

Making Input Comprehensible through Accessibility: Connecting Krashen's Comprehensibility Hypothesis to Universal Design for Learning

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Abstract

Krashen's (1981, 1982) concept of comprehensible input being necessary for new language acquisition has not been discussed specifically from a lens of accessibility, particularly related to individuals with visual impairments. When considering the needs for instruction and materials for English language learners (ELLs) with visual impairments (VI), the universal design for learning (UDL) principle of representation, guidelines of perception and language and symbols, recommend that learners be offered options how information is displayed and provided and multiple media, including alternatives to visual information (CAST, 2024). A qualitative descriptive study conducted with postsecondary English instructors of ELLs with visual impairments related to their use of inclusive materials and accommodations found that participants reported the use of inclusive materials and accommodations to be enabling and helpful to their students in accessing learning (Quiñones, 2025). In the results of the study, accessibility, as outlined by UDL principles and guidelines was noted as a necessary part of defining comprehensibility when considering input for ELLs with visual impairments. Proposal of an expanded definition of "comprehensible input" is made. Future research incorporating this new formal definition of "comprehensible input" including accessibility as a key component is recommended.

Keywords: accessibility; comprehensible input; English language learner; universal design for learning; visual impairment