INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT APPROACH WORKSHOP
FOR SECONDARY SPANISH TEACHERS

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PROJECT: INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT APPROACH WORKSHOP FOR SECONDARY SPANISH TEACHERS

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To my family for your unconditional support, understanding, and love that has helped me to accomplish my goals. I am forever grateful to have you by my side every day.
ABSTRACT

This project uses peer-review research, books, and research-based practices to introduce secondary Spanish teachers to the Comprehensible Input approach and its implications in the classroom. The workshop is an overview of the most significant language acquisition theories that support language acquisition throughout Comprehensible Input. In addition, the workshop includes a few comprehensible input strategies that can be used and implemented right away in any world language classroom.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the way world language educators teach a language has been in discussion. Some world language educators prefer to teach using a traditional approach that involves following a book curriculum that targets World Ready Standards for Learning Languages and sticking to activities that books normally provide such as following a specific topic sequence, memorizing many vocabulary words, creating, and practicing given dialogs, teaching grammatical rules, translating, and forcing students to talk in the new language. For the purpose of this work, I will refer to this approach as “traditional Instruction or grammar-based Instruction”. However, new pedagogies have evolved in a way that allows students to use a second language in real situations rather than in abstract pieces. Current research in second language acquisition shows evidence of current language acquisition approaches that focus on acquiring a new language based on communication in which students understand most of the content that is taught. This set of pedagogical principles refers to the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terell, 1983) that includes a framework called Comprehensible Input (Krashen and Terell, 1983) that focuses on input-based methods to accomplish proficiency in a second language. Both Traditional and Comprehensible Input pedagogical approaches have been subject to many debates about their effectiveness and how each teaching approach drives students to use a second language in real situations. However, a significant amount of research has shown a positive effect on proficiency when using Comprehensible Input methods to teach modern languages such as Spanish, English, French, and even Latin (a dead language) at different levels.
in which students who had been taught using comprehensible input methods overperform students taught using traditional approach in many categories. According to Krashen and Terell (1983), acquiring a language involves a subconscious process in which the student is exposed to sufficient meaningful input that allows them to understand the language. They stated, “acquiring a language is when students develop their ability in a language by using it in natural, communicative situations” (Krashen and Terell, 1983, p.18). Additionally, Lightbrown and Spada (2013) stated in their book called How Language is Learned that “Comprehensible Input remains the foundation of all language acquisition”. VanPattern and Wong (2003), noted that “Acquisition of a linguistic system is input dependable” (p.404). However, the comprehensible input must be understandable, yet still challenging. And a variety of Comprehensible Input strategies must be used in the classroom that targets specific language levels. Krashen and Terell (1983) pointed out that grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic structure can be acquired with sufficient meaningful comprehensible input since students already possess universal implicit grammar that will facilitate the acquisition of the new language (Krashen & Terell 1983). A metropolitan high school teacher, Roberth Patrick (2018) reflected on his experience teaching Latin to high school students when switching from a traditional instruction approach to Comprehensible Input. He pointed out that teachers tend to teach a language in the same way they learned it; however, it is important to reflect on frameworks such as Comprehensible Input and make changes in our practices and the way we deliver our instruction, especially when building proficiency in the language taught is the main goal. Patrick (2018) also mentioned that “By engaging in pedagogical practices such as Comprehensible Input, we see
significantly positive results in our classrooms and Latin becomes accessible to all kinds of learners” (p.39). Patrick (2018), for example, used games, gestures, understandable messages, and a lot of input in the target language to teach a dead language such as Latin. Vocabulary was not memorized but practiced within a context multiple times in which students focused first on listening. Textbooks were not used but comprehensible readings and discussions at every level were. Grammar was not taught explicitly, but in a context when reading and listening. As a result of embracing the principles of comprehensible input, his program increased retention rates significantly and increased its demographics including students with special abilities and diverse backgrounds. Rodrigo et al. (2004) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of two Comprehensible Input approaches when teaching Spanish as a foreign language at the intermediate level. This study was conducted with three experimental groups, two of them focusing on intensive reading (self-selected reading and assigned reading), intensive reading and discussion with comprehensible input, and one on a traditional approach. The results showed that the experimental reading and reading-discussion groups outperformed the traditionally taught group on vocabulary and grammar tests and 4 out of 6 comparisons. Rodrigo et al. (2004) concluded that “The results thus provide support for the efficacy of comprehensible-input based approaches, confirm that vocabulary and grammar can be acquired via comprehensible input, and are consistent with a three-stage approach to increase reading proficiency” (p.59). In addition, TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) is one of the comprehensible techniques used in the classroom which has been subjected to an explosion of research in the past few years in which Litchman (2019) stated that TPRS is an interaction with
the target language throughout the creation of comprehensible stories, “Researchers studying TPRS generally identify the method based on core concepts such as the co-construction of a story with students, using high frequency vocabulary, and providing lots of input in the target language with a small amount of translation for clarity” (Litchman, 2019, p.300). Karen Lichtman (2019) analyzes three empirical studies comparing TPRS to another method, two empirical studies on TPRS without control group, and three descriptive pieces in which she concludes that TPRS contribute the most to learner success and it is “at least as effective as, and often more effective than, other second language teaching methods” (p.376). Watson (2009) conducted a study to compare two high school Spanish classes in which one was taught using TPRS and the other one traditional teaching. Based on the written and oral exam he concluded that TPRS students score significantly better than traditional students in both tests. Varguez (2009) compared two beginning high school Spanish classes receiving TPRS with two classes receiving traditional methods in which students took a standardized test. He concludes that “the TPRS class that matched the traditional classes on demographic variables significantly overperformed the traditional classes in all categories” (Varguez 2009, p.3-5). Based on the research mentioned, we can deduce that Comprehensible input is a second language approach that uses all means of communication in the target language in which students can comprehend messages from the first one without explicit instruction. For that reason, Comprehensible Input represents a good way to build students’ second language proficiency in a secondary world language classroom that will improve not only student retention and interest but will build upon students’ first language abilities.
Rationale

In the current years, different approaches such as Comprehensible Input have evolved and have taken an important place in world language classrooms. However, only a small percentage of Spanish educators are familiar with the Comprehensible Input approach and its implications in the classroom. Since Spanish is one of the most taught languages in the United States, and at the secondary level, learning a foreign language in California is compulsory for two years, there is a great necessity of introducing teaching approaches that support language acquisition and build proficiency.

Thesis Statement

The purpose of this project is to create a workshop to introduce secondary Spanish teachers to the Comprehensible Input (CI) teaching approach by providing second language acquisition theories that will give insight into the benefits of using the CI approach to teach Spanish as a Second Language.

Taking into account the body of research about the role of comprehensible input in world language classrooms and in second language acquisition, providing professional development on this topic to language educators will allow them to be familiar with the comprehensible input teaching methods and implement them in the classroom. Comprehensible input also will allow teachers to create a learning environment when students can learn a language within a context and figure things out by themselves using inferences, background knowledge, and the oral and written input provided. In addition, by using comprehensible input strategies, teachers will provide a learning experience in which students will try to put together the meaning of new words, helping
them to engage in the class and increase retention. Lastly, language classes must be interactive and comprehensible input techniques provide the resources necessary to use the language in all proficiency levels by using context cues such as gestures, visuals, context embedder lessons, movements, objects, videos, stories, and comprehensible readings that will allow students to achieve proficiency.

Especially for new Spanish teachers, having insight into new approaches such as comprehensible input may allow them to set academic goals for their students and question the role of textbook grammar in language development. In addition, Spanish educators might reflect on if students can use the target language in real and informal settings outside the classroom after two years of foreign language instruction.

Propose Overview of Culminating Experience

**Target population.** The target audience for this project is secondary Spanish teachers who desire to have a better understanding of the comprehensible Input approach and implement a CI-based curriculum in their classroom.

**Content.** This project will include a workshop with an introduction to the Comprehensible Input (CI) framework view from the eye of a secondary Spanish teacher that can be used as a foundation to implement a Comprehensible Input curriculum in all levels of Spanish courses for native and non-native speakers. The goals of this workshop will be to provide evidence-based research that supports comprehensible input as an effective way to build proficiency in Spanish and question the role of grammar-based instruction in which research shows are less effective. The topics that will serve as a foundation for this project will be The Natural Approach (Krashen and Terell, 1983) which supports that a second language is learned in the
same natural way first language is acquired, Acquisition vs. Learning (Krashen and Terell, 1983) which involves a subconscious vs. conscious process respectively, Mental Representations (VanPattern, 2010) which explain how the brain works when acquiring a language, Silent Period (Krashen and Terell, 1983) in which comprehension precedes production, and Comprehensible Input (Krashen and Terell, 1983) which includes methods such as TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling), Meaningful Reading, Movie and Picture Talk, Gestures and Physical Responses).

**Concluding Thoughts**

This workshop will be a good resource for secondary Spanish teachers who want to start implementing the Comprehensible Input approach in their Spanish classes. This work shows evidence-based research about how the brain works when acquiring a second language and how comprehensible input supports acquisition and proficiency. In addition, this workshop will provide different Comprehensible Input-based strategies that can be used to teach Spanish as a second language and build proficiency. Alternatively, this workshop will also provide evidence that shows that grammar-based curriculums and grammar-based books contribute very little to proficiency and acquisition leading students to memorize abstract parts of language and retain information for a short period of time. As a result, students fail to acquire the language and may not be able to produce authentic interaction in the target language.

In the upcoming chapter I will discuss in greater detail the history and evolution of Second Language Acquisition, approaches of second language acquisition such as the grammar-teaching approach, and the Natural Approach that includes comprehensible input, silence period, comprehension vs. acquisition, and mental representations of
language. I will also discuss different comprehensible input strategies that can be implemented in the classroom such as TPRS, meaningful reading, movie talk, gestures, and physical response. The main goal this project aims to achieve is to expose Secondary Spanish teachers to the comprehensible input approach and the benefits of using it in the classroom to achieve student proficiency in Spanish. In addition, proficiency will allow students to use the language in their future jobs and careers.
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the past 50 years, Second Language Acquisition as a discipline has been subject to research focusing on the way humans acquire language. According to Van Patten et al. (2010) Second language acquisition (SLA) is a “research field that focuses on learners and learning rather than teachers and teaching” (p.1). However, in recent years the study of Second Language Acquisition has developed pedagogical practices and approaches to teach a second language such as the Comprehensible Input Approach. The body of research that has been done about comprehensible input is particularly important for secondary Spanish teachers and has a lot of implications in world language classrooms. Since Spanish is one of the most spoken and taught languages in the United States and it is one of the subjects required for high school graduation in California, there is a great need of introducing approaches such as Comprehensible Input that allow teachers to teach the language communicatively and build proficiency in Spanish and modern languages in general. For that reason, the purpose of this project is to create a workshop to introduce secondary Spanish teachers to the Comprehensible input (CI) approach by providing a brief review of the history of second language acquisition, and the most relevant approaches that complement and support language acquisition and development throughout Comprehensible input.

Brief Summary of Most Relevant Approaches of SLA

Second language acquisition (SLA) has been a subject of research since the early 1960s (Hannon Umarlebbe & Binti Mat Said, 2021, VanPatten, 2007, López-
Burton and Minor, 2014, Ellis, 2020). The development of the behaviorism, which is basically a psychological theory that argued that language develops as a result of certain behaviors such as imitation, opened the door to further research and critiques about second language learning in the 20th century (Hannon Umarlebbe & Binti Mat Said, 2021). However, the study of SLA continues to evolve focusing particularly with classroom instruction (Gass et al., 2020, VanPatten, 2007). Although SLA started as a discipline, it was developing over the past years into a pedagogical discipline. Ellis (2020) in his timeline of language acquisition states that SLA emerged as a “pure discipline in relation to first language acquisition, however, research on input and interaction aroused and took special relevance to language pedagogy” (p. 193). In the same way, Ortega (2009) mentions that one of the questions that had inspired the abundant body of research is how humans learn a second language. As language educators the previews question also becomes tied to what we do in our classrooms and the way we teach a second language. According to Ellis (2020), understanding how humans learn a second language is "an essential requirement for language teachers" (p.197). Teachers cannot ignore the finding of SLA research to make good choices about their instruction. VanPatten et al. (2010) mentioned that if instructors know that a linguistic structure will be acquired in a particular order over time, then they will know that there is no purpose to teach those structures at the beginning stages and so on. He also mentioned that If a teacher believes he or she can get learners to learn something before its time, earlier that is normally acquired later in the acquisition process, that teacher is not making the best use of his or her time. (VanPatten et al. 2010). In this context, the following sections will briefly explain the history of second language
acquisition that will lead to the rationale of the Comprehensible Input Approach useful for general teacher edification.

**Chomsky and Universal Grammar.** Noam Chomsky was the "father" of the second language acquisition theories because he changed the point of view of all the aspects that involve language acquisition. López-Burton & Minor (2014) state that before Chomsky, language was taught in a particular setting, in the same way people learn math and biology (p.97). López-Burton & Minor (2014) also explain that this way to teach a language (based on memorization, repetition, and translations) is old and came from Latin and Greek language teaching, "Methods that had been developed hundred years ago in an attempt to keep Latin and Classical Greek alive among the elite"(p. 97). However, at a young age, Chomsky (1957) was able to recognize similarities between languages which led him to believe that all languages came from the same linguistic families. In his book Syntactic Structures, he pointed out that first language acquisition is innate and biological makeup, and that all humans possess language structures in their minds that allow them to learn a first language. López-Burton & Minor (2014) mentioned in their history of SLA that Chomsky proposed that "all languages are outward expressions of an innate system that all humans share, regardless of their ethnicity and culture"(p.99). These findings allowed Chomsky to propose a theory called the "Innateness Hypothesis" that later became the theory of "Universal Grammar" serving as a starting point to develop many second acquisition theories focused on how humans acquire a first language and how this supports second language acquisition. Chomsky’s Universal Grammar approach states that all humans are born and wired with universal grammatical rules just as humans are born with other physiological features.
According to Chomsky's (1986) approach, all languages have some commonalities even when they do not contain verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, but they are similar in some way. Hannon Umarlebbe & Binti Mat Said, (2021) explains that “all languages share similar characteristics of using nouns, verbs, and other structures though not essentially in similar order” (p.32). In López-Burton & Minor's (2014) article, they explain that “Chomsky maintained that human languages are similar to one another as human faces are similar to one another” p. 100). In this way, Chomsky (1986) stated that all human babies are born with this implicit universal grammar in their brains, and they can comprehend, assimilate, and incorporate language and create new words. He called this ability Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Babies drink the sounds from other humans around, combine sounds, watch gestures and body language and after some years, they create and produce sentences by themselves (López-Burton & Minor, 2014) However, the language acquisition device deteriorates if it is not used. To put all Chomsky’s (1986) findings in the context of second language acquisition, specifically for a secondary Spanish teacher, when adolescents arrived in our classrooms, they already have all the first language running in their minds that will allow them to learn a second language more effectively since they are already wired with the universal grammar that we as human beings possess. Hannon Umarlebbe & Binti Mat Said, (2021) in their research called "Universal Grammar: Arguments for its existences” argue that this predisposition that children have that Chomsky’s called Universal grammar is what enables people to learn a language. In this way, students arrive in our world language classroom with the knowledge of their first language in their brains which will allow them to learn a second language and transfer their implicit inborn
grammar rules into a new language. Hoque (2021) wrote in his journal about Universal grammar contributions to SLA that this "set of implicit grammar rules that all humans possess not only helps them to learn their first language but also allows humans to create mental representations when learning a second language" (p.59). That means that universal grammar plays a fundamental role in second language acquisition since students already possess grammar competence that they can transfer to the second language. While implicit and inborn grammatical rules that humans possess influence second language acquisition, Hoque (2021) also explains the importance of providing sufficient and authentic input (written and oral) to "raise students' awareness of first language and second language differences" to help the second language acquisition process (p. 61). Although Universal Grammar provides principles and parameters for first language acquisition, it is evident that it also represents the foundation of acquiring a second language. According to Dulay et al. (1982), data has accumulated that places a student's first language in a more respectable, and valuable place not only as support for second language development but also as an enrichment of the student's communicative ability when the student becomes bilingual.

**Krashen Theories of SLA.** Another linguistic approach that follows Chomsky's ideas is the Natural Order Approach developed by Stephen Krashen (1990) who is one of the most respected linguists in California and the whole nation because of his contribution to Second Language Acquisition. Krashen's ideas have persisted for more than four decades, and they play a fundamental part in our understanding of Second Language Acquisition (Jegerski, 2021, Bailey 2022, Loewen 2021). Stephen Krashen (1988) points out that we acquire a second language in a communicative way similar to how we
acquire our first language and following a specific order of acquisition. Little children acquire language by being exposed to different contexts and language uses of their parents and caregivers and without any memorization and explicit rules. Krashen refers to this as the easy way to learn a language. However, with the passing of the years, the Natural Order approach had been redefined and subjected to additional case studies in which stages of acquisition of a particular structure were examined in children and adults with English as a second language. Lichman & VanPatten (2021) explained those stages as follow,

1. Stage 1: Negator + word/phrase: No like this one, no paper.
2. Stage 2: Subject + negator + verb phrase: I no like this one, He no see.
3. Stage 3: Negotiation with modals: I can't do this one, She won't go.
4. Stage 4: Negation with do: I don't like those, She doesn't live here (p.12).

This shows that learners acquire a language in specific and predictable stages that has much to do with the natural way. Lichman & VanPatter (2021) stated that “the development of the learners’ linguistic systems will occur in order and predictable ways” (p.11). As Krashen also stated, learners will develop language abilities only when they are ready, and instruction and explicit practice will have little influence in this language evolution. In addition to the Natural Order Approach, Krashen has developed other theories that have impacted the way a language is taught. For example, the Acquisition VS. Learning approach, silent period, comprehension precedes productions, and comprehensible Input which is the main focus of this project.

**Acquisition VS. Learning.** One of the main aspects of the natural approach is the concept of Acquisition vs Learning. This is one of Krashen’s most significant theories of
Second Language Acquisition that impact language pedagogy as language teachers. According to Krashen's findings (1982), world language educators are doing their teaching jobs in the wrong way because they focus more on teaching language explicitly and leave aside the implicit knowledge of language. Krashen (1998) states that all languages are complex, and it is important to focus on acquisition to be able to communicate. He makes a distinction between Acquiring and Learning a language. He claims that acquiring is a subconscious process while in learning the student is aware of grammar rules and forms, “Simply, acquiring a language is "picking it up", developing ability in a language by using it in natural and communicative situations" (Krashen & Terrell, 1990, p.27). While acquisition does not involve technical language features, learning does. Krashen and Terrell (1990) argue that “Language learning is "knowing the rules" and having a conscious knowledge about grammar" (Krashen & Terrell, 1990, p.26). In other words, daily drills, long lists of verb conjugations, and memorization of vocabulary words do not align with the acquisition of a second language but using the language in context and meaningful ways will lead to acquisition and proficiency. Krashen (1990) also pointed out the simple fact that many students spend years studying a second language and are not able to maintain a conversation while children who moved to another country and after several months of playing with other kids are fluent in the language without any formal instruction. López-Burton & Minor (2014) compared this theory with two children with a bicycle for the first time. One of them has a tutor who explains all names, parts, and principles of the bicycle. The tutor also explains the art of balancing, and the child memorized all this theoretical knowledge. As a result, all this explicit teaching did not help the child to ride the bike. On the other
hand, the other child does not have a tutor but has a sibling and a friend to observe. One day he tried to sit on the bike while holding a tree and he balanced the bike. Then, the next day, the mom offers some help and holds the seat till the child rides by himself. López-Burton and Minor (2014) explain that "We as teachers need to be more like this mother instead of the tutor" (p. 102). Research suggests that acquisition is more important than learning because acquisition is responsible for creating mental representations that will allow the student to understand and communicate (Krashen & Terrell, 1990, Jegerski, 2021). In this case, acquisition takes place when students are exposed to comprehensible input in which students understand messages in the target language. Learners acquire when they focus on the message rather than the form and when the message communicates real ideas. In other words, rather than learning, the acquisition of the second language should be the main goal in world language classrooms and to accomplish this goal students must be exposed to sufficient linguistic input that allows them to use the language for communication. Bayley (2021) explains that "learners use linguistic input to create an understanding of patterns of a new language system" (p.541). In this context, the oral and written input that students receive every day combined with communicative activities will lead to acquisition while grammar teaching will lead to learning. In the past years, there has been some controversy about the concept of acquisition vs. learning, however, many contemporary linguists agree with Krashen's ideas and rename these concepts as implicit and explicit knowledge (Lichtman & VanPattern, 2021; Jegerski, 2021). Acquisition and Implicit knowledge are subconscious and automatic while explicit knowledge and learning involve explicit teaching most likely in the classroom setting. Lichtman & VanPattern
(2021) updated Krashen's theory as follows,

"The complex and abstract mental representation of a language is mainly built up through implicit learning processes as learners attempt to comprehend messages directed to them in the language. Explicit learning plays a more minor role in the language acquisition process, contributing to metalinguistic knowledge rather than a mental representation of language" (p. 288).

While implicit knowledge is the same as the acquisition of a second language, the question that arises is how teachers know that students are acquiring vs. learning. The answer has to do with the way we teach the language and the ability our students demonstrate to use the language in real situations. According to Dulay et al. (1982), teachers must maximize the students' exposure to natural communication. This means that students must focus on the message being conveyed, not on the linguistic form (grammar) of that message. According to Jegerski (2021), in the past 15 years, empirical research about language processing has become evident with the need to measure outcomes when acquiring a second language. Research has focused specifically on implicit knowledge because it is the foundation of language use and a predictor of learners' ability to communicate in real-world situations. Much research uses online methods to measure the spontaneity (time) in which a student uses a second language. Clahsen and Felser (2006) talked about how processing language in real-time (either when hearing or reading it) is a predictor of acquisition. Rather than testing students' abilities on a piece of paper, studies found online methods more effective when testing real-time use of a second language. Contrary, the explicit knowledge that a student possesses is the knowledge the student is aware of and can
explain and verbalize. For example, an English learner student has explicit knowledge about past tense in English and he knows that he needs to add -ed to the base form of the verb to speak in past tense. However, knowing this rule is not very helpful when communicating with someone in English. Shawn Loewen (2021) explains that explicit/declarative knowledge is not especially helpful for communicating in real time because learners may have a difficult time applying the rules if they are having a conversation in a second language. He points out that implicit/procedural knowledge “is the knowledge learners are not aware of, but they can use it for spontaneous communication in which they focus more on what to say rather than how to say it” (Loewen, 2021, p. 312). In this context, students need tons of comprehensible input in the target language to acquire a second language and communicate spontaneously (when they are ready) and focus on the message they want to transmit instead of consciously thinking about grammatical rules. This means that students need to be constantly exposed to the target language in different ways and settings where students have the opportunity to construct and negotiate the meaning of words that will lead to acquisition. According to Patrick (2019), teaching for acquisition moves “the experience of learning from facing a page to a face-to-face experience which is the most basic form of human communication” (p. 40).

**Silent Period.** In addition to being exposed to comprehensible input in the classroom to acquire a second language, the Natural Approach takes into consideration another stage of language acquisition, the Silence Period, in which students are absorbing language and are not able to speak. Studies about second language acquisition have been consistent arguing that a second language learner typically exhibits a silent period
for more than three months (Dulay et al., 1982) Once students overcome the Silent Period, they begin producing small phrases and move gradually to more complex constructions. This production may not be very accurate; however, it contains few grammar forms. During the silence period, students are building competence in the language and comprehending mostly the massage of the input. Based on case studies and observations, Krashen & Terrell (1990) hypothesized the length of the Silent period when children and adults were learning a second language, "A silent period may last from a few hours to several months, depending on the situation and the age of the acquirer"(p. 20). However, the studies about this second language acquisition stage do not take into consideration that all learners are different culturally, linguistically, socially, and psychologically and those distinctions may impact the length or duration of the silent period. In addition, world language classroom teaching curriculums are different, for example, some teachers focus more on routines and basic survival language that students need at the beginning stages while other teachers focus on other language forms. According to Gibbons (1985), the assumption based on second language acquisition theories is that there "should" be a silent period at the beginning of a second language instruction and learners are assumed to be capable of comprehending the new language (p. 256). However, the reality is that there is not an exact and consistent time frame in which a learner will start speaking and the silent period will last. Gibbons (1985) conducted a survey completed by teachers about 47 elementary or primary students learning English as a second language in a Catholic primary school in Sydney to investigate the length of the silent period in young children. He concluded that, "The length of the silent period ranged from 0 (some children tried to speak English from the
first day) to 56 days” (Gibbons, 1985, p. 260). This shows that the Silent Period was shorter than the assumptions from the literature. While the silent period may vary for each learner, there is also the possibility that not all learners experience it. Granger (2004) wrote that the silence period does not seem to occur to all language learners, however, if it does occur, it would vary in degree and duration. Since the lack of consensus in the literature about the length of the Silence period is evident, it can be argued that a non-production stage is likely to happen in the second language acquisition. However, many variables can influence the length and duration since all learners are different and are exposed to a different type of input at the beginning of the learning and acquisition process. In other words, world language teachers must be aware that students may exhibit a period of "pre-production" (Gibbons, 1985, p 265.) at the beginning of the learning and acquisition process. Gibbons (1985) proposed that "the first part of a language curriculum should consist of a reduced output stage,” whereby curriculums and pedagogy in world language classrooms must include and support a short period of silence at the beginning stage (p.265). In other words, reduce the pressure to speak that most teachers placed upon the students since this only increases their affective filters, and secondly be supportive when students attempt to communicate. In addition, incorporating language routines for social interaction at the beginning stage instead of teaching language patterns and abstract pieces of language (grammar) may have a positive impact on the length of the silent period. In a world language classroom, it is important to recognize that language acquisition is a process, and it is necessary to provide appropriate language opportunities for all students even when they are not able to speak in the target language (non-verbal period). Drury
(2013) mentioned in her case study about the Silent Period in England that recognizing the stages of language learning acquisition will allow educators to provide a framework against judgments about individual children’s progress. Learners enter the world language classroom facing a social situation in which they are normally asked to speak in the target language and interact with other students at the beginning stage. All these situate learners in a situation of social distress that causes learners to raise their affective filters. Understanding the stages of language acquisition, and that students will experience an unspecified time of a silent or non-speaking period is crucial because it allows time to get used to a new context and environment. Even native speakers of the language in world language classrooms need to get confidence and feel accepted before raising their hands and participating in the target language. Drury (2013) also reassured that the Silent Period is “an experience shared by all students entering a new language learning context and that the length of the silent period is closely related to the connection between the language learning context with the home and community context” (p.385). In addition, according to the natural order approach, listening and reading comprehension precede speaking. Students will be able to comprehend messages and construct meaning by listening and reading before they can produce language. In other words, to produce language, a large amount of oral and written input is needed. In this way, the target language must be used in the classroom all the time, in addition to comprehensible reading sources that allow students to understand the language. Lichman & VanPatter (2021) also mention that as today, they agree that input is necessary, and learners comprehend before producing language, “The principal data for the acquisition of language is found in the communicative comprehensible input that
learners receive. Comprehension precedes production in the acquisition process” (p. 296). Since comprehension and production are equally important, Tasseva-Kurktchieva (2015) research stated that we must consider both comprehension and production to assess linguistic knowledge.

**Comprehensible Input**

Comprehensible Input is one of the most robust approaches in Second language acquisition. Krashen & Terrel (1990) called this theory the input hypothesis, “This hypothesis states simply that we acquire (not learn) language by understanding input that is a little beyond our current level of (acquire) competence” (p.32). It consists in providing the necessary language input to allow students to understand most of the content that is taught in the target language. According to many contemporary linguists, Comprehensible Input (CI) plays a pivotal role in developing language communicative skills, for that reason, it is important to know how CI works and what its role is in the classrooms and being aware of the role that either input and output play in second language acquisition is the base of a second language teaching, and it is the central point of language (VanPatten 2014, Bailey & Fahad, 2021). Comprehensible input has become an instrument of change affecting our teaching and classrooms and a complete philosophical framing of pedagogical practices (Patrick, 2019). Krashen's input hypothesis claims that exposure to input and having a classroom environment rich in comprehensible input (oral and written) is necessary for second language acquisition and development. In this way, the acquisition of the second language becomes unconscious and implicitly constructed by meaningful and understandable messages in the target language. Shawn Loewen (2020) in his research mentioned that while he
agrees that input is vital for second language development, it is the interaction with learners that also contributes. He points out that Krashen’s input hypothesis has viewed Comprehensible Input as that which is made comprehensible either by linguistic or environmental context. However, adding interaction with students is another way to make input comprehensible (Loewen, 2020). For example, Loewen (2020) explains that when an L2 student is asked to put a book on the shelf, this student may not know the word *shelf*. However, based on his understanding of the rest of the sentence (linguistic context), and the presence of a structure with spaces in between (environmental context) the student understands what shelf means. In addition to this linguistic and environmental context, we add interaction by providing verbal clarification using familiar words or gestures to clarify the meaning of *shelf*. This is a good example of comprehensible linguistic, environmental, and interactive input that allows students to acquire the language. According to Patrick (2019), comprehensible input recognizes that learning and speaking a new language is a complex task into the human brain and comprehensible input is a vehicle to facilitate that acquisition. According to Loewen (2022), when the interlocutor provides clarification of a word, it results in learner understanding. As a result of the rich comprehensible input supported by linguist and environmental context, and interaction with teachers, students will be able to negotiate meaning and create mental representations of the target language. As it was mentioned before in this research, one of the main goals of every Spanish educator should be that students acquire the language to communicate in real settings. In other words, creating a mental representation of language that allows students to use the language in a specific real-life context should be the main educational goal. Mental
representations of language refer to the implicit knowledge that a person possesses about something, "It is implicit because it exists outside awareness" (VanPatten 2014, p. 24). This implicit knowledge are pieces of information that exists only if there is a corresponding brain image, "Mental representation is a distinguishable mental state that complies with the underlying inherent rules of mental function for information processing in the brain" (Slavova & Soschen, 2015, p.317) One example that Van Pattern (2014) shows to represent how language representation develops is our implicit definition of rounded, in other words, the implicit concept that we all have of roundedness. In his research, he mentioned that most people know what round means because they were exposed to the notion of roundness by looking at round objects. However, most people were not taught the explicit concept of rounded that we found in the dictionary, so most people can identify rounded objects, and even define them, but do not know the technical concept of round (VanPattern, 2014). This example exemplifies how language works. We all have a universal mental representation of language, and being exposed to the necessary input will create the mental representation we need to acquire a language and eventually use that language to communicate. In the same way, a lot of research has been done in the neuroscience field that shows how language works, and how creating mental representations allows students to acquire a new language. Slavova & Soschen, (2015) states that language faculty came from the entire brain and mental representations are formed gradually, "The world's mental representations are gradually developed by the entire brain that makes use of the in-wired cognitive mechanism and rules to create the internal information units and perform mental operations on them for the internal language of thought and the external language of
communication” (p.320). Rogers (2019) wrote in his article about Comprehensible Input facts that language is acquired through comprehensible input, and it happens when students are focused on the meaning rather than the language (p.33). Likewise, as mentioned before in this project, there is a natural order in which humans acquire a language. That means that students do not acquire some language features until they are ready. In this context, comprehensible input becomes even more important in the acquisition process. The most comprehensible (listening and reading) students receive, the most exposure to grammatical features they will have, and then you will be surprised how fast they comprehend and acquire grammar explicit instruction later. A question that many world language teachers may have would be about what understandable input they can read and speak to their classes. Patrick, (2019) mentioned that “if our input is understandable and there is no need to use tedious translation, students will make progress, and the natural order of the language will unfold” (p. 41). Patrick (2019) also mentioned that the main obstacle of the Comprehensible Input approach would be that most of the teachers were taught and trained with a grammar syllabus (traditional method) and have confidence in the natural order and the fact that comprehensible input works is not an easy task. Since language is complex and very abstract, new Spanish educators must be aware that teaching grammar rules and memorizing a long list of vocabulary words may not be the best way to create a mental representation of the target language. VanPatten (2014) explains that "The grammar of textbooks represents a shorthand way of talking about something too abstract and complex to talk about in non-technical terms" (p.24). Contrary, Comprehensible input in the target language is psychologically real while textbook
grammar is not. Spanish classrooms should be environments rich in comprehensible input to help construct meaning and gradually develop communicative ability. In addition to creating an environment, it is important to create a physical space in which participants (students) interact and engage in meaningful conversations. We call this *context*. If we expose students to different contexts with the necessary comprehensible input, students will be able to create a mental representation, construct meaning, and communicate in the target language. VanPatten (2014) argues that "Context affects communication and communication is not something static; it is highly fluid and dynamic" (p.25). In other words, students can be exposed to many specific contexts that will allow them to construct meaning. This is when comprehensible input and context complement language acquisition. VanPatten (2014) explains, "Learners see and hear the language in a communicative context that they process for meaning" (p.25). The question for Spanish teachers is this: Does input guarantee acquisition? VanPatten (2014) mentioned that Input does not guarantee acquisition, however, acquisition cannot happen in the absence of input. Textbook grammar, fill-in-the-blank activities, and teaching grammar rules do not contribute to creating mental representations of the language while input does. Reconsidering teaching goals is the first thing a Spanish educator would think when teaching specific lessons; should students memorize abstract words and grammar rules or be exposed to the language as much as possible via communication to create a mental representation that lasts forever in their brain? Patrick (2019) states that "Language that is acquired is not forgotten. Language that is learned is" (p.44). While learning acquisition theories can provide us with different approaches to language development, it is the world language teacher who will
determine what all this means for their particular students in specific classroom settings. Building or adapting a curriculum that supports comprehensible input in the target language and exposes learners to the language in a way that allows them to make sense of grammatical structures and the meaning of a new language will support and embrace language acquisition. Rogers (2019) explains that “The focus of the teacher is to deliver understandable messages in the target language as often as possible and in as many different ways as possible” (p.33). While the presence of Comprehensible input is necessary for acquisition and language development, Krashen (1982) also pointed out that the input must be slightly above students' language proficiency. He called this i+1 in which the i represents the students’ current proficiency and the +1 picture the idea that the input must be a little difficult or advanced. According to Bailey & Fahad (2021), the human brain is an amazing master of finding patterns and regularities in a language, and if the learners are motivated to make sense of the incoming comprehensible input, the fundamental condition for acquiring a language has been met. Bailey & Fahad (2021) also suggested that the responsibility of language teachers is to support the students' effort to make meaning of the target language. A good way to support a student's language development is by providing the necessary and i+1 oral comprehensible input and focusing on understanding written comprehensible input. According to Bao (2019), comprehension in the target language should be provided in great quantity and in high frequency. This does not mean that grammar will disappear from your curriculum, it means that language educators will expose learners to abundant oral and written input long before introducing abstract grammatical rules (natural order). Drills, translations, and memorization are not necessary, especially in
the early stages of language development. The main focus is the acquisition of language in a context rather than abstract pieces. For that reason, comprehensible input should be the focus of teaching planning, and world language teachers must understand the role that they play in the process of second language acquisition and development. In addition to i+1, the comprehensible input must be compelling. According to Krashen (2013), the process of acquisition is more successful when the materials (oral and written) are compelling. Krashen (2013) explains that compelling means interesting enough that students forget that it is in another language. In this way, the opportunities we provide to our students must be focused on a lot of understandable input, stories, and communicative tasks in which students forget that we are working in the target language. Patrick (2019) explained that to offer input that is both understandable and compelling, we need to get to know our students. For example, who they are, their creative abilities, dreams, aspirations, fears, and “all the things that tell us what kind of material they will lean into both emotionally and physically” (Patrick, 2019, p. 43). Based on these findings, we can argue that the comprehensible input Approach represents a pedagogy of promise for students in the world language classroom since it embraces communication in the target language taking into consideration students’ experiences, prior knowledge, and funds of knowledge. In this way, students use the target language in real situations that will prepare them for the real complex world.

**Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Story Telling.** TPRS stands for Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. It is a comprehensible input-based method that was first researched and developed by James Asher (2009), a
psychology professor that supports his finding in many pieces of research about the brain and how humans’ body-movement learning works with commands, and developer of the Total Physical Response approach that later was included by many teachers as part of the TPRS. Asher (2009) researched how sensory channels of vision produce more efficient learning and retention when constructed with an audition. He also stated that when a word is followed by a body movement, learners are also able to guess the meaning of the message, and long-term retention is achieved (Asher, 2009). He pointed out,

"Not only is there immediate understanding of the strange noise coming from someone noise, but the pattern of the target language is internalized in such a way that the learner is able effortlessly to reorganize constituents to understand novel sentences" (Asher, 2009, p.30).

In this way, Asher (2009) found a positive correlation between body-movements and language as a great combination of internalizing information. TPRS was also included by Stephen Krashen as an important aspect of the comprehensible Input approach, and it is being practiced by many world language teachers nowadays. Lichtman (2018) wrote in her research about TPRS that most of the research has been done at middle school and high school level and the overall picture of TPRS is quite favorable. According to Rogers (2019), "TPRS is one approach that has enjoyed much success in the classroom" (p.34). Rocio and Rojas (2010) stated that the TPR-Storytelling method is not perhaps the most fashionable one, it indeed becomes an appealing, suitable, and powerful alternative for a foreign language teaching, nowadays. Since the positive feedback of many linguistics and world language teachers is quite abundant, much
research has been done on which TPRS has a positive impact on language acquisition. For example, Joseph Dziedzic (2012) conducted a study to compare the effectiveness of TPRS in comparison to a traditional grammar-based teaching and found that the comprehensible input (TPRS) based classes outperformed the traditional classes in writing and speaking. Lichtman (2019) also conducted a compilation of sixteen empirical studies comparing TPRS with another teaching method, empirical students on TPRS without a control group, and descriptive pieces in which most of them found that TPRS students outperform traditional students on some measures of language skills. Watson (2009) conducted an empirical study with high school students to compare TPRS with traditional instruction in which one class was taught using comprehensible input and storytelling and the other one was taught grammar explicitly. She found out that TPRS students outperformed traditional students consistently. Davidheiser (2002) conducted research without a control group in his German class in which he argued that TPRS improves pronunciation and vocabulary memory. He also observed that while using TPRS students were calm and engaged, and levels of anxiety were reduced. But what exactly is the TPRS approach? According to Muzammil and Andy (2017), TPRS is a “comprehensible Input method designed to develop real fluency” (p.20). It is a student-centered teaching approach around body movements, asking questions, creating stories, and reading in the target language in which the teacher and students collaborate interactively and communicatively. According to Krashen (2015), TPRS is also complemented with games and activities that are more interesting than traditional "conversation class" activities such as exercises like yoga instruction, serf defense techniques that will cover body parts, simple magic tricks, cooking, teaching skills such
as juggling. Krashen (2015) argues that all these activities are very compelling and align with the language's natural order approach. Even at a novice level, TPRS allows students to acquire vocabulary and engage in meaningful interactions from day one even when they are not able to speak in the target language. John Bracey (2019) wrote a guide to some of the basics of TPRS when teaching Latin, however, his guide can be used to teach any modern language. He mentioned that TPRS is focused on personalized questions and answers (PQA) and story-asking. Bracey (2019) explained that the PQA activity consists of asking students questions about “themselves and their interests” in the target language (p. 60). For example, the teacher asks students "Who runs in PE" using comprehensible input (body movements and images), and students raise their hands to answer. Then, the teacher asks as many students as possible if they run in PE and students answer with yes or no. Then, the teacher and students engaged in a conversation about who runs and who doesn't. While PQA is one part of the TPRS approach, story-asking is another fundamental part. This activity consists mainly of creating stories with the students. Bracey (2019) stated that over the course of his years teaching at all levels, he has yet to come across a single activity that can rival the effectiveness of story-asking. Students and teachers work together to create stories based on pre-planned vocabulary and a focus question and students take ownership of their learning by suggesting ideas that go from the name of the character to the environment of the story and feelings. During storytelling, for example, the teacher asks students for ideas and suggestions about specific characters, pictures, or plot points and together create a story that can be used later as a reading task. As we mentioned before in this literature review, the input must be comprehensible and compelling to
promote language acquisition. Bracey (2019) states that “focusing the content and the conversation around students' interests and ideas will guarantee compelling input” (p.60). In this way, the main focus of the language teachers must be making sure that the language they use in the classroom is comprehensible and understandable. It is important to mention that teachers must keep themselves in the target language and use all the tools, gestures, movements, and accessible ways to make the target language understandable. In the same way, these techniques are not meant to teach grammar explicitly but to promote language development and acquisition. During the conversations with students about them or topics that interest them, students receive as much input as possible, but they are not forced to speak. Although TPRS can be used in all levels of language acquisition, the focus is on listening not on speaking. The teachers are doing mostly all the talking and students may respond depending on their levels. For example, students in a beginning class may just respond yes or no while students in advanced classes respond with complete sentences and the conversation becomes more interesting and advanced. Bracey (2019) pointed out that "students acquire language through interacting with comprehensible and compelling input, not by producing language themselves" (p.60). Lastly, TPRS also involves reading in the target language. The comprehensible Input approach embraces reading for pleasure as an essential part of the language acquisition process. According to Krashen (2015), TPRS is “the only foreign language teaching method in the US that has taken reading for pleasure seriously” (Krashen 2015, p.2). Krashen (1998) also mentioned that “TPRS is not a complete method and that students need to be exposed to other powerful comprehensible input activities such as reading for pleasure” (p. 84) According to the
research of (Renandya et al., 2019) when second language students engage in self-selected reading, they do not just demonstrate high achievement but increase the likelihood of obtaining compelling input. TPRS books offer not only comprehensible and compelling input but also a variety of interesting topics that will provide the student with a pleasant reading experience. According to Renandya et al. (2019), complementing second language classes with a strong reading-for-pleasure program using TPRS books will place all students, even those who are not exposed to books, with the reading experiences, access, and time and place to select a book that positively will impact language acquisition. Krashen (2020) mentioned that the path of pleasure is more effective than the path of pain. He claims that reading for pleasure will prepare language learners for academic success by providing them with easy access to reading material that they find extremely interesting instead of demanding grammar drills. Krashen (2020) also mentioned many studies about reading fiction as a good source of academic vocabulary.

Conclusion

Second language acquisition theories play a fundamental role in the Comprehensible Input Approach because they represent the basis of language pedagogy that focuses on communication and acquisition of a second language. It is very important that Secondary Spanish educators know the importance of understanding the literature of second language acquisition such as Universal Grammar, the Natural Order hypothesis, Acquisition vs. Learning, and Silent Period and how all these theories support and embrace Comprehensible Input as an effective way to acquire a language. In the past years, teachers, and linguists all over the world have
been researching and discovering the magic of teaching a second language via Comprehensible Input, specifically by using TPRS. All the body of research presented before represents foundations and benefits of using CI in the world language classroom. Specifically in Spanish classrooms, Comprehensible Input represents an innovative way to teach a second language in real contexts in a communicative, understandable, and compelling way instead of relying on books that focus on grammar forms that are not psychological real and do not align with the natural order of acquisition. In addition, Comprehensible Input, represents a pedagogy of promise in which students use their background knowledge in a fun and communicative way to make sense of a message in the target language, preparing them to have real conversations in the target language and use it in their future careers.
CHAPTER 3:

METHODS

This project was developed by using best practices of peer-review literature and books on Second Language Acquisition theories and practices that support the Comprehensible Input teaching approach. The purpose of this project is to create a workshop to introduce secondary Spanish teachers to the basics of the Comprehensible input approach that will allow them to set new academic goals for their students and question the traditional grammar-based approach that most secondary teachers have been using for generations. In the literature review, this project gives a brief overview of Second Language Acquisition theories and progressively explains the connections to the Comprehensible Input approach such as the concept of Universal Grammar, the Natural Order Approach, the Acquisition vs. Learning, the Silent Period, and most importantly, the Comprehensible Input Approach that includes Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling. Based on the literature mentioned, this project is a useful resource to get inside about how the Comprehensible Input approach works, its benefits, and how it supports second language acquisition and proficiency.

Target Population

This workshop was created to introduce Secondary Spanish teachers to the Comprehensible Input approach that will inform them about the different theories of language acquisition that support Comprehensible Input as an effective way to learn a second language. This project will also allow secondary Spanish teachers to define new academic goals and question the regular grammar approach. This project was created with Secondary Spanish teachers in mind and all the struggles they face in the
classroom such as the lack of student engagement, the heavy pressure of teaching a specific curriculum, and finally, the disappointment of seeing students struggling with a lot of vocabulary, grammatical forms, and tedious memorization, and finally the world language retention rates decreasing every year.

**Format**

The format of the workshop was developed from peer-reviewed articles and books about Language Acquisition and Comprehensible Input. This professional development is divided into the following: 1) Why Comprehensible Input that explains its benefits. 2) Second Language Acquisition Theories and its connection to CI. 3) Comprehensible Input 4) Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS). 5) Key Strategies for Comprehensible Input.

**Procedures**

To create this workshop, I researched the most important Second Language Acquisition theories that support Comprehensible Input. Although I am familiar with all theories I mentioned in this workshop, I wanted to support Comprehensible Input on these theories to show my readers that the CI approach is very well supported by literature, so they can trust the approach and the natural process of acquisition. Something that was very important to me was to provide Secondary Spanish teachers with the basics of the Comprehensible Input approach since most teachers are not aware of the existence of this approach and its effectiveness in the classroom. After I went to observe some deskless classrooms using comprehensible input curriculums, and using the strategies in my own classroom I realized that all secondary Spanish teachers must have access to the approach because it ensures
second language acquisition and engages students in a real language communication. I began the workshop with a brief rationale about why using comprehensible input in the classroom and its benefits. I wanted to make sure that Secondary Spanish teachers are aware that comprehensible Input allow students to acquire a language in a communicative way by using engaging activities that not only develop fluency in target language but also takes into consideration student interests and background knowledge and as a result students feel more connected and engaged increasing foreign language retention rates. I also included a short story called “The Bicycle Example” in which I pictured the role of the teacher in a comprehensible classroom as facilitator instead of a tutor. I chose this story because as language teachers we tend to focus on forms rather than messages when in real life speakers focus on messages when having a conversation. Comprehensible input provides the foundation for communication using students’ listening and reading skills mainly. Grammar forms, and memorized words do not have any significance if they are not used in a context. As the project continues, I included the main theories of second language acquisition that support comprehensible input. This is important because if teachers know the predictable stages of acquisition, they will make instructional decisions with confidence and they will not waste the time teaching grammatical forms too early in the acquisition process. After the theories, I explained in more detail what Comprehensible Input actually is and how it works in the classroom. I chose a short video that demonstrates the difference between a comprehensible and no comprehensible message. It shows how a student can understand messages, instructions, or commands when the instructor uses
comprehensible resources to make the message understandable. In the following part of the workshop, I explained different comprehensible input strategies. The first one is the Total Physical Response technique that consists of producing an actual physical movement or gesture to what the student is hearing. This is very effective for pre teaching vocabulary before reading or to acquire vocabulary. Second, I included a brief explanation of TPRS which stands for Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling that includes many strategies secondary teachers can use in the classroom every day such as telling stories using images or visuals, singing songs to internalized vocabulary words, playing games in the target language, movie talks in which the teacher uses a mute short film and describe what is happening using simple vocabulary that students can understand and most importantly reading every day. Since reading is an essential part of the CI approach, I included some resources that will allow teachers to look for TPRS books that focus on repetition of basic verbs that will allow the student to internalize verb conjugations. Finally, I pointed out that switching to a comprehensible deskless classroom is not an easy task, especially if teachers are very used to following a textbook or using the grammar approach. However, it is necessary to develop student proficiency in the target language. Teachers must adopt CI driven curriculums or create their own that may be time consuming but beneficial in the long run. I concluded with some useful resources in which teachers can explore different CI ideas and resources.
CHAPTER 4:
CRITIQUE AND CONCLUSION

Strengths

This project addresses the great necessity of introducing teaching approaches that support language acquisition and build proficiency. Especially in California, where most of the foreign language programs have Spanish as a target language, this project represents a good introduction for new and experienced Secondary Spanish Teachers to the Comprehensible Input teaching approach since many Spanish teachers in secondary education are not familiar with the concept. Secondly, this project aims to improve secondary Spanish programs by exposing educators to a teaching approach that focuses on communication and exposing diverse students to the real forms and uses of the Spanish language. The knowledge and resources presented in this project will give secondary Spanish teachers insight about how to start using CI in their classrooms and set new academic goals based on acquisition of the target language.

Limitations

A few limitations need to be noted for this project. First, the project does not cover all the variety of activities teachers can implement in the classroom. There is a vast amount of comprehensible input effective strategies, however, this project introduces the most used and effective. Second, the project assumes that most Secondary Spanish teachers do not have knowledge about the Comprehensible Input Approach, however, there are many Spanish teachers that have been using the CI approach for many years and have contributed to the literature. Lastly, the Comprehensible Input approach is a pedagogy that targets all diverse learners taking
into consideration their background knowledge and experiences since a big part of the approach involves real communication mainly about students themselves. However, all students are different, and classroom needs, and academic goals are different for all Spanish teachers.

**Goals**

This project's aims to introduce Secondary Spanish Teachers to a pedagogy that will develop proficiency in Spanish in a communicative way with the goal of awakening curiosity about new teaching approaches. This project also hopes that experienced Spanish teachers open themselves to try this effective, fun, and enjoyable comprehensible input strategies to allow their students to use the target language beyond the classroom.

**Conclusion**

This study sought to address the great necessity of introducing Secondary Spanish Teachers to new and effective second language acquisition approaches that support proficiency in the target language in a communicative and real way. The workshop includes an overview of the most significant language acquisition theories that support language acquisition throughout Comprehensible Input. In addition, the workshop includes a few comprehensible input strategies that can be used and implemented right away in any world language classroom. This project focused on introducing Secondary Spanish teachers to the basics of the Comprehensible Input approach and increasing the student opportunities to acquire a second language that they can use in their lives outside the classroom. This workshop served to act as a guidance to implement a new comprehensible input-based curriculum or supplement
one already in use since the strategies can be adapted to any language curriculum and topic. Further research is required to obtain more familiarity with the comprehensible input strategies since most of them are guided by teachers.
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PART II: PROJECT
Introduction to the Comprehensible Input Teaching Approach for Secondary Spanish Teachers

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Introduction

This workshop was developed to introduce Secondary Spanish Teachers to the Comprehensible Input teaching approach which will allow them to set new academic goals using a communicative based teaching method. This workshop contains the reason why Comprehensible Input is a great way to develop language proficiency in the target language that students will use in their actual lives, and some strategies for teachers to implement into their classrooms. This workshop will focus on the benefits of providing comprehensible input in the target language and eventually questioning the traditional grammar approach based on the research-based evidence that supports Comprehensible Input. Finally, this workshop will allow teachers to consider the transition to a comprehensible based curriculum and choose what strategies work better for their classrooms, learners, and teaching style.

This workshop was created to benefit both new and experienced secondary Spanish teachers in embracing new teaching pedagogies or developing and modifying their curriculum. This workshop is divided into logical sections based on importance and implementation in which teachers can have a logical rationale of the comprehensible input approach. First, the workshop shows a brief rationale about why using Comprehensible Input in the classroom, followed by a summary of most remarkable theories of language acquisition, and ending with a full explanation about what Comprehensible Input is, TPRS, strategies in the classroom and a few resources.
Why Use Comprehensible Input in World Language classrooms

● Ensure learners acquire language and build proficiency.

● It is an interesting and engaging strategy since it takes into consideration student interests and funds of knowledge.

● Students will be able to use the language in real situations rather than constructed and unreal conversations.

● A large body of research supports second language acquisition through comprehensible input as an effective strategy to build proficiency.

● Improves retention rates in World Language programs since learning a language becomes interesting and fun.

● Language is used in real life situations instead of constructed materials.

● Students acquire language from the first day although they are unable to speak.

How Are You Doing Today?

Students can respond with numbers, colors, or even move to a corner of the classroom.
**The Bicycle Example**

Lopez-Buron & Minor (2014) compare Comprehensible Input with learning to ride a bike for the first time.

<table>
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<th>Juanito receives bicycle lessons to learn how to ride a bike for the first time. He has a tutor who teaches him all the basics of the art of riding. He learns parts of the bike, what balancing means, and all theoretical information. Although he had all the theory, he was unable to ride the bike.</th>
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<td>Pepito also wants to learn how to ride a bike. He spends some time observing his friends riding the bike. One day, he tries to balance by holding himself in a tree. He tried a couple times. After that, his mother held his bike from the back while Pepito pedals without stopping until he was riding the bike by himself.</td>
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As language teachers, we NEED to be more like the mother instead of the tutor.
There are many SLA theories that justify and embrace comprehensible input. It is important to understand the different theories of Second Language Acquisition.

- Chomsky and his Universal Grammar Theory
- Natural Order Approach
- Krashen Acquisition vs. Learning Theory
- Krashen Silent Period
- Krashen Input Hypothesis
- Asher’s Total Physical Response

**Importance of Knowing How Humans Acquire Language:**
Teachers make good teaching choices since it is a natural order of acquisition, and it is not useful to teach forms of language before learners are ready.

Some linguistic structures are acquired later in acquisition and there is no purpose to teach them at the beginning stages.

Teachers and educators will provide as much input as possible in the target language to expose learners to as many language forms as possible just in the same way learners were exposed when acquiring their first language.

**Universal Grammar:**

Chomsky's (1986) theory of Universal Grammar plays an important role in SLA.

- He was able to find commonalities between languages.
- He argues that kids are born and wired with implicit Universal Grammar called Language Acquisition Device.
- This predisposition allows humans to comprehend, assimilate and create sentences.
- Grammar forms are hard-wired into the brain, so learners use their cognitive abilities that they already have and apply them to learn a second language.
Influence of the First Language:

- When students arrive in our world language classroom, they already have their first language running in their brains that allows them to learn a second language.
- First language allows students to create a mental representation of language in their brain that allows them to acquire a second language.
- Transfer skills and background knowledge. Ex. They already know the meaning of a word in their first language, so learners only associate the meaning with the word in a new language.
- Raise awareness of first language and second language difference (Hoque, 2021)

The Natural Order Approach:

Language is acquired in predictable stages. Learners' linguistic systems develop gradually. Lichman and VanPatter (2021) explained those stages as follow:

**Stage 1:** Negator + word/phrase: No like this one, no paper.
**Stage 2:** Subject + negator + verb phrase: I no like this one, He no see.
**Stage 3:** Negotiation with modals: I can't do this one, She won't go.
**Stage 4:** Negation with do: I don't like those, She doesn't live here.

Questions:

- Would you teach future tense at the beginning (pre-production) stage?
- Do you think the conjugation of verbs in Spanish should be taught at the beginning stage?
Do you think it is useful to teach grammatical forms at beginning stages? Students would remember?

**Acquisition VS. Learning:**

According to Krashen and Terrell (1990), there is a distinction between Acquisition and Learning. Acquisition is implicit and something difficult to verbalize while learning is explicit knowledge that the learner is aware of.

**Acquisition:** Is picking up the language naturally without explicit teaching of grammar forms. Acquisition is the implicit knowledge a learner possesses.

**Learning:** Is knowing the rules or explicit knowledge, something that the learner can explain.
Comprehensible Input and Acquisition

- Comprehensible Input ensures acquisition. Learners MUST receive tons of input to acquire a language.
- It does mean that students will not learn, that means that students will read and hear the language till they acquire it.
- Ex. Students will hear the uses of the TO BE verb in Spanish many many times before they learn it explicitly. At the moment you teach the conjugation of the verb, students will already be comfortable and familiar because they are hearing and reading tons of input.
- Knowledge that students acquire lasts forever in their brain. That means that they will remember and use it in the future. The fact with second language learners is that they will not pull out their grammar notebook when having a conversation. Instead they will use the implicit knowledge to communicate.

The Silent Period:

It is a period in which students are absorbing the language and are unable to
speak. There is no consensus in the literature about how long the silent period will last, however, it will depend on students’ abilities, personality, and background knowledge.

The effective filter is too high at beginning stages:

- Do not force students to speak at beginning stages. Respect the silence period. Being silent doesn't mean they are not learning.
- Allow short responses at the beginning. Yes, No, Thumbs up and down, etc.
- Find better ways (low anxiety) opportunities to encourage students to respond in the target language.
- Recognize that language acquisition is a process and students will talk when they feel ready. Comprehension precedes production in the acquisition process (Krashen and Terrell, 1990).
What exactly is Comprehensible Input?

The Comprehensible Input (CI) is an instructional language approach developed by Dr. Stephen Krashen in which the instruction is delivered in the target language and the input is understandable for the learner. In other words, the learner understands most of the message you deliver in the target language.

Language teachers and educators must provide as much input as possible in the target language that students can understand. For example, if the students are learning “La niña juega en el parque”, teachers may use an image of a little girl playing in the park. Students can guess the meaning of “parque” since it is a cognate. They also infer the meaning of the rest of the sentences because the teacher points to the girl every time she says the word “nina” and makes a body movement every time she points to the word “juega”.

Comprehensible Input Techniques

Alberto J. Pantoja

Modeling
Hands-On
Realia

Pictures
Overhead Projector
Demonstration

Multi Media
Timeline
Maps
Graphs
According to Krashen, *comprehensible* and *compelling* input is necessary to acquire a second language. Learners MUST be exposed to sufficient understandable *ORAL AND WRITTEN* input in the target language to acquire. For that reason, teachers MUST keep themselves in the target language in order to find all the means of communication to make the message understandable. It does not mean that we have to erase students' first language completely but use it only for clarification if necessary.

Students will not be exposed to grammar explicitly till later in acquisition by providing a small lesson when students can motor themselves. Especially during the first year of second language learners, students are receiving language by listening and reading. They will start noticing grammar differences in the process such as verb tenses, however, only a short grammar lesson is necessary since students already have been exposed to the forms multiple times. According to Wong and Van Patter (2003), grammar drills are not necessary and, in some cases, may impede acquisition. They claim that focusing on the message instead of form will be more beneficial to acquire language.
Krashen (2013) argues that the acquisition of real language skills occurs through comprehensible input. He also opposes the traditional Approach which is based on memorization, repetition, and teaching grammar explicitly. Dr. Krashen argues that competence in the target language is built via input which provides real use of language rather than abstract pieces of language that learners forget.
What about compelling?

Dr. Krashen argues that the input learners receive must be also compelling. That means it is interesting enough that learners forget that it is another language (Krashen, 2016). If you base your instruction on students' interests, funds of knowledge, and creative abilities, etc, the input will be compelling.

Examples: Talk about people they admire, video games, technology, yoga, cooking, etc.
| CI is based on second language acquisition theories such as The Natural Order Approach that support the idea that learners acquire a second language in the same way they acquire their first. That means by hearing and using the language in real life situations. | The grammar or traditional Approach is basically teaching grammar structures at the beginning stage of acquisition, encouraging or forcing learners to produce language, and following a textbook that teaches language in specific sequence. Normally involves memorization, translation, |
How Comprehensible Input Works

Teacher uses different techniques to make massage comprehensible such as body movements, examples, performance, modeling, gestures, etc. When students associate language words with something that is actually real, they acquire. Contrary, textbooks activities are not psychological real and have little impact on language acquisition.

For example, teachers can start with basic commands, high frequency vocabulary in the classroom, routines, etc, this way students use the language every day. If the target is teaching students body parts, students respond with a physical movement or response when hearing the word. “Ojos” and students touch their eyes. “Comer” and students pretend they are eating.

The following video shows how learners can comprehend language when receiving comprehensible input followed by a command or when performing an activity.

https://youtu.be/x7c429g-cu8?si=LlkLarE559PkFgeD
Total Physical Response

Asher (2009) conducted research about how sensory channels produce more efficient learning and retention when constructed with audition. He found a positive correlation between body movements and language concluding that long-term retention is achieved. He also conducted research about the brain and how human-movement learning works with commands. He is the developer of the Total Physical Response approach which is the basis of TPRS.

Comprehensible Input is precisely the response to something the learner hears, and it is the foundation of vocabulary acquisition that later on will allow students to produce language.

TPR is very effective in Spanish classrooms since students perform the activity
they are learning. It can include vocabulary, verbs, and abstract concepts. Students practice words every day during a specific period of time. By the time they start constructing sentences they already know the meaning of the words which make the output process more efficient. In advanced classes, students learn abstract words such as “ordinario” by also producing a physical response that may be a hand movement or drawing the letter “S” as “Simple or ordinary” on the air every time they hear the word.

**TPRS (Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling)**

This teaching technique is part of the comprehensible Input and is one of the most effective ways to build proficiency in a second language. It is a student-centered approach that involves different activities such as Asking Personal questions to students (PQA) based on what they are reading, asking and telling stories, reading, etc.

Listening and reading are the main activities in the classroom. Teachers introduce many grammatical forms in a context, so learners do not know that they are being exposed to those structures. The body of research on TPRS effectiveness is quite abundant showing that TPRS students outperform the traditional approach students in many domains (Lichtman, 2019)

The main focus is to make the class meaningful and use the language to talk about common things. When humans acquire their first language they hear, and then start producing. Mothers do not teach grammar to their one-year-old baby. They communicate with them, and the Universal Grammar or Language acquisition device does its job. Same happens in the world language classroom, learners must be exposed to all kinds of input, not just vocabulary relating to family, school, and parts of
the body. There is no unit sequence in a CI classroom.

**THREE STEPS OF TPRS®**

1. ESTABLISH MEANING
2. ASK THE STORY
3. READ & DISCUSS

**TPRS Key Strategies:**
- Tell stories.
- PQA (personal question, answer)
- Visuals
- Sing songs.
- Play games.
- Target reading
- Body movements
- Gestures
- Watching a movie/short film
- Etc.
**Storytelling using CI:**

This strategy is very effective to introduce a reading or to expose students to the language using vocabulary they already know. The Jambore tool in Google is a good resource to tell the story and draw context clues while speaking. This way students correlates the drawing with the vocabulary and construct meaning of the story. During the story, teachers can ask personal question (PQA) that relates with the story and students may answer in their own language or in the target language if they are more advance. For example, if the story is talking about a family, teacher can ask in spanish how many siblings the student have using the context and the drawings of the story. This way the class will be more engaging and meaningful for the students since they are connecting in some way to the story.

Teachers begin with short stories at beginning levels with basic vocabulary, then stories become more interesting once students have more word repertory. Once students get used to the strategy, and their comprehension in the target language is
improving, students can recreate a scene of the story by acting it out. This will allow students will reinforce comprehension and produce small language phrases or sentences. In advanced classes, stories can include critical thinking questions, opinions, or other language figures.

https://youtu.be/0NwfzTYryqk?si=oivCQEMtGPxFQit9

**Vocabulary Acquisition:**

Vocabulary acquisition is one of the most important things in second language development. The more vocabulary learners have the better communication and comprehension they will have. Body movements, Gestures and physical response are very effective CI strategies in any World Language classroom. Make a list of high frequency verbs and words and teach them every day following with a physical response.

https://youtu.be/a-TrtsdBGd0?si=0aollpkzLN6bjAsO

**Movie Talk with CI:**

Teachers use the video to immerse students in a specific context while they use vocabulary they know to participate. This is very low anxiety activity and students use and practice the language they know. It consists of describing what the characters of the movie are doing in the form of a story.

https://youtu.be/2ue7iPOIdwQ?si=BumMJs8853uHcvy9

**Reading with CI (TPRS books):**
Reading plays a fundamental role in second language acquisition. Students must receive sufficient oral and written input. Reading will become a daily activity in a comprehensible classroom. Teachers may pre-teach target vocabulary before reading to facilitate understanding.

TPRS readers are essential elements of a comprehensible classroom. These books target different language uses with much repetition and high frequency vocabulary. Research shows that CI is the only curriculum that embraces reading for pleasure as an essential part of the second language acquisition process. (Krashen, 2015)
How to Switch to a Comprehensible Classroom

● Switching to a Comprehensible Input curriculum is not an easy decision although it is the best. Especially for more experienced teachers, they are very used to using the grammar approach because they probably learned that way. However, the benefits of switching to a comprehensible classroom are many and the research is clear and abundant showing positive results.

● The change does not have to be drastic. You can switch gradually taking into consideration your students’ needs, your teaching goals, and your district curriculum. Teachers can even use a mix of both approaches to make the transition easier.

● Most CI curriculums must be created or adapted by the teacher. Although there are a lot of resources online and CI curriculums, only the teacher can adjust and create a curriculum that aligns with standards and goals.

● CI can be used in all levels of Spanish including advanced classes.

● Deskless classrooms are very effective, however, it is recommended to switch gradually with admin approval. CI is normally embraced for a whole department, and this makes the transition easier since planning in collaboration and results can be measured easily.
**Challenges**

There are some challenges to consider when switching to a CI classroom. First, most teachers start by creating their own CI curriculum from scratch. Although there are many resources available online, teachers need to create a curriculum that aligns with the school vision, goals, and standards taking into consideration that most schools do have common assessments and collect academic data. Second, creating a CI curriculum is time consuming and will be more ideal to plan as a department in order to maximize the creation of the CI curriculum. Also, if the whole department adopts a CI curriculum, more resources would be available such as a variety of CI books in each classroom. Lastly, most teachers are not aware of the benefits of using the CI approach in the classroom and this lack of information prevents informed teachers from making the switch because of the lack of department or admin support.

**Conclusion**

This project sought to provide an introduction to the Comprehensible Input Approach that will allow new and experienced secondary Spanish teachers to have an insight about how this language approach works and benefits in second language acquisition and development, and most effective CI strategies. This project also provides information about the implications of switching to a comprehensible classroom.

Moving forward, teaching a language will always require new strategies to use the language interactively. Secondary Spanish teachers always can take multiple approaches to teach a language, however, Comprehensible Input approach promises a pedagogy that will allow students to learn and acquire a language in an engaging and realist way.
Resources for ideas and Curriculum

- Flangoo.com
- Garbanzo Spanish.com
- Somos Curriculum.com
- Sr. Diego Ojeda
- http://www.desklessclassroom.com/
- https://growingwithproficiency.com/why-comprehensible-input-is-important-for-world-language-classes-and-how-to-incorporate-it-into-our-class/
- The Big CI Book

Models of Deskless classrooms:
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