

## The FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE in SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

We can summarize the five hypotheses with a single claim: people acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to allow the input 'in'. When the filter is 'down' and appropriate comprehensible input is presented (and comprehended), acquisition is inevitable. It is, in fact, unavoidable and cannot be prevented – the language 'mental organ' will function just as automatically as any other organ:

*The learner (acquirer) has no 'reason' for acquiring the language; he does not choose to learn (acquire) under normal conditions, any more than he chooses (or can fail) to organize visual space in a certain way – or, for that matter, any more than certain cells in the embryo choose (or can fail) to become an arm or the visual centers of the brain under appropriate environmental conditions. (Chomsky 1975, p. 71)*

In other words, comprehensible input is the essential ingredient for second-language acquisition. All other factors thought to encourage or cause second-language acquisition work only when they contribute to comprehensible input and/or a low affective filter.