to return to the supermarket example, he indeed started to do small family shopping in the local shop).

The interviews also showed how the extent to which he understood his main forms of input (books, films, radio) grew at a surprising rate. Although he reported that he had been able to understand the gist of the input already at the beginning of the study, the rapid growth in his comprehension was really
remarkable. Within two months of his arrival in Britain, he reported that he could understand even insignificant details.

**Observations**

I observed the subject continuously throughout the research period, both as a neutral observer and as a participant in various situations. This allowed me to see the progress he was making in his communicative competence in the course of this study.

I could observe how at the beginning of the study, R avoided any unnecessary communication. For instance, the following situation occurred: R and I were walking through Leeds city centre when a stranger (A) stopped us and asked for directions to a Morrisons supermarket.

A: Hi, sorry, do you know how to get to the Morrisons?
R: I'm sorry, I don't know.

Although, as I asked him, R understood the question and knew how to get to the supermarket, he chose to reply with 'no' so that he would not have to continue the conversation and give the actual directions. When I asked him whether he would be able to give the directions, he in fact said 'yes'!

The above example is in sharp contrast with the situation that I could observe towards the end of the study. We were in an Internet cafe when one of the other customers (A) stopped at our table and asked:

A: Sorry, do you know where the loo is?
R: Loo?
A: [recognising that R is a foreigner] The toilet?
R: [pointing] Just through that door, on the right.
Instead of taking the chance to end the interaction (as I think would have been the case a few months earlier), not knowing what the word ‘loo’ meant, he continued the interaction as he would have done in his mother tongue.

To illustrate the complete move from avoiding having to speak through speaking when invited to volunteering to speak, let me quote one more example. A few weeks after the situation described above, we were in the same Internet cafe. R noticed two people sitting at a table next to us who were trying to insert a floppy disk into their computer’s ZIP drive. R went to them and explained why they were having problems and directed them to another computer that had a floppy disk drive.

At the end of the study, I also had an opportunity to observe the subject in a formal situation: his interview for National Insurance number, a number for tax purposes that one has to obtain to be able to work in Britain legally. I was asked to come with him in case he needed an interpreter but throughout the whole interview he did not require any help. He was able to cope with the situation all by himself and, when I asked him afterwards, he reported that he had understood the interviewing officer without any problems.

Documentation
The data in this section come mainly from the subject’s performance on the PET tests that he completed at the end of the research period but I also examined other written documentation, such as various job application forms.

While at the beginning of the study, R did not even consider looking for a job, at the end of the study he was able to fill in application forms so well that they won him several job interviews and, subsequently, job offers. The kind of information (and therefore the kind of language necessary for it) that he had to fill
in ranged from relatively simple (e.g. name, address, date and place of birth) to more difficult – he had to provide a summary of his education and previous work experience in a curriculum vitae style as well as statements about why he would be a suitable person for a particular job.

A very important written source of my data was a simple diary that the subject was asked to keep on a daily basis. This served mainly as a record of what kind of input the subject had (e.g. a name of a book he read, its author and number of pages) and what the amount of the input was (e.g. how many hours a day he spent reading a particular book). The subject’s input on an average day can thus be reconstructed using the information provided by the diary: listening to the radio – five hours, watching films – two hours, and reading books – two hours.

**Performance on the PET test**

Compared to his results at the beginning of the study, the results of the PET tests at the end of the study were quite surprising. R had to complete six tests (PET 2, PET 3); his average score was 98%. His results on the listening and speaking papers of the tests, listening being 100% and speaking 85%, were especially significant. These results would mean a Pass with Merit grade in a real exam; it is interesting to contrast this with the Fail grade he would have received at the beginning of the study.

**Description of the test**

The Preliminary English Test (PET) is a part of the Cambridge main suite examinations of English for Speakers of Other Languages. It is between the Key English Test and the First Certificate in English.
PET is designed to ensure that it reflects the use of language in real life. It corresponds closely to an active and communicative approach to learning English, without neglecting the need for clarity and accuracy (PET Handbook 2004: 4).

The test was introduced in the late 1970s and examines competence in reading, writing, listening and speaking. The revised version of the test (the one that I used) was introduced for the examinations from March 2004 on.

The PET is at level B1 of the Common European Framework. A more detailed description of the level is provided below. The description is very useful for my purpose here as my subject achieved the grade Pass with Merit in this mock examination; so the description of a successful PET candidate fits the subject well. In some respects, he indeed exceeds the requirements; I will return to this later.

Structure of the test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAPER</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TIMING</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>TEST FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>Reading/Writing</td>
<td>1 hour 30 minutes</td>
<td>Reading: Five parts which test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. Writing: Three parts which test a range of writing skills.</td>
<td>Assessment of candidate's ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of candidate's ability to produce straightforward written English, ranging from producing variations on simple sentences to pieces of continuous text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>30 minutes (approx.)</td>
<td>Four parts ranging from short exchanges to longer dialogues and monologues.</td>
<td>Assessment of candidate's ability to understand dialogues and monologues in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 3</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>10-12 mins per pair of candidates</td>
<td>Four parts: In Part 1, candidates interact with an examiner; In Parts 2 and 4 they interact with another candidate; In Part 3, they have an extended individual long turn.</td>
<td>Assessment of candidate's ability to express themselves in order to carry out functions at Threshold level. To ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses. To talk freely on matters of personal interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Overview of the PET structure (Adapted from PET Handbook 2004)
For the speaking paper parts 2 and 4, I both set the tasks and guided the discussion while at the same time playing the part of another candidate. For this purpose I modified my speech: I did not use overcomplex sentences or advanced grammatical structures (e.g. third conditional), I used neutral vocabulary (neither too formal nor informal) and in terms of pronunciation I limited the number of assimilations.

**Marking and grading**

The final mark is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers. There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers.

The passing grades are:

- **Pass with Merit** – corresponds to approximately 85% of the total marks
- **Pass** – corresponds to approximately 70% of the total marks

The failing grades are:

- **Narrow Fail** – indicates that a candidate was within 5% of the Pass boundary
- **Fail**

*Subject’s level of English at the end of the study as specified by PET*

As mentioned above, I here used the description of the level of a successful candidate provided by the *PET Handbook* (2004) as R would very likely be a successful PET candidate in a real test situation.

According to the *PET Handbook* (2004), the learner at this level should be able to cope linguistically in a range of everyday situations that require a largely predictable use of language, both with native and non-native speakers of English.
The text types that R can successfully handle include

street signs and public notices, product packaging, forms, posters, brochures, city guides and instructions on how to do things, as well as informal letters and newspaper and magazine texts such as articles, features and weather forecasts. (*PET Handbook* 2004: 3)

The listening texts that R can understand include

announcements made at railway stations and airports, traffic information given on the radio, public announcements made at sporting events or pop concerts and instructions given by police or customs officials. (*PET Handbook* 2004: 3)

It is important to stress that R is able to not only pick out facts, but also to understand opinions, attitudes, moods and wishes.

In the context of work, he can

state requirements within [his] job area, and ask questions of a fact-finding nature. In a meeting, [he] can take part in a discussion which involves the exchange of factual information or receiving instructions, but [he] may have difficulty dealing with anything unpredictable or unfamiliar. (*PET Handbook* 2004: 3)

As far as telephone calls are concerned, predictability is also important:

the learner can receive and pass on messages, as long as routine matters are involved. They can write simple personal letters (...) in a more or less standard format. (*PET Handbook* 2004: 3)

As tested by PET, R is familiar with lexical items normally occurring in the everyday vocabulary of native-speakers using English today and knows the lexis appropriate to his personal requirements, e.g. nationality, hobbies, likes and dislikes.

*Language specifications*

The language specifications provided by the *PET Handbook* (2004; see Appendix) serve as a checklist for what R can now successfully do in English. Not only was he able to use the forms specified in the tests but he was also able to employ them in real-life situations that I observed.
R definitely exceeds the PET specifications in reading skills in that he is able to read complex (in terms of vocabulary, syntax and semantics) academic texts. This may be partly due to the fact that he is a good and efficient reader in his mother tongue.

Also as seen above, he was reading extensively during the period of study which had two effects: it helped him improve his reading skills further and it provided a great amount of comprehensible input in low-anxiety situations.

**Use of the Monitor**

To apply the Monitor Hypothesis to R, he would be best characterised as a Monitor over-user at the beginning of the study. Both my observations and his self-reports confirmed that his speech was hesitant and slow as he was searching for the consciously learnt rules that he could apply to what he wanted to say and was concerned with correctness all the time. This was probably the result of the formal grammar-based instruction that he had received in English as Krashen observes that:

> Those trained only in foreign language classrooms, where the emphasis was on conscious grammar, may develop extensive formal knowledge of the target language, with very little acquisition, and consequently have no choice but to be overusers. (Krashen 1981: 16)

As both his acquired competence of the target language and his confidence in using it was growing, he more and more resembled the optimal Monitor user. He used conscious self-correction when he had enough time to apply the learnt knowledge (e.g. when filling in job application forms) but reported to be far less 'obsessed' with correctness in rapid speech production and rather concentrated on
getting the meaning across, as a consequence his speech also became more fluent, though obviously not always error-free.

**Level of the Affective Filter**

As the great majority of R's input was provided by reading for pleasure, listening to the radio and watching films, that is activities which he was in control of and which he deliberately chose to do (not something that was forced upon him), he reported that he did not experience any anxiety and generally felt relaxed when receiving this input.

Although it is hard to establish the level of the Affective Filter by objective measures, the subject's self-reports imply a low Affective Filter, which, as Krashen's theory predicts, should facilitate the transformation of input into intake.

To interpret the research findings and to return to the research question, I can assert that the subject of my study, who during the period under research received a great amount of comprehensible input and who, on the other hand, produced only insignificant amount of output, made progress in his acquisition of a second language, English.

This means that the part of Krashen's Input Hypothesis which claims that output is not necessary for language acquisition was in this case confirmed.

Further research would be needed to establish whether the rate of acquisition would have been significantly improved if the output variable had been altered, that is, if output had been required of the subject.
Conclusion

In my dissertation, I investigated Stephen Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, a hypothesis that states that the comprehensible input learners of a second language receive is a sufficient condition for language acquisition to take place and that the output learners produce does not play any significant role in that. I tested this claim using a case study approach, with R, a male Czech adult acquiring English. He was an ideal subject for this study as he received a great amount of comprehensible input but performed hardly any output.

The dissertation has the following structure: I first examined Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition that is made up of several interlinked hypotheses; among these the Input Hypothesis occupies a central position. At the same time, I also looked at the points for which the theory has been criticised by others working in the field of applied linguistics.

I then specified the aim of my research and introduced the methodology that I used to achieve it. I also presented the subject of the study, his level of English prior to the study and the situation to be explored.

The final section established that R indeed made considerable progress in English over the nine months I was observing him. I believe that the case study approach allowed me to cater for all possible variables that could have influenced this result.

To sum up the research findings, the broad claim that comprehensible input alone leads to language acquisition was proved valid in this case. As I stated earlier, my aim was not to construct a new theory or provide a comprehensive
critique of Krashen's. I intended to see if it was possible to acquire language without having to produce it on regular and extensive basis. To this, I can only conclude that it is indeed possible because at least one person, my subject, managed to do so.
Works Cited


Appendix

**PET language specifications** (*PET Handbook 2004*)

1. Inventory of functions, notions and communicative tasks

- greeting people and responding to greetings (in person and on the phone)
- introducing oneself and other people
- asking for and giving personal details: (full) name, age, address, names of relatives and friends, occupation, etc.
- understanding and completing forms giving personal details
- understanding and writing letters giving personal details
- describing education, qualifications and skills
- describing people (personal appearance, qualities)
- asking and answering questions about personal possessions
- asking for repetition and clarification
- re-stating what has been said
- checking on meaning and intention
- helping others to express their ideas
- interrupting a conversation
- starting a new topic
- changing the topic
- resuming or continuing the topic
- asking for and giving the spelling and meaning of words
- counting and using numbers
- asking and telling people the time, day and/or date
- asking for and giving information about routines and habits
• understanding and writing diaries and letters giving information about everyday activities

• talking about past events and states in the past, recent activities and completed actions

• understanding and producing simple narratives

• reporting what people say

• talking about future or imaginary situations

• talking about future plans or intentions

• making predictions

• identifying and describing accommodation (houses, flats, rooms, furniture, etc.)

• buying and selling things (costs, measurements and amounts)

• talking about food and ordering meals

• talking about weather

• talking about one's health

• following and giving simple instructions

• understanding simple signs and notices

• asking the way and giving directions

• asking for and giving travel information

• asking for and giving simple information about places

• identifying and describing simple objects (shape, size, weight, colour, purpose or use, etc.)

• making comparisons and expressing degrees of difference

• talking about how to operate things

• describing simple processes
- expressing purpose, cause and result, and giving reasons
- drawing simple conclusions and making recommendations
- making and granting/refusing simple requests
- making and responding to offers and suggestions
- expressing and responding to thanks
- giving and responding to invitations
- giving advice
- giving warnings and prohibitions
- persuading and asking/telling people to do something
- expressing obligation and lack of obligation
- asking and giving/refusing permission to do something
- making and responding to apologies and excuses
- expressing agreement and disagreement, and contradicting people
- paying compliments
- criticising and complaining
- sympathising
- expressing preferences, likes and dislikes (especially about hobbies and leisure activities)
- talking about physical and emotional feelings
- expressing opinions and making choices
- expressing needs and wants
- expressing (in)ability in the present and in the past
- talking about (im)probability and (im)possibility
- expressing degrees of certainty and doubt
2. Inventory of grammatical areas

**Verbs**

regular and irregular forms

**Modals**

- *can* (ability; requests; permission)
- *could* (ability; possibility; polite requests)
- *would* (polite requests)
- *will* (offer)
- *shall* (suggestion; offer)
- *should* (advice)
- *may* (possibility)
- *might* (possibility)
- *have (got) to* (obligation)
- *ought to* (obligation)
- *must* (obligation)
- *mustn’t* (prohibition)
- *need* (necessity)
- *needn’t* (lack of necessity)
- *used to* + infinitive (past habits)

**Tenses**

Present simple: states, habits, systems and processes (and verbs not used in the continuous form)

Present continuous: future plans and activities, present actions

Present perfect simple: recent past with *just*, indefinite past with *yet, already, never, ever*; unfinished past with *for* and *since*

Past simple: past events

Past continuous: parallel past actions, continuous actions interrupted by the past simple tense

Past perfect simple: narrative, reported speech

Future with *going to*

Future with present continuous and present simple

Future with *will* and *shall*: offers, promises, predictions, etc.
Verb forms

Affirmative, interrogative, negative
Imperatives
Infinitives (with and without to) after verbs and adjectives
Gerunds (-ing form) after verbs and prepositions
Gerunds as subjects and objects

Passive forms: present and past simple
Verb + object + infinitive give/take/send/bring/show + direct/indirect object
Causative have/get
So/nor with auxiliaries

Compound verb patterns

phrasal verbs/verbs with prepositions

Conditional sentences

Type 0: An iron bar expands if/when you heat it.
Type 1: If you do that again, I'll leave.
Type 2: I would tell you the answer if I knew it.
If I were you, I wouldn't do that again.

Simple reported speech

Statements, questions and commands: say, ask, tell
He said that he felt ill.
I asked her if I could leave.
No one told me what to do.

Indirect and embedded questions: know, wonder
Do you know what he said?
I wondered what he would do next.

Interrogatives

What, What (+ noun) How; How much; How many; How often; How long; etc.
Where; When Why
Who; Whose; Which

including the interrogative forms of all tenses and modals listed
Nouns

Singular and plural (regular and irregular forms)

Countable and uncountable nouns with *some* and *any*

Abstract nouns

Compound nouns

Complex noun phrases

Genitive: 's and s'

Double genitive: a friend of theirs

Pronouns

Personal (subject, object, possessive)

Reflexive and emphatic: *myself*, etc.

Impersonal: *it, there*

Demonstrative: *this, that, these, those*

Quantitative: *one, something, everybody*, etc.

Indefinite: *some, any, something, one*, etc.

Relatives: *who, which, that, whom, whose*

Determiners

a + countable nouns

the + countable/uncountable nouns

Adjectives

Colour, size, shape, quality, nationality

Predicative and attributive

Cardinal and ordinal numbers

Possessive: *my, your, his, her*, etc.

Demonstrative: *this, that, these, those*

Quantitative: *some, any, many, much, a few, a lot of, all, other, every*, etc.

Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular): *(not) as ... as, not ... enough, too ... to*

Order of adjectives

Participles as adjectives

Compound adjectives
Adverbs

Regular and irregular forms

Manner: quickly, carefully, etc.

Frequency: often, never, twice a day, etc.

Definite time: now, last week, etc.

Indefinite time: already, just, yet, etc.

Degree: very, too, rather, etc.

Place: here, there, etc.

Prepositions

Location: to, on, inside, next to, at (home), etc.

Time: at, on, in during, etc.

Instrument: by, with

Miscellaneous: like, as, due to, owing to, etc.

Prepositional phrases: at the beginning of, by means of, etc.

Prepositional preceding nouns and adjectives: by car, for sale, at last, etc.

Prepositions following (i) nouns and adjectives: advice on, afraid of, etc. (ii) verbs: laugh at, ask for, etc.

Connectives

and, but, or, either ... or

when, while, until, before, after, as soon as

where

because, since, as, for

so that, (in order) to

so, so ... that, such ... that

if, unless

although, while
3. Topics

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