An approach to foreign language instruction that emphasizes language acquisition rather than learning will emphasize the development of listening comprehension even at the expense of oral production, since research has shown that the latter does not suffer where the former is fostered. This approach tends to reduce the restrictive workings of the "affective filter." Just how powerful that filter can be is illustrated by the poor results of Spanish programs in the public schools of El Paso, Texas. In this city, students undergo traditional FLES training, which amounts to hundreds of hours of Spanish instruction over a period of six years. Still, the effect of the program is to teach failure through the repeated reinforcement of awareness of communicative incompetence. Furthermore, a linguistic continuum of native and non-native Spanish speakers exists in El Paso, rendering nearly impossible the separate placement of Anglos who would benefit from a classroom environment free from the implied intimidation of those who speak at least some Spanish at home. An aural-comprehension approach would effect a high degree of individualization, permitting real progress for each student and freeing students from what amounts to a burden to perform. (JB)
SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING:
THE APPLICABILITY OF ITS FINDINGS TO THE SPANISH LANGUAGE
PROGRAMS AT A UNIVERSITY ON THE U.S.-MEXICAN BORDER

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At issue is which process--learning or acquisition (as these terms have been used since the early work of Jean Piaget)--does a better job in the facilitation of what I will henceforth call 'language getting' (the need for a neutral term is now obvious, since 'learning' and 'acquisition' take on particular and separate definitions in the present context). The issue is one which is dealt with convincingly and at length in the collection of papers edited by Rosario Gignras: Second-Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching (Arlington VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1976).1

It is the goal of the present paper to discuss the Gignras volume in terms of its applicability to the University of Texas at El Paso's (UTEP) language-getting programs in Spanish intended for English monolinguals (as contrasted with its language-expanding/language-refining programs aimed at Spanish-English bilinguals--invariably Mexican-Americans--typically fluent in Spanish but lacking advanced or "school" lexicon and more at ease in writing English than Spanish). It should be noted that the findings and recommendations of the Gignras volume (and especially those of Prof. Krashen, whose lead-off article presents the "monitor model" that is now so closely associated with his name) have prompted a series of conclusions which, if applied to UTEP's or any other university's language teaching endeavors, would give rise to a system quite different from the one that is so familiar to most language teachers today.

As Krashen puts it, a major goal of his own research and that of the scholars he cites is

... to determine the true contribution of conscious learning ... Whatever the quantity of its contribution to adult second-language performance the Monitor Model predicts that it is in one domain only, as a conscious
Monitor. Conscious learning does not initiate utterances or produce fluency. It also does not contribute directly to acquisition. (p. 23; all page references are to the Gingras volume unless otherwise stated)

Sajovaara seconds this, refining the role which acquisition plays in bringing the language-getter up to an acceptable state of fluency:

Acquisition and learning seem to be different in that acquisition leads to skills which are automated for the most part. After acquisition the programs and plans which are necessary for the execution of tasks require a minimum of attention. Learning mainly provides for storage of separate items and ingredients of sub-tasks whose retrieval from long-term memory requires highly complicated and capacity-consuming processes; the number of readily available plans is small... What is decisive here is that, unless the plans and programs necessary for the execution of a task are 'acquired,' the planning device will have to resort to learned items, which requires more processing and consumes more capacity. (pp. 58-59)

Crucial to our understanding of the programmatic implications of Krashen et al.'s thinking are the increasingly well-known terms 'affective filter,' 'input,' 'intake,' and 'explicit' vs. 'implicit' language-getting. 'Affective filter' refers in general to attitude, conscious and unconscious. 'Input' consists of all target-language materials directed at and/or heard by the language-getter, while 'intake' is what said language-getter actually "takes in," i.e., submits to meaningful processing and comprehends. The 'explicit' vs. 'implicit' distinction parallels the one between learning and acquisition.

A prime goal of any language-teaching endeavor must be to mitigate the effects of the affective filter, which of course operates both to obviate the "integrative" motivation (to the extent that this is really necessary for all language getting) and to enhance those feelings of self-consciousness which, following the onset of adolescence, so effectively contravene the willingness to experiment in an area as central to the core of human personality as is language. As Krashen notes,

... the 'right' attitudinal factors, the presence of an integrative motivation and an optimal amount of self-confidence, produce two effects: they encourage intake, or useful input, and they allow the acquirer to utilize this intake for acquisition. (p. 9)

His comments regarding post-critical age self-consciousness are also revealing, and must be taken into account by all language-teaching programs beyond the sixth grade:
Around age 12, according to Inhelder and Piaget (1958), the child grows significantly in his ability to think abstractly; for the first time, he is able to relate abstract constructs to other abstractions . . . . This newly-entered into 'Formal Operations' stage may indirectly contribute to the typical adult's inability to acquire a second language perfectly, since it may be at least partially responsible for psychological changes that cause an increase in the affective filter. (p. 14)

Concern about the affective filter is evident throughout the Gingrás volume and is drawn attention to by Gingrás himself in his Introduction (p. ix): "In particular, research is needed on how teachers can 'lower the affective filter' so that L2 acquirers are more open to the language they hear and understand." Further comments on affective filtering will appear later in the present paper, especially as to the way affective filtering has operated on many non-native track students at UTEP.

Observers of child language development note that children acquiring second languages generally go through (as Krashen puts it) a

... 'silent period' during which they may be building up acquired competence via active listening. Their output during this period consists, for the most part, of prefabricated rather than creative language . . . . This stage may correspond to the adult use of the first language as a 'filler'. (p. 13)

Krashen also notes that interference or first-language influence

... is most prevalent in acquisition-poor environments, such as foreign-language situations. It is rare in normal ('playground') child second-language acquisition. . . . Too early production before sufficient acquisition is built up results in the use of the surface structure of the first language. (ibid.)

This of course is a phenomenon with which all language teachers are made constantly aware--plentiful "anglicisms" in Spanish (or "hispanisms" in English) persist well into the advanced levels of language instruction among students subjected to the sort of classroom work that demands manipulation of a structure immediately upon the theoretical presentation of it, or sometimes even before.

In view of the paramount importance that Krashen attaches to acquisition-rich instructional environments ("It is my view that one of our main responsibilities--if not our most important one--is to provide the adult acquirer with intake, either inside the classroom or outside"--p. 18), a fuller explanation of what Krashen means by
'intake' will be helpful at this point. For Krashen, 'intake' is language that is understood by the acquirer; language that is at or slightly in advance of the acquirer's current stage of grammatical competence (in this regard Krashen notes that "there is some very interesting evidence from child language acquisition research that . . . children are in fact 'tuned in' to input that is at their stage or 'just beyond' and that, in fact, they 'tune out' to language that is far beyond their level"—p. 17); language that is sequenced, and which gets progressively more complex; and, last, language that constitutes (or at least approximates) natural communication.

If intake is what does most to facilitate acquisition, then all typical received-standard language class activities must be analyzed in terms of whether they promote intake or not. This Krashen does at length (see pp. 18-19). He discusses, in turn, free conversation, mechanical exercises, manipulation drills, and others. One drawback of free conversation for example is that it "is often not understood, may or may not be at the acquirer's level or just beyond it and is practically never progressive." Manipulation or mechanical exercises are "uses of language in isolation [which] may be understood for their propositional content, but soon lose this effect. Paulston (1972) warns that overuse of this drill type produces tedium, and Lee, McCune and Patton's study (1970) of the rapid decline of orienting response to mechanical drill confirms this as well. [The requirement for] natural communication is not met at all" by drills of this sort. This incidentally is a point which Sagaiyaara, Gingras, Valdman and the other contributors make haste to echo; the consensus in fact is that the sole virtue of mechanical exercises is to drill pronunciation and to provide the least secure students with the illusion of language production. As for drills, Krashen and the others only favor what he terms (p. 19)

. . . meaningful and communicative drills, activities in which students can tell the truth or role play [since such drills] have the potential for satisfying all the characteristics listed: They are designed to be understood, may be put at any level, may be progressive, and may involve real communication or something close to it. These types should be the most effective for acquisition.
are, however, as Krashen also warns, "the most difficult to construct." So that
us where? One could conceivably argue (as Krashen does, for the sake of argu-
that

... no materials at all is best. Since we do not know what the optimal
teaching sequence is and--even if we did--materials are so hard to create, why not follow Roger Brown's (1977) advice to mothers wanting to know how
to teach their children language? '... There is no set of rules of
how to talk to a child that can even approach what you unconsciously know.
If you concentrate on communicating, everything else will follow.' Does
it, therefore, follow that instead of trying to determine the natura? syl-
labus and design materials, we should substitute the sympathetic native
speaker? (ibid.)

But there are problems with this too, as Krashen readily recognizes; chief among these
is that adults, sympathetic or not, usually avoid caretaker speech with other adults
because of the patronizing way it sounds.

If the conclusions reached thus far appear to have tied our h. . . , the knot is
cut by realizing that not intake for the sake of immediate feedback in the form of
speech production but, rather, intake FOR ITS OWN IMMEDIATE SAKE--intake that is for
storage as eventual material for output--is what we should be seeking. As Krashen
points out, "there is little doubt that speaking is very useful for acquisition, but
its main function is that it allows conversation which encourages intake [emphasis in
the original]." (p. 20) Such reasoning is fully consonant with several recent studies
which show that delaying speech in second-language acquisition, when active listening
is strongly emphasized, causes no delay in attaining proficiency (ultimate oral as
well as more immediate aural proficiency), and may even be of greater benefit; among
the citable studies are Gary 1975 (for child acquisition) and (for adults) three pieces
by Asher (1965, 1966, 1969) and the highly convincing, definitive work of the late
Valerian Postovsky (1974, 1977), which demonstrated that students of Russian not avail-
ed of the direct opportunity to perform orally actually exceeded an oral-performance-
involved control group in all four skills, including oral production. Krashen's con-
clusions regarding the importance of input and the relatively minor role played by
speaking

... are entirely consistent with the earlier conclusions on the role of
the first language in second-language performance: 'too early' speaking may lead to over-reliance on the first language and what appears to be 'interference.' Allowing the adult a silent period, during which acquired competence is built up via active listening and reading, may be the best means for dealing with first language 'interference.' (p. 22)

If, by delaying oral production (both free and audio-lingual/patterned), the primary emphasis is to be put on aural comprehension, then how does one facilitate this? In part by explicitly teaching certain components of it. What Gingrás has in mind is the explicit presentation of both vocabulary and sound system, two sine qu nons of aural comprehension. He says:

Understanding can be aided by the early internalizing of vocabulary as well as by direct guidance to the surface phonetic system of the L2. Research suggests that the early learning of vocabulary is of great importance since such . . . appears to facilitate the comprehension of listening activities . . . Pronunciation instruction is probably best limited to explicit instruction that allows the students to recognize and produce recognizable instances of the vocabulary items they will be learning. (pp. 90-91)

With vocabulary taught and pronunciation drills utilized for recognition purposes, "active listening" can then be given the emphasis it deserves. Gingrás has some specific suggestions as to how to promote active listening:

The vocabulary items should be known by the students (as a result of previous presentation) and the context of the conversation should provide enough hints so that students understand what the conversation is about. Earlier Gingrás had insisted that since focus should be on as total a comprehension as possible, topics with which students are unfamiliar should be avoided; specific unfamiliar topics to be avoided are those involving foreign cultural patterns and artefacts, presentation of which should be made in English. Visual presentations (such as film or videotape) are particularly good for 'active listening' . . . (p. 95)

What makes this type of listening any more "active" than, say, the sort of reading of short passages followed by "questions" that all of us undertake in class every day? Except for the central role assigned the activity, and the intensity with which it is carried out, only the type of response that is sought distinguishes this from present-day practices; as Gingrás notes.

Students should give some evidence they understand the conversation presented by way of short answers in the L2, or even by allowing responses in the native language if students feel very uncomfortable producing utterances in the L2. (p. 95)

Sayəaraa expands upon these themes by stressing the need to develop listening skills
no matter which method of instruction is employed. Language teaching, he says, has traditionally emphasized

. . . the production of acceptable chains of utterances. Communication, however, involves constant switching over of the converse roles of the speaker and the hearer. In many cases, communication fails, not because the speaker-hearer is unable to produce signals that can be interpreted in the right way, but because he is unable to adjust to the signals which he is receiving. It seems to be the underlying assumption in many foreign language teaching materials that teaching speaker performance is sufficient and that listening skills and hearer performance will develop alongside. Yet, in most cases, the models given for speaking are based on some standardized variety of the language which is seldom the variety the native speakers use in everyday speech communication, or which may even be totally inaccessible to them. (pp. 53-54)

In this regard he insists that language-getters be exposed to "real" speech at normal or near-normal rates from the very beginning, and that if the rate of speech needs slowing down, this should be done by lengthening pauses or, if mechanically-reproduced speech is used, by means of speech-expander devices. Saivara also emphasizes (as does Saville-Troike) that active-listening exercises should do everything possible to focus on message, not structure for its own sake. The main task of the teacher then

. . . is to bring in communicatively meaningful materials. This is the area where most language teaching methodologies have failed, not primarily because they were wrong as methods, but because teachers have seen themselves mainly as teachers of language--language meaning the grammar and vocabulary of the language concerned. From very early on, it is the natural tendency of a human being to focus on message, whereas academic language teaching . . . has emphasized form. (p. 67)

So the consensus obtainable from (and emphasized throughout) the Gingras volume is that successful language instruction involves deemphasizing "learning," i.e., the Monitor (though Krashen cautions that "for the optimal Monitor users, the applications of conscious rules to one's output can result in a real increase in accuracy" --p. 25); lowering (in adolescents and adults) the restrictive workings of the affective filter; providing judicious input; and, above all, transforming input into maximal intake so as to speed the all-important processes of acquisition, without which much can be known about a language but little communicative mileage can be gotten out of it.

But as Muriel Saville-Troike reminds us,
The success of particular methods, teachers, texts and even goals of instruction and models for curricular organization is likely to prove relative to particular social and cultural settings and socio-cultural and psychological characteristics of students. (p. 70)

With this in mind, and because the chief purpose of the present paper is to discuss the Gingras volume both in terms of why it is applicable to our local programs but also (and perhaps more importantly) why these local programs and others like them stand in need of its lessons, let us now focus on the campus and the city to see what lessons they have in store for us.

Both the applicability and the necessity derive from the following two main considerations: the presence, within the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez "internationalplex" (to borrow the media term), of a full bilingual continuum covering all possible points; and, chiefly among the English-monolingual products of El Paso's public school systems, the presence of a far-stronger-than-is-healthy "affective filter" vis-à-vis the Spanish language. It is the genesis and the effects of the filter that I will discuss first; far more obvious is the relationship between the full continuum and the programs I propose, so that can safely be left for later.

Highly salient and easy to recognize is one of the major causes of the negative affectivity that the Spanish language may still produce locally and of course throughout the southwest and also beyond; I refer here to inter-ethnic tension, even in a city such as El Paso with its comparatively high degree of social integration between the Hispanic majority (ca. two-thirds) and the Anglo minority. Less apparent though is how affective factors deriving strictly from ethnic circumstances would affect anglomonomatriphones' performance in a Spanish course at the university level. I submit that the effect would be negligible. On the one hand we know from the work of Teitelbaum, Edwards and Hudson (1975) that among Anglo students of Spanish at the University of New Mexico, no relationship could be discerned between positive attitude toward the local Hispanic community and performance in Spanish in the classroom. On the other hand, it is logical to assume that anglomonomatriphones bearing specific ill will towards Hispanics and, by extension, the Spanish language would probably elect
French, German, Russian, etc., not Spanish. Ethnic factors then can be largely ruled out as constituting the core of the negative affectivity I perceive to exist among many of our non-native speaker students. What I do judge a prime cause is one that can be laid directly at the doorstep of the mandatory (from the early elementary years onward) FLES-style Spanish programs operant since the 1950's in our city's public schools.

We all know this type of program: 30 minutes of "foreign" language per day (or however many times per week), utilization with pre-critical age subjects of a strictly learning-oriented methodology inappropriate (as we know now) even for adults—in short, exactly the sort of system against which the English-Canadian parents of St. Lambert rebelled 16 years ago, and which gave way to what was (for the North American continent at least) a genuine innovation: the immersion program, which, as is widely known, succeeded precisely where FLES had failed. FLES, however, is alive and sick in El Paso, Texas, and continues to churn out students such as those I encounter semester to semester signing up for or, worse, being placed into first-semester Spanish on this campus, students who despite 30 minutes of Spanish per day times however many hundreds of days over a half dozen years or more are unable to recognize (let alone produce) more than one verb tense; cannot distinguish between pairs such as buscar/mirar, saber/conocer, pedir/preguntar; cannot handle object pronoun constructions; cannot count beyond 100; and on and on. One hardly needs to ask why their filters are clogged. It is because the chief lesson they have learned in all those years of "taking" Spanish in our city is that they are unable to communicate in the city's other language. Failure, then, is what they have "learned" in school (despite the high grades many undoubtedly achieved).

Perhaps these students are enrolling in our university-level courses in hopes that somehow at this level the communicative miracle can be performed. It cannot be, however, unless the negative affectivity justifiably born of a linguopedagogically-wasted childhood of frustration and non-acquiring can be overcome by a method one of
whose chief virtues is that it does not expect the language-getter to produce language until the ability to comprehend the language is highly developed. Other ramifications of an aurocomprehensocentric system are likewise obvious vis-à-vis the frustrated long-time non-acquirer: this type of student is especially sensitive to the sounds he or she produces in Spanish; thus any emphasis on oral production—until such time as the student is fully aware of having made actual progress with Spanish—is bound to be not just minimally valuable but actually counterproductive, i.e., it will serve to reinforce negative affectivity.

If the typical sections of courses described in our catalogue as "Spanish One (and so forth) for Non-Native Speakers" were in actuality limited to (or even largely composed of) anglonomonomatriphone students, that is, those whose sole acquired/home language has been English, then the effects of the particular negative affectivity which derive from "fear of speaking" among those students who know, correctly, that their Spanish sound system is far from native-like would at least be somewhat attenuated. However, these effects are actually exacerbated, thanks to that second local fact of sociolinguistic life which was mentioned earlier—the presence in our area of a complete (bi)lingual continuum. That is to say, the total absence of anything resembling a clear-cut division between "natives" and "non-natives" makes a mockery of our department's attempts to apportion off our students into just two groups, one per track. Individual location at a point on the continuum is the product of a seemingly interminable list of factors social, economic, generational, residential, and personal, the recounting of which is easily the subject for a separate paper. For the purposes of this paper, however, it suffices to say that even with our soon-to-be effected uniformly mandatory Spanish placement test, it will never be possible for us to achieve "non-native" track sections that are totally or even largely free of persons who have experienced childhood acquisition of Spanish on the home front. (At present the typical so-called non-native class is at least one-third native or semi-native. I expect we can cut this percentage by only about half once the new placement system
goes into effect; that is, the new instrument will ideally place all "real" natives and roughly the upper half of the semi-natives into the native-speaker track.) My experience here has taught me how very attuned our local students are (and almost 90 percent of our undergraduate are local) to "who is what," socially and linguistically. Where physical appearance fails to reveal linguistic background (and this is especially true of the products of inter-ethnic marriages, of which there are many), and where ways of speaking English likewise fail to do so, ways of speaking Spanish will almost always succeed in revealing a history of home acquisition (as opposed to school non-learning). Anglonomonomatriphones "know," then, how many of "us" and how many of "them" there are in a given Spanish class within seconds of the first round-robin pattern drill. The fact of this knowledge constitutes yet one more argument favoring an instructional methodology which delays or at least deemphasizes oral production.

A third argument favoring adoption here of an acquisitocentric, speech-production-delayed program in the "non"-native track likewise derives from the facts of life on the local continuum. Briefly put, some form of self-pacing hence individualized instruction is necessary, given the wide diversity of backgrounds. The ideal would be a vast number of topic-specific "units" or "packets" loosely supervised by a combination of professors, teaching assistants and language lab workers. The reality is that in a department (typical of so very many) with few teaching assistants and many tenured faculty, most of the lower division classes are staffed by the latter, and the single-teacher teacher-centered same-group-of-students-all-semester format is vocally preferred by nearly all. Emphasizing aural comprehension would serve as a compromise here, since aural comprehension exercises are individualizable (I'm referring of course to pre-recorded exercises) but yet readily retain as the classroom's focus of attention the teacher, who must be on hand, Gingrâs insists, to teach and drill the vocabulary and the sound system.

My pedagogical recommendations are also entirely consonant with my perception of the sort of language behavior that is expected by the internationalplex's rules of
speaking. Let us examine the one facet of these that is most germane to the topic at hand (proficiency in Spanish among Anglos) and, what is more, most germane to the functions of a teaching institution: the language performance expected of business, government or educational representatives by the monolingual publics. (I have in mind primarily the Spanish monolingual public here, but by mutating the mutatable, the same is true for performance in English.)

As is well known, El Paso/Ciudad Juárez is the world's largest bilingual transnational city, and also the U.S./Mexican border's busiest crossing points. Of the two political units, Ciudad Juárez is easily the larger (ca. 700,000 people to El Paso's ca. 400,000). There is at least as much south-to-north traffic in search of goods and services as there is north-to-south. Various degrees of bilingualism can be said to exist among some Juárez residents (for details see Ornstein et al. 1976), but my general impression has been that most juarenses are proficient in English only to the extent that they have undergone schooling in El Paso. The upshot of this (and also of the fact that Spanish monolingualism is by no means limited to Ciudad Juárez; there is a fair amount of full or near-monolingualism in Spanish in El Paso as well) is that the immediate area is home to considerably more Spanish monolingualism than English monolingualism. Thus Spanish is a de facto requirement for many private or public service positions. And while in general, north-of-the-border Hispanics lacking or weak in English appear willing to either tolerate an English-medium exchange or else wait patiently for bilinguals to attend to them, my impression is that this is much less the case among Juárez residents, especially wealthier ones, who are quick to assert their wish for service in Spanish (as has long, of course, been the custom anent English among most Anglos visiting Juárez). The implications of this for persons lacking Spanish are obvious. On the flip side of the coin, it is also easy to demonstrate that the Spanish-monolingual desiring a university degree from UTEP must quickly acquire the ability to comprehend the natural speech his professors will use, and that our university's ESL classes should examine their own present modes of instruc-
Language-getting then is to be taken seriously. This is especially true in places like the El Paso area where either Spanish or English must be learned for survival, but it is increasingly true elsewhere; and in any event, to perpetrate, in classes purporting to teach language, anything less than the first crucial steps toward genuine acquisition is to perpetrate fraud. This, then, informs my disagreement with one of the Gingrás volume's contributions, that of Prof. Albert Valdman of Indiana University. Valdman admits to a "distinctly pessimistic view" about what can be achieved in language classes for adolescents and adults. Basing his feelings on his own interpretation of Krashen and the others, he asserts that

... the current emphasis on communicative competence appears incompatible with basic language instruction... The level of communicative ability attainable under ordinary classroom circumstances is relatively low, and emphasis on that objective requires special instructional features such as small groups of students, the simulation of natural conditions of language use, etc. (p. 81)

In consequence, communicative ability is beyond our reach, so FL teaching "should retain its traditional stress on language learning and on analytic skills." (ibid.) Valdman thus prescribes what he labels a "little language course," defined as a

... basic FL course that stresses realizable goals--language learning and the teaching of language concepts--while providing for some degree of language acquisition. But in that instructional scheme, language acquisition would serve an exemplary function only; there is no illusion about the learner's acquiring proficiency sufficient to use the FL for instrumental purposes. (ibid.)

For Valdman, an alternative that recommends itself as "truly basic is an approach involving direct attention to language structure and to the nature of culture, as well as discussion of the culture of the target language community." (p. 83)

Indeed, "structure," "culture," and the analysis of both are valuable disciplines that do much to nurture the educated person, as do art history, prehistoric civilizations, comparative religions, musicology and the other courses that end up competing for those six-to-nine units of "free electives in the Humanities." For the average student, then, language teaching will become esoteric should it fail (as it has long
done) to produce students who over the course of 14 etc. credit hours have at least begun to acquire communicative competence, "if only" in aural comprehension, which, in any event, we now know to be the cornerstone of everything else.

NOTES


2 I have no statistics on this, but I would estimate that among UTEP undergraduates who are fully Hispanic ethnically, about half can and regularly do produce an English that is entirely devoid of "Chicano English" features or nearly so.
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