

# BLOCK 4.

## The past meets the present: Language teaching methods in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries

### Sub-block 4.3. Communicative approaches

#### Unit 4.3.3. The Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell)

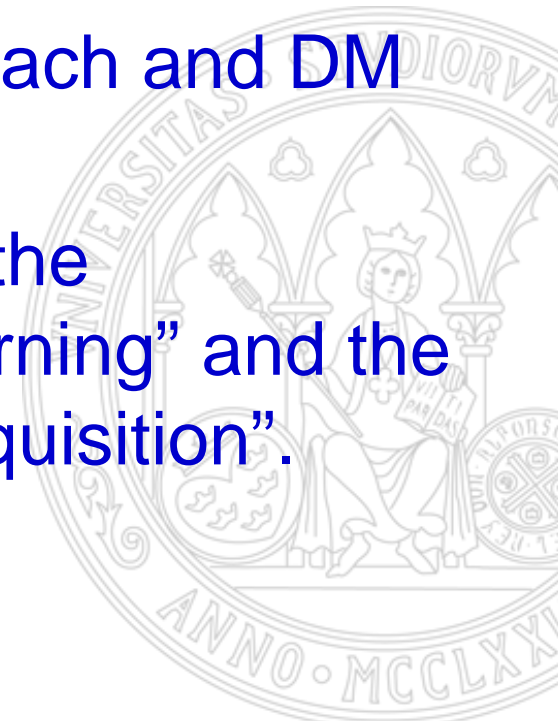
# Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Goal of the Natural Approach
3. Historical background and rationale behind the Natural Approach
  - 3.1. Origins. A summary of the SLA theory underlying the Natural Approach
  - 3.2. Distinction between Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach and the Natural Approach and DM from the 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - 3.3. The five hypotheses of the Natural Approach
4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach
5. Critical assessment of the Natural Approach



# 1. Objectives of this unit

1. Report on the fundamentals of Krashen's Natural Approach (1981, 1982, 1985, 1992, 1997).
2. Distinguish it from the Natural Approach and DM from the 19<sup>th</sup> century
3. Analyse the proposal and highlight the contribution of “acquisition” and “learning” and the importance of “input” to achieve “acquisition”.



# 2. Goal of the Natural Approach

To develop students' basic communicative skills, both oral and written, from an elementary level to an intermediate level



### 3. Historical background and rationale behind the Natural Approach

#### 3.1. Origins. A summary of the SLA theory underlying the Natural Approach

Principles of Krashen's SLA theory underlying the Natural Approach:

*What [SLA] theory implies, quite simply, is that language acquisition, first or second, occurs when comprehension of real messages occurs, and when the acquirer is not 'on the defensive'... Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill. It does not occur overnight, however. Real language acquisition develops slowly, and speaking skills emerge significantly later than listening skills, even when conditions are perfect. The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production.*

(Krashen, 1981: 6-7)

### 3. Historical background and rationale behind the Natural Approach

#### 3.1. Origins. A summary of the SLA theory underlying the Natural Approach

- ✓ Newmark & Reibel (1968): teaching is not helpful but it actually interferes with learning.



Stephen Krashen's "input hypothesis"

- ✓ The Natural Approach. Joint efforts from two sides:
  - ❑ Pedagogically-based: Tracy Terrell (1977, 1982)
  - ❑ SLA-based: Stephen Krashen (1981, 1982)



Krashen, S. & Terrell, T. (1983). *The Natural Approach. Language Acquisition in the Classroom*. London: Pergamon.

### 3. Historical background and rationale behind the Natural Approach

#### 3.1. Origins. A summary of the SLA theory underlying the Natural Approach

Krashen, S. & Terrell, T. (1983). *The Natural Approach. Language Acquisition in the Classroom*. London: Pergamon.

*[Students] will be able to function adequately in the target situation. They will understand the speaker of the target language (perhaps with requests for clarification), and will be able to convey (in a non-insulting manner) their requests and ideas. They need not know every word in a particular semantic domain, nor is it necessary that the syntax and vocabulary be flawless –but their production does need to be understood. They should be able to make the meaning clear but not necessarily be accurate in all details of grammar.*

(Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 71)

### 3. Historical background and rationale behind the Natural Approach

#### 3.2. Distinction between Krashen and Terrell's "Natural Approach" and the Natural Approach and DM from the 19th century

- ✓ Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach is located within traditional approaches to language teaching. *Traditional* in the sense of "natural", which Krashen and Terrell explicitly acknowledge.

However:

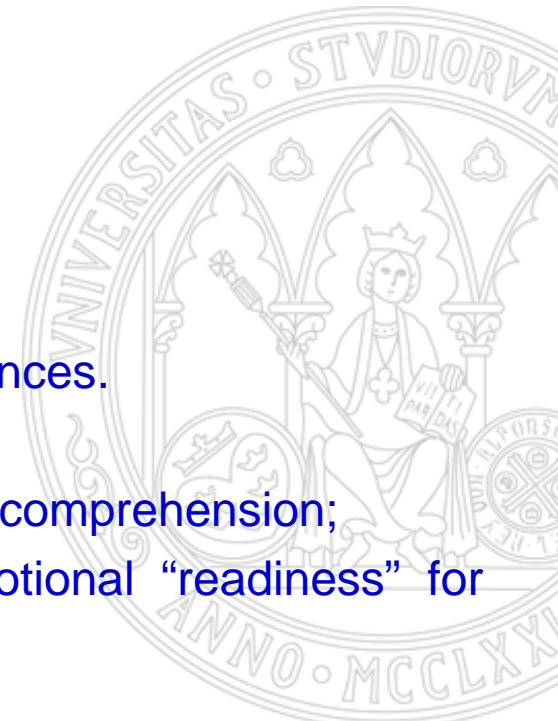
- ✓ Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach Natural Approach is not the same as the Natural Approach or the DM. Common tradition but certain differences (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 179):



# 3. Historical background and rationale behind the Natural Approach

## 3.2. Distinction between Krashen and Terrell's "Natural Approach" and the Natural Approach and DM from the 19th century

- ❑ Similarities: the underpinnings of the methods lie on naturalistic language learning in young children.
- ❑ Differences:
  - DM: emphasis on
    - teacher monologues,
    - direct repetition,
    - formal questions and answers,
    - role of practice,
    - accurate reproduction of target-language sentences.
  - Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach:
    - emphasis on exposure or input –central role of comprehension;
    - input as a triggering source to optimise emotional "readiness" for learning;
    - silent period (hearing before producing);
    - using written and aural materials as comprehensible input.



## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

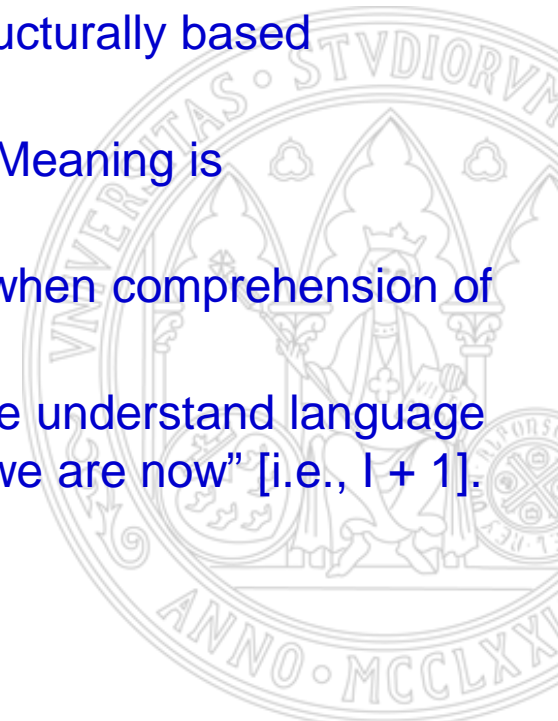
### Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

#### □ Theory of language (nature of language, including approach to culture)

- No attention to a proper theory of language (Gregg, 1984).
- Rejection of grammatical views of language (G-T, Structurally based methods). See Axis 2.
- Communication as the primary function of language. Meaning is emphasised:

“[...] language acquisition, first or second, occurs only when comprehension of real messages occurs” (Krashen, 1982: 6)

- However... “We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structure that is "a little beyond" where we are now” [i.e., I + 1]. (Krashen, 1982: 21).
- In all, then: lexical items, structures and messages.



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

- ❑ Theory of learning (learning principles)
  - “It is based on an empirically grounded theory of second language acquisition, which has been supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts.” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 1).
  - **Krashen’s views of SLA: FIVE HYPOTHESES.**
    - 1) The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis
    - 2) The Monitor Hypothesis
    - 3) The Natural Order Hypothesis
    - 4) The Input Hypothesis
    - 5) The Affective Filter Hypothesis



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 1) The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis

- Key in Krashen's SLA theory.
- Adults have two distinct ways to attain L2 competence:

#### **Acquisition**

- Naturalistic learning, identical to children language acquisition.
- Results in implicit knowledge.
- Unconscious process of input that occurs when understanding language and when interaction is communicatively meaningful.
- Focuses on meaning, messages.

*The result of language acquisition, acquired competence, is also subconscious. We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a "feel" for correctness. Grammatical sentences "sound" right, or "feel" right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated.*

(Krashen, 1982: 10)

# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 1) The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis

### Learning

- Conscious process.
- Conscious rules about a language are developed.
- Results in explicit knowledge (subject to be verbalised).
- Focuses on form.
- Formal teaching is necessary for learning to occur.
- Error correction aids towards the attainment of learning.

*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)

Learning cannot lead to or result in acquisition.



*Monitor Hypothesis*

# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 2) The Natural Order Hypothesis

- Brown (1973). Children acquiring English as a first language tended to acquire certain grammatical morphemes, or function words, earlier than others.
- Dulay & Burt (1974, 1975). Children acquiring English as a second language also show a "natural order" for grammatical morphemes, regardless of their first language.
- Errors are signs of naturalistic developmental processes

*Do you remember the author that explicitly posited this?*



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 3) The Monitor Hypothesis

The language acquired initiates utterances when we communicate and is responsible for fluency. Conscious learning can only function as a monitor or editor of the linguistic performance -the output of the acquired system.

Three conditions account for the successful use of conscious knowledge (or monitor):

- 1) Time.
- 2) Focus on form.
- 3) Knowledge of rules. These rules must be simple to describe and must trigger simple syntactical changes.



*In which situations do you think that students or language performers can use their Monitor?*

“Optimal Monitor users can therefore use their learned competence as a supplement to their acquired competence” (Krashen, 1982: 19)

## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

### Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

#### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 4) The Input Hypothesis

- It answers the question of how a language acquirer develops competency over time.
- In technical terms: how do we move from stage  $i$ , where  $i$  represents current competence, to  $i + 1$ , the next level?
- According to Krashen (1982: 21), the claim made by the input hypothesis is as follows:

*A necessary (but not sufficient) condition to move from stage  $i$  to stage  $i + 1$  is that the acquirer understand input that contains  $i + 1$ , where "understand" means that the acquirer is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message.*



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 4) The Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis involves four parts (Krashen, 1982: 21-22):

- (1) The input hypothesis relates to acquisition, not learning.*
- (2) We acquire by understanding language that contains a structure beyond our current level of competence ( $i + 1$ ). This is done with the help of 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.*

Evidence supporting this hypothesis (Krashen, 1982: 22-30):

- First language acquisition in children.
- Evidence from second language acquisition: simple codes (foreigner talk, teacher talk, interlanguage talk). Similar function to caretaker in L1 acquisition.
- Evidence from second language acquisition: the silent period and L1 influence
- Advantages and disadvantages of L2 rule use
- Applied Linguistics Research

## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

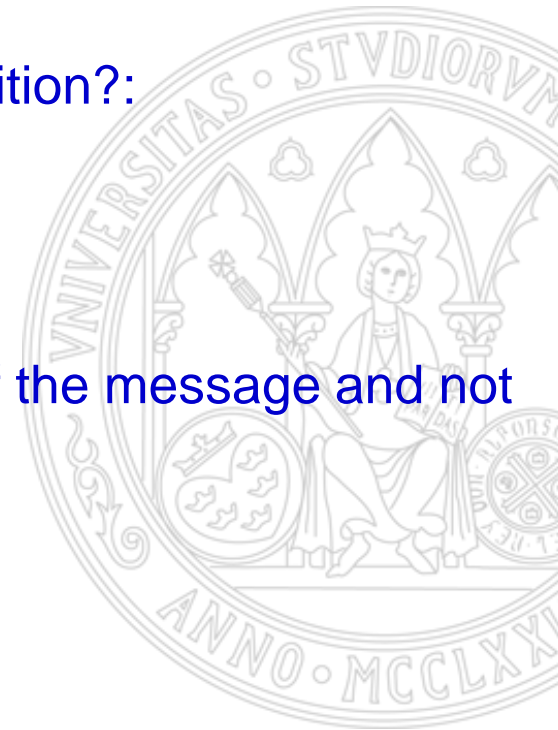
### Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

#### Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 4) The Input Hypothesis

What kind of input is optimal for acquisition?:

- a) Comprehensible
- b) interesting and/or relevant
- c) allowing the acquirer to focus on the meaning of the message and not on the form of the message
- d) not grammatically sequenced (see next slide)
- e) large enough



## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

### Grammatical syllabus (deliberate attempt to supply $i + 1$ )

1. All students may not be at the same stage. The structure of the day may not be the  $i + 1$  for many of the students.
2. Each structure presented only once.
3. Grammatical focus may prevent real and natural communication.
4. Assumes we know order of acquisition.

### Communicative input ( $i + 1$ included naturally, given enough input)

1.  $i + 1$  will be provided for all students eventually.
2. Natural and extensive review.
3. Conscious focus of both the student and teacher is communication of ideas.
4. Does not assume we know order of acquisition.

Krashen (1982: 70). The case against grammatical syllabus.

# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### ❑ Theory of learning (learning principles)

#### 5) The Affective Filter Hypothesis

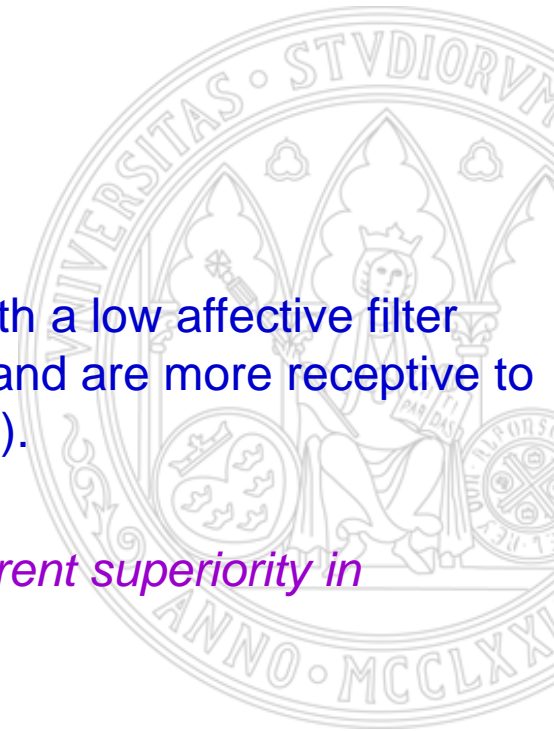
A certain number of affective variables are related to the success or failure of SLA:

- 1) Motivation.
- 2) Self-confidence.
- 3) Anxiety.

“The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that acquirers with a low affective filter seek and receive more input, interact with confidence, and are more receptive to the input they receive” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 183).



*The affective filter may account for children's apparent superiority in acquiring languages. Why do you think so?*



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

### □ Theory of learning (learning principles)

These five hypotheses of second language acquisition can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Acquisition is more important than learning.*
- 2. In order to acquire, two conditions are necessary. The first is comprehensible (or even better, comprehended) input containing  $i+1$ ; structures a bit beyond the acquirer's current level, and second, a low or weak affective filter to allow the input 'in'."*

(Krashen, 1982: 32-33)

## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

### Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

#### □ Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)

*Quite simply, the role of the second or foreign language classroom is to bring a student to a point where he can begin to use the outside world for further second language acquisition. [...] In other words, all second language classes are transitional, and no second language class can be expected to do the entire job.*

(Krashen, 1982: 160-161)

Implications of the five hypotheses for language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 185):

- 1) As much comprehensible input as possible should be presented.*
- 2) Whatever helps comprehension is important. Visual aids are useful, as is exposure to a wide range of vocabulary rather than study of syntactic structure.*
- 3) The focus in the classroom should be on listening and reading; speaking should be allowed to “emerge”.*
- 4) In order to lower the affective filter, student work should center on meaningful communication rather than on form; input should be interesting and so contribute to a relaxed classroom atmosphere.*

# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

- Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)
  - Krashen states that “The input hypothesis runs counter to our usual pedagogical approach in second and foreign language teaching”.

*Why do you think so?*

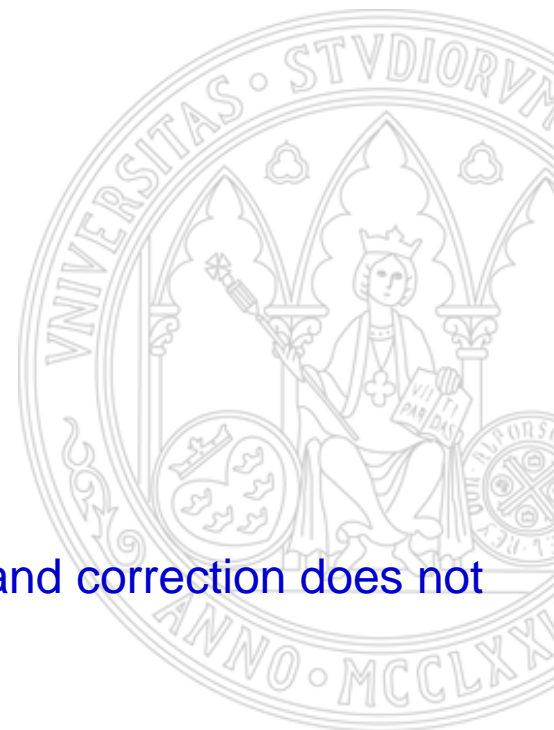
- Error correction (Krashen, 1982: 116-117):

- Alright when the goal is learning (not acquisition).

*Why should errors not be corrected in acquisition?*

- When to correct errors: when students have time and correction does not interfere with communication.

*So in which situations should errors be corrected?*



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 2. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

- ❑ Emphasised language: vocabulary.
- ❑ Situations and topics. Functions derived from those (but not explicitly stated) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 185).

“If input is supplied over a wider variety of topics while pursuing communicative goals, the necessary grammatical patterns are automatically provided in the input” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 71)

- ❑ Emphasised skills: receptive (first listening and second reading).  
After the silent period: speaking, writing
- ❑ Importance of content selection



*Why do you think that content selection is important in Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach?*



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

## Axis 2. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

*The goals of a Natural Approach class are based on the assessment of student needs. We determine the situations in which they will use the target language and the sorts of topics they will have to communicate information about. In setting communication goals, we do not expect the students at the end of a particular course to have acquired a certain group of structures or forms. Instead we expect them to deal with a particular set of topics in a given situation. We do not organize the activities of the class about a grammatical syllabus.*

(Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 185)

# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

**Axis 3. The How.** Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

## □ Activities

- Should favour acquisition, i.e., be focused on meaningful communication rather than form
- Should offer comprehensible input, including subject matter
- Should allow for the silent period. When learners are ready to produce, activities should be designed so as to gradually elicit longer and more complex output.
- Should set pair- and group-work interactions
- Activities and techniques from input methods (TPR, Terrell's Natural Approach, etc.):

*In these methods, class time is devoted to providing comprehensible input, where the focus is on the message and not the form, and students are not expected to produce in the second language until they themselves decide they are “ready”.*

(Krashen, 1982: 30)

- Supplementary activities to those in the classroom favoured by Krashen (1982: 162-175): conversation with a caring foreign speakers (foreigner talk) and pleasure reading (or extensive reading).



## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

**Axis 3. The How.** Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

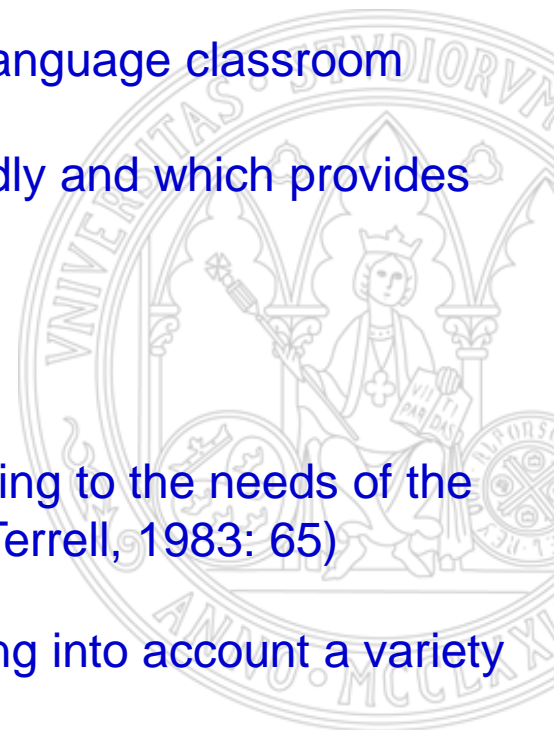
- ❑ Roles of teachers (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 188)
  - Very active and very demanding:
    - a) Primary source of comprehensible input in the language classroom
    - b) Creator of a classroom atmosphere that is friendly and which provides for low affective filters

*How do you think that teacher can achieve this?*

- c) Needs analyst

“The purpose of a language course will vary according to the needs of the students and their particular interests” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 65)

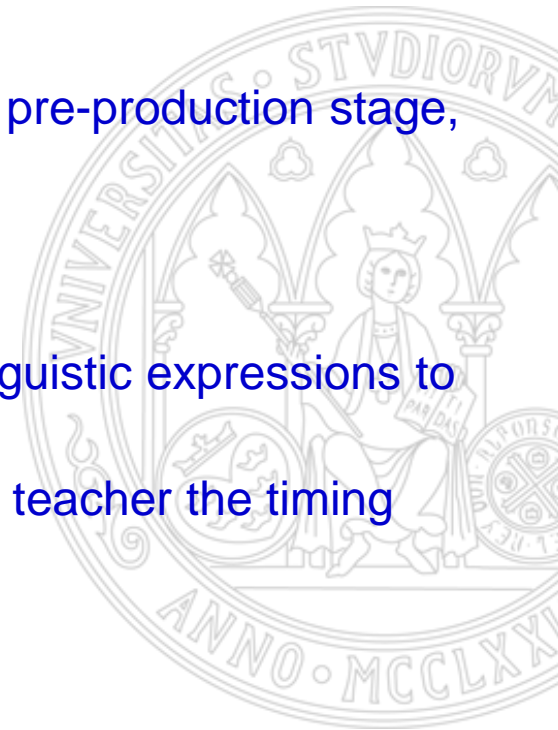
- d) Compiler of materials and related activities, taking into account a variety of group sizes, content and contexts



# 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

**Axis 3. The How.** Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

- Roles of learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 186-187)
  - An active role
  - A processor of comprehensible input
  - Three stages in their development and related roles: pre-production stage, early-production stage, speech-emergent stage.
  - Responsibilities:
    - a) Informing the teacher about their needs
    - b) Deciding when to speak, what to speak, which linguistic expressions to use in speaking
    - c) If learning exercises are involved, decide with the teacher the timing assigned to such exercises.
    - d) Ensuring their participation in all the activities



## 4. Analysis of the components of the Natural Approach

**Axis 3. The How.** Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

### □ Roles of instructional materials

- Providing much comprehensible input to beginning and intermediate students.
- Only focusing on grammatical rules that are easy to learn and apply.
- Should supply the extralinguistic context that fosters optimal acquisition so that students are trained to obtain more input outside the classroom.
- Sources: *realia* rather than textbooks, i.e., pictures and visual aids; schedules, brochures, advertisements, maps, games... Also reading materials with interesting topics for the students and few formal exercises.

# 5. Critical assessment of the Natural Approach



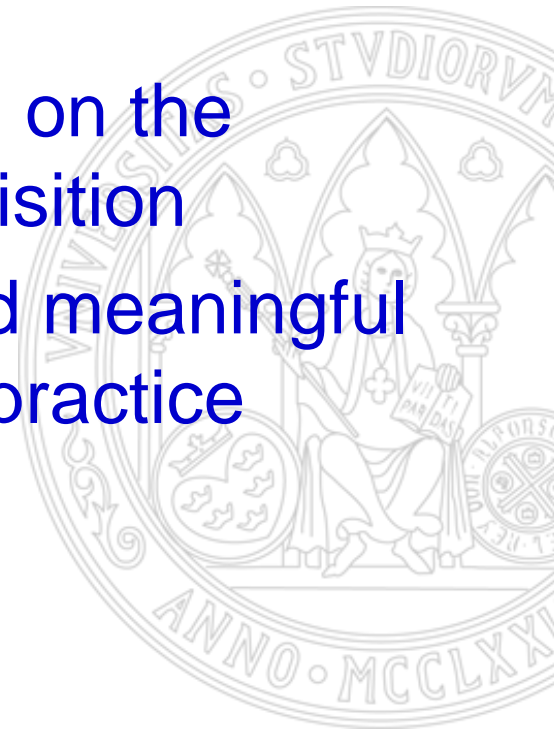
*Can you think of any advantages and disadvantages of Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach?*



# 5. Critical assessment of the Natural Approach

## □ Positive aspects:

1. Based on a thorough and rigorous observation of how children acquire their L1
2. Emphasis on comprehension and on the communicative nature of L2 acquisition
3. Emphasis on comprehensible and meaningful activities rather than mechanical practice



# 5. Critical assessment of the Natural Approach

## ❑ Negative aspects:

1. L1 and L2 learning is not the same:
  - Different settings
  - Different subjects (children vs. adults)
2. Since it explicitly provides clear classroom recommendations, the Monitor Hypothesis (later renamed as Monitor Model) needs to be tested.
3. The five hypotheses were also the target of criticisms:
  - a) Is it really possible to distinguish, operationalize and measure the result of acquisition vs. learning?
  - b) Is it impossible to attain L2 proficiency without explicit knowledge? Explicit knowledge can help to attain implicit knowledge: strong interface issue (Criado, 2010, 2012; Criado & Sánchez, 2009; Criado, Sánchez & Cantos, 2010; DeKeyser, 1998, 2007a, 2007b; Johnson, 1996, 2008; Sánchez & Criado, 2011)
  - c) What *exactly* is the influence of the findings from the Natural Order studies on L2 learning and the role of L1 transfer?



# 5. Critical assessment of the Natural Approach

## ❑ Negative aspects:

3) The five hypotheses were also the target of criticisms:

d) Are comprehensible input and low affective filters the only requirements for successful L2 acquisition? Besides comprehensible input, output is also necessary: Pushed Output Hypothesis/Comprehensible Output Hypothesis/Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 1995, 2005).



*Next slide*

4) The Natural Approach runs counterintuitive to many teachers' "common-sense" assumptions about the importance of practice and production in language teaching, i.e. the strong interface issue does have a place in language teaching.



*For more detailed critiques, you could consult Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987; Mitchell & Miles, 2004*

# 5. Critical assessment of the Natural Approach

## □ Influence of the Natural Approach on FLT:

- Meaning-based exposure in the second language: driving force of immersion programmes in Canada in the 1960s



### *Unit 4.3.5*

- The criticisms at the Natural Approach have stimulated the design of numerous empirical studies on SLA directed at either confirming or refuting the claims posited by the Natural Approach. SLA has been considerably enriched thanks to this impetus in research. For example: formal deficiencies in learners' speech in immersion programmes called for the need to consider output as a learning factor (Swain, 1985, 1995, 2005)
- Compatible with the emergent CLT at the time of Krashen & Terrell's 1983 book: emphasis on meaning and detachment from mechanical practice