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LANGUAGE

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Language is very much like a living organism. It cannot be put together from parts like a machine, and it is constantly changing. . . . Language does not contain meaning; rather, meaning lies in the social relationships within which language occurs. Individuals in communities make sense of language within their social relationships, their personal histories, and their collective memory. . . . Our own language practices come from our cultural experience with language, but our individual language practices along with those of others collectively make the culture. Indeed the different ways people use language to make sense of the world and of their lives are the major distinguishing features of different cultural groups.

At the same time, language is always changing as we use it. Words acquire different meanings, and new language structures and uses appear as people stretch and pull the language to make new meanings. Consequently, the meaning that individuals make from language varies across time, social situation, personal perspective, and cultural group. . . . School actually plays a modest role in language acquisition, the bulk of which occurs outside the school. In schools we must learn to teach language in a way that preserves and respects students' individuality at the same time that we empower them to learn how to be responsible and responsive members of learning communities (International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1996, pp. 7-9).

School personnel serving language minority students often wonder what works best. What factors strongly influence students' development of their first and second languages? How long does it take to learn a second language? What are the most effective instructional practices that will foster students' academic success? This chapter provides answers to these questions based on the most recent research, as well as an overview of current instructional practices for teaching language in schools. The knowledge base presented in this chapter can be applied to the teaching of English as a second language (ESL), to sheltered English content subjects, and to English language arts (English as a first or dominant language), as well as to any other language (Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, and so on) taught as a first or second language.

The teaching of language is intimately connected to the major education reform movements described in the previous chapters. Language teachers can no longer teach language in isolation from the rest of the curriculum. Indeed, No Child Left Behind's Adequate Yearly Progress expectations for English language learners, as well as rigorous state standards, oblige teachers to combine both language development and content teaching. At elementary and middle schools, teachers are collaboratively planning thematic units that cross curricular areas, so that students discover the interdisciplinary connections and uses of knowledge outside of school. While high schools are still organized by isolated subject areas, the reforms at elementary and middle school levels are beginning to have an impact on high schools through some experimentation with structural reforms.

In the United States, the teaching of English language arts has undergone radical transformation over the last two decades. The focus of the older curricular approaches taught discrete skills in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary memorization, with critical thinking applied mainly to literary analysis. The old discrete-skills curriculum isolated language structures from context, established artificial sequences of language skills to be mastered, simplified texts to control sentence structures and vocabulary, and emphasized measurement of student progress through discrete-skills tests.

The current advocacy by researchers and teachers for a constructivist, whole-language philosophy of learning places emphasis on the integration of language and content, fostering personally and academically meaningful language development. The four language modes (formerly referred to as "skills") of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught as an integrated whole, with written and oral language developed simultaneously. Lessons are learner-centered and meaningful to students' lives inside and outside school. Language lessons engage students in social interaction and collaborative learning. The focus is on the social construction of meaning and understanding the process of reading and writing (Freeman & Freeman, 1992, 1994; Goodman, 1986). Students first acquire literacy through their own writings and share children's literature as well as experiences across the curriculum through, for example, science experiments, recipes, games, instructions for making things, math problem solving, interactive computer communications, and map reading. Most of all, language is developed for meaningful purposes within and outside of school. The current curricular standards for the teaching of language arts reflect the perspective articulated by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (1996) in the opening quote of this chapter.

A large body of research on language acquisition has provided the theoretical base for this shift to a constructivist, whole-language philosophy for teaching language. Recent media coverage has inaccurately presented whole-language advocates as embroiled in controversy with those who support phonics instruction. In contrast to the oversimplified stories in the press, the general philosophy of whole language incorporates phonics and other analytic skills into the natural language acquisition process. Phonics advocates a push for phonics to be taught first in literacy development; whereas whole-language approaches start the initial stages of literacy with focus on meaningful, authentic, natural uses of language, with explicit instruction in phonics and other skills, as needed, when learners are developmentally ready. We will discuss this in more detail in the section of this chapter on whole-language approaches.

Research in first-language acquisition, second-language acquisition, and the simultaneous acquisition of two languages can provide teachers with insights into the language acquisition process with implications for the classroom. This chapter will explore (1) important research findings on language acquisition; (2) instructional approaches to teaching a second language; (3) teaching language arts in a bilingual classroom; and (4) teaching language and multicultural literature across the curriculum for bilingual, ESL, and grade-level classrooms.¹

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Teachers and parents have many misconceptions about language learning. Contrary to popular belief, second-language learning is difficult and complex for all ages, including young children. Acquiring a first or second language takes a long time, and the process of second-language acquisition varies greatly with each individual learner. The notion that first language “interferes” with a second language has been resoundingly rejected by extensive research findings on the positive role the first language plays in second-language acquisition. Cognitive and academic development of a student’s first language provides especially crucial support for second-language acquisition. This section of the language chapter provides an overview of current research findings in language acquisition that have strong implications for the classroom teacher.

The Prism Model: Language Acquisition for School

The following conceptual model was developed by Thomas and Collier (1997) to illustrate the interrelationships among the four components that influence first- and second-language acquisition in a school context. The developmental process that all students experience throughout the school years is subconscious and ongoing. Figure 4.1 illustrates this developmental process by showing the interdependence of all four components—sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive processes—which occur simultaneously. While this figure looks simple on paper, it is important to imagine that this is a multifaceted prism with many dimensions.

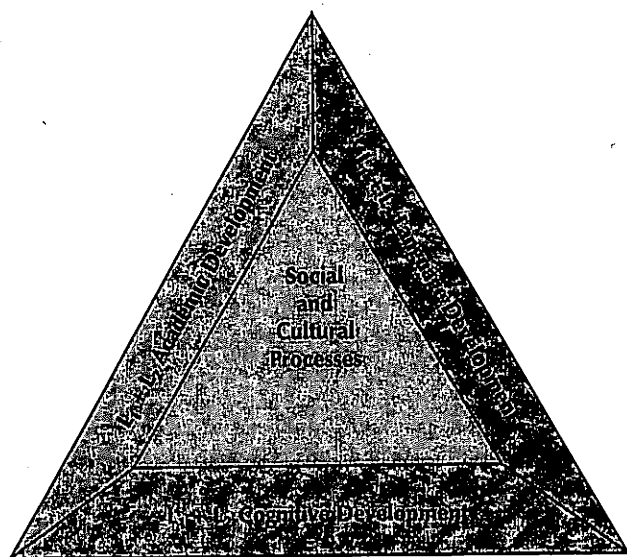


Figure 4.1 *Language Acquisition for School: The Prism Model*
Source: W.P. Thomas & V.P. Collier, 1997

Sociocultural Processes

At the heart of Figure 4.1 is the individual student going through the process of acquiring a second language in school. Central to that student’s acquisition of language are all of the surrounding social and cultural processes occurring through everyday life within the student’s past, present, and future, in all contexts—home, school, community, and the broader society. Sociocultural processes at work in second-language acquisition may include individual student variables such as self-esteem, anxiety, or other affective factors. At school the instructional environment in a classroom or administrative program structures may create social and psychological distance between groups. Community or regional social patterns such as prejudice and discrimination expressed towards groups or individuals in personal and professional contexts can influence students’ achievement in school, as well as societal patterns such as the subordinate status of a minority group or acculturation versus assimilation forces at work. These factors can strongly influence the student’s response to the new language, affecting the process positively only when the student is in a socioculturally supportive environment.²

Language Development

Linguistic processes, a second component of the model, consist of the subconscious aspects of language development (an innate ability all humans possess for acquisition of oral language), as well as the metalinguistic, conscious, formal teaching of language in school and acquisition of the written system of language. This includes the acquisition of the oral and written systems of the student’s *first* and *second languages* across all language domains, such as phonology (the pronunciation system), vocabulary, morphology and syntax (the grammar system), semantics (meaning), pragmatics (how language is used in a given context), paralinguistics (nonverbal and other extralinguistic features), and discourse (stretches of language beyond a single sentence). To assure cognitive and academic success in a *second* language, a student’s *first* language system, oral *and* written, must be developed to a high cognitive level at least through the elementary school years.

Academic Development

A third component of the model, academic development, includes all schoolwork in language arts, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies for each grade level, K through 12, and beyond. With each succeeding grade, academic work dramatically expands the vocabulary, sociolinguistic, and discourse dimensions of language to higher cognitive levels. Academic knowledge and conceptual development transfer from first language to second language. Thus it is most efficient to develop academic work through students’ first language, while teaching second language during other periods of the school day through meaningful academic content. In earlier decades in the United States, we emphasized teaching second language as the first step, and postponed the teaching of academics. Research has shown us that postponing or interrupting academic development is likely to promote academic failure. In an information-driven society that demands more knowledge processing with each succeeding year, students cannot afford the lost time.

Cognitive Development

The fourth component of this model, the cognitive dimension, is a natural, subconscious process that occurs developmentally from birth to the end of schooling and beyond. An infant initially builds thought processes through interacting with loved ones in the language of the home. This is a knowledge base, an important stepping-stone to build on as cognitive development continues. It is extremely important that cognitive development continue through a child's first language at least through the elementary school years. Extensive research has demonstrated that children who reach full cognitive development in two languages (generally reaching the threshold in L_1 by around ages 11 to 12) enjoy cognitive advantages over monolinguals. Cognitive development was mostly neglected by second-language educators in the United States until the past decade. In language teaching, we simplified, structured, and sequenced language curricula during the 1970s, and when we added academic content into our language lessons in the 1980s and 1990s, we watered academics down into cognitively simple tasks. We also too often neglected the crucial role of cognitive development in the first language. Now we know from our growing research base that we must address linguistic, cognitive, and academic development equally, through both first and second languages, if we are to assure students' academic success in the second language.

Interdependence of the Four Components

All of these four components—sociocultural, academic, cognitive, and linguistic—are interdependent. If one is developed to the neglect of another, this may be detrimental to a student's overall growth and future success. The academic, cognitive, and linguistic components must be viewed as developmental, and for the child, adolescent, and young adult still going through the process of formal schooling, development of any one of these three components depends critically on simultaneous development of the other two, through both first and second languages. Sociocultural processes strongly influence, in both positive and negative ways, students' access to cognitive, academic, and language development. It is crucial that educators provide a socioculturally supportive school environment that allows natural language, academic, and cognitive development to flourish in both L_1 and L_2 (Collier, 1995a, 1995c, Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Linguistic Processes

The synthesis of research on language acquisition that follows presents three of the four major dimensions of the Prism Model: *linguistic*, *sociocultural*, and *cognitive*. The *academic* dimension of the Prism, focused on the specifics of language acquisition *in a school context*, will be discussed in more detail in the second half of this chapter, as well as in the Mathematics and Science and Social Studies chapters. Most major theories of second language acquisition developed in the last decade have incorporated these three overall dimensions of language development—linguistic, sociocultural, and cognitive processes (Ellis, 1985, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 1985; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987; Wong Fillmore, 1985, 1991a). We shall begin with the linguistic dimension.

First-Language Acquisition

A common misconception of parents and teachers is to assume that it takes a short time to acquire a language. Research on first-language (L_1) acquisition can help us understand the complexity of language development, a lifelong process (Berko Gleason, 2001). Development of oral language is universal; all children of the world have the same capability, given no physical disabilities and access to a source of human language input. From birth through age five, children subconsciously acquire oral language (listening and speaking), advancing to the level of a five-year-old in L_1 phonology, vocabulary, grammar, semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (how language is used in a given context). While we think of this as a fantastic accomplishment, L_1 is not yet halfway completed at this age. From ages 6 to 12, children subconsciously continue oral development of complex grammar rules, subtle phonological distinctions, vocabulary expansion, semantics, discourse (stretches of language beyond a single sentence), and more complex aspects of pragmatics (Berko Gleason, 2001; de Villiers & de Villiers, 1978; Goodluck, 1991; McLaughlin, 1984, 1985). This oral L_1 development is not formally taught; it is subconsciously acquired through *using* the language.

Formal instruction in school introduces L_1 written language—the modes of reading and writing—to be mastered across all the language domains mentioned above. Each grade level adds to the cognitive complexity of language development needed for each subject (mathematics, sciences, social studies, language arts). By adolescence, L_1 proficiency, developed both in and out of school, has reached a very complex level. Even so, there are aspects of first-language acquisition that continue across one's lifetime, including vocabulary development, writing skills, and many pragmatic aspects of language (Berko Gleason, 2001; Collier, 1992a, 1995; Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990; McLaughlin, 1985).

Simultaneous Bilingual Acquisition

Acquisition of a second language (L_2) is equally complex. A young child who is raised from birth as a simultaneous bilingual goes through the same subconscious acquisition process with both languages. Most children being raised bilingually experience a developmental stage of appearing to combine at least some aspects of the two languages into one system, followed by several stages that lead to separating the two languages into distinct language systems sometime between three to five years of age. Given regular exposure to, and cognitive development in, both languages over time, the same level of proficiency develops in two languages as a child acquiring one language reaches (Goodz, 1994; Hakuta, 1986; Harding & Riley, 1986; Hatch, 1978; McLaughlin, 1984). Children who are fortunate enough to develop strong academic proficiency in both languages are likely to experience cognitive advantages over monolinguals (Baker, 1993; Bialystok, 1991; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Díaz & Klingler, 1991; Genesee, 1987; Hakuta, 1986).

Second-Language Acquisition: Social Language

While some children are raised bilingually from birth, many more are successive bilinguals who begin exposure to their L_2 at a later age. The purposes of acquiring

the L₂ and opportunity for exposure to that language have significant influence on the amount of proficiency developed. Crucial components to the language learning process are

- (1) *Learners* who realize that they need to learn the target language and are motivated to do so;
- (2) *Speakers of the target language* who know it well enough to provide the learners with access to the language and the help they need for learning it; and
- (3) A *social setting* that brings learners and target language speakers into frequent enough contact to make language learning possible.

All three components are necessary. If any of them is dysfunctional, language learning will be difficult, or even impossible. When all three are ideal, language learning is assured. Each of them can vary in a great many ways, however, and some of this variation can critically affect the processes by which language is learned (Wong Fillmore, 1991a, pp. 52-53).

For example, when a child is using the L₂ for communication with friends in play, conversation may begin to flow within a few months. Given the three essential components outlined above, for communicative purposes the vocabulary, grammar, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics of L₂ will develop over a two- to three-year period, although "differences of up to five years can be found in the time children take to get a working command of a new language" (Wong Fillmore, 1991a, p. 61).

In this book, we use the term *social language* to refer to the dimension of language proficiency first referred to by Cummins as "basic interpersonal communicative skills" (BICS) or "context-embedded" or "conversational" or "contextualized" language (Cummins, 1979a, 1981b, 1986b, 1991, 1996b, 2000). In social language, meaning is negotiated through a wide range of contextual cues, such as nonverbal messages in face-to-face interaction or written feedback in a letter from a friend or an e-mail message. Social language is more than the acquisition of listening and speaking; it includes the development of literacy for use in situations such as shopping, use of transportation, or access to health services. Children, adolescents, and adults generally develop substantial proficiency in L₂ social language within two to three years, given access to L₂ speakers and a social setting that encourages natural interaction. For those just beginning L₂ acquisition as adolescents or adults, retention of an accent is so universal that non-native pronunciation is not considered to be an issue in proficiency development, unless the accent impedes the flow of communication.

Age of Initial Exposure to the Second Language

A myth also exists that young children are the fastest learners of a second language. Adults are fooled by the nativelike pronunciation that young children acquire quickly, but this is one of the few advantages that young children have over older learners. In fact, substantial research evidence has shown that young children may not reach full proficiency in their second language if cognitive development is discontinued in their primary language (Bialystok, 1991; Collier, 1988, 1989c, 1992c, 1995). Given the necessary prerequisites for L₂ acquisition to happen as defined

above by Wong Fillmore, older learners from approximately ages 9 to 25 who have built cognitive and academic proficiency in their first language are potentially the most efficient acquirers of most aspects of academic L₂, except for pronunciation. An accent-free pronunciation is more likely if a second language is introduced before puberty. Adult learners past their 20s just beginning a second language may have more difficulty than the adolescent or young adult (Harley, 1986; Long, 1990; Scovel, 1988; Singleton & Lengyel, 1995). However, adults usually experience less difficulty with third- and fourth-language acquisition if they are already very proficient in the oral and written systems of their first two languages.

A research synthesis on the optimal age question written two decades ago (Krashen, Scarcella, & Long, 1982) concluded that "older is faster but younger is better." Now we know that this generalization applies mainly to conversational or oral language development. When reading and writing are added to the picture, a very different conclusion emerges. To state that one age is better than another to begin second-language acquisition would be greatly oversimplifying the complex interrelationships between development of language and cognition as well as social, emotional, and cultural factors (Collier, 1987, 1988, 1989c, 1992a, 1995). As proficiency in academic language develops at school, age interacts with many other variables that influence the language acquisition process, to be discussed below.

Second-Language Acquisition: Academic Language

When the purpose of L₂ acquisition is for use in educational settings, then the complexity of language proficiency development expands greatly. We use the term *academic language* to refer to "a complex network of language and cognitive skills and knowledge required across all content areas for eventual successful academic performance at secondary and university levels of instruction" (Collier & Thomas, 1989, p. 27). Cummins (1979a, 1981b, 1986b, 1991, 2000) first popularized this dimension of language, referring to it as "cognitive academic language proficiency" (CALP) as well as "context-reduced" or "decontextualized" language. This dimension of language proficiency is an extension of social language development. In other words, social and academic language development represent a continuum; they are not separate, unrelated aspects of proficiency. However, academic language extends into more and more cognitively demanding uses of language, with fewer contextual clues to meaning provided other than the language itself, as students move into more academically demanding work with each succeeding grade level.

A good teacher incorporates social and academic language development into every lesson. Activating students' background knowledge and prior experience might begin with social language, including many contextual supports through, for example, visuals, maps, charts, manipulatives, music, and pantomiming. As the lesson continues, new knowledge is developed and applied through increasingly cognitively complex tasks that extend students' cognitive and academic development through meaningful application in cooperative groups. Development of academic language is using language "to explain, to classify, to generalize, . . . to manipulate ideas, to gain knowledge, and to apply that knowledge"

across all academic subjects (Swain, 1981, p. 5). Academic language development crosses all levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives in the cognitive domain—knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—for all grade levels and all content areas. Developing L₂ academic language is not watering down the curriculum; instead, students actively participate in lessons through meaningful, contextualized language that stimulates their cognitive and academic growth.

Academic Language: How Long?

When one realizes that academic language development is a continuous process throughout a student's schooling, the length of time required for this complex process can be better understood. For example, in the United States, native-English-speaking students are constantly acquiring a deeper level of proficiency in academic language in English. A newcomer who has had no previous exposure to English must build proficiency in social and academic language in English and catch up to the native speaker, who is not standing still waiting for others to catch up, but is continuing to develop higher levels of academic proficiency (Thomas, 1992). Cultural knowledge embedded in the native speaker's past experience adds to the complicated task the second-language student must face. Research has shown that when immigrants in the United States and Canada are schooled only in L₂, it takes a minimum of 5 to 10 years to attain grade-level norms in academic L₂, and it takes even longer when students do not have a literacy base in L₁ (Collier, 1987, 1989c, 1992c; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981b, 1991, 1992; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Dolson & Mayer, 1992; Genesee, 1987; Ramírez, 1992). However, when students are schooled in L₁ and L₂ at least through grade 5 or 6, they are able to maintain grade-level norms in L₁ and reach grade-level norms in academic L₂ in four to seven years (Collier, 1992c; Genesee, 1987; Ramírez, 1992). Furthermore, after reaching grade-level norms, students schooled bilingually stay on or above grade level; whereas those schooled only through L₂ tend to do less well in school in the upper grades (Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002).

INTERDEPENDENCE OF FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGES

Many studies have shown that cognitive and academic development in L₁ has a strong, positive effect on L₂ development for academic purposes (Collier, 1989c, 1992c; Cummins, 1991; Díaz & Klingler, 1991; Freeman & Freeman, 1992, 1994; García, 1993; Genesee, 1987, 1994; Hakuta, 1986; Lessow-Hurley, 2005; Lindholm, 1991; Lindholm Leary, 2001; McLaughlin, 1992; Snow, 1990; Tinajero & Ada, 1993; Wong Fillmore & Valadez, 1986). Academic skills, literacy development, concept formation, subject knowledge, and learning strategies all transfer from L₁ to L₂ as the vocabulary and communicative patterns are developed in L₂ to express that academic knowledge. Cummins (1976, 1979a, 1981b, 1986b, 1991) refers to this phenomenon as "common underlying proficiency" or the "interdependence" of

languages. Cummins's view is supported by research in linguistic universals, which has found many properties common across all languages at deep, underlying structural levels (Ellis, 1985, 1994). Only in surface structures do languages appear to be radically different. But still deeper than language itself is the underlying knowledge base and life experience that students have developed in L₁, all of which is available to them once they have the ability to express that knowledge in L₂. L₁ literacy is considered a crucial base for L₂ literacy development. Many research studies have found that a wide variety of skills and learning strategies that are developed in L₁ reading and writing can have positive transfer to L₂ reading and writing (Au, 1993; Bialystok, 1991; Cummins, 1989c, 1991, 1996b; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Genesee, 1987, 1994; Hudelson, 1994; Johnson & Roen, 1989; Lessow-Hurley, 1990; Lindholm, 1991; Snow, 1990; Tinajero & Ada, 1993; Wong Fillmore & Valadez, 1986).

The old notion that L₁ "interferes" with L₂ has not been supported by research evidence (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; McLaughlin, 1984, 1985, 1992). It is clear that L₁ serves a function in early L₂ acquisition, but it is a supportive role rather than a negative one. In the beginning stages of L₂ acquisition, acquirers lean on their L₁ knowledge to analyze patterns in L₂, and they subconsciously apply some structures from L₁ to L₂ in the early stages of interlanguage development. Most linguists look upon this process as a positive use of L₁ knowledge. Less reliance on L₁ structures occurs naturally as the acquirer progresses to intermediate and advanced stages of L₂ acquisition. Overall, research has found less L₁ influence on L₂ vocabulary and grammar development once students move beyond the beginning levels of language acquisition. Students beginning L₂ exposure as adolescents and adults experience some L₁ influence on L₂ pronunciation throughout their lives. Also, research in L₂ academic writing has found considerable influence from L₁ on L₂ rhetorical thought patterns (Connor & Kaplan, 1987).

Threshold Hypothesis

Some studies indicate that if a certain academic and literacy threshold (Cummins, 1976) is not reached in L₁ (with at least four to five years of L₁ schooling), students may experience cognitive and academic difficulties in L₂ (Collier, 1987, 1995; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1976, 1981b, 1991, 2000; Dulay & Burt, 1980; Duncan & De Avila, 1979; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). Not only are L₁ literacy skills important to L₂ literacy in languages with obvious transfer possibilities, but also literacy skills from non-Roman-alphabet languages (such as Arabic, Hindi, Korean, and Mandarin Chinese) assist significantly with acquisition of L₂ literacy in a Roman-alphabet language such as English (Chu, 1981; Cummins, 1991; Thonis, 1981). Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, and Hart (1990) found that L₁ literacy has a strong positive impact on academic achievement even in L₂ for language minority students attending Canadian bilingual immersion programs.

A number of researchers have criticized Cummins's threshold hypothesis as well as his distinction between social and academic language, suggesting that both are rooted in the deficit theory of semilingualism, or the belief that some language

minority children do not know any language at all, or speak their native and target languages with only limited ability (Crawford, 2004; Edelsky, et al, 1983; Edelsky, 1996; MacSwan, 2000; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2003; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986; Wiley, 1996). This belief has little theoretical or empirical validity, they argue, because all normal children acquire the language of their speech community, and thus are unlikely to arrive at school without the ability to understand or speak it. Moreover, the term *semilingualism* fits all too well into popular stereotypes about children who do not know English and do not know their mother tongue either, and therefore do poorly in school settings (MacSwan, 2000).

Cummins initially used the term in the context of the threshold hypothesis to characterize the low levels of academic proficiency that some bilingual students appeared to manifest in their two languages. He argued that failure to attain strong academic proficiency in either language "might mediate the consequences of their bilingualism for cognitive and academic development" (cited in Cummins, 2000, p. 100). Cummins made clear that such a condition was the result of discriminatory schooling and the systemic denial to language minority students the opportunity to access literacy and academic language in either L_1 or L_2 . Over the years, Cummins has repudiated his earlier use of the term (1979a, 2000), stating that it "has no theoretical value in describing or explaining the poor school performance of some bilingual students" (2000, p. 99). Nonetheless, he argues forcefully that the attainment—or not—of academic language proficiency is the principal variable in school success:

... The denial of the theoretical utility of the construct of "semilingualism" does not imply that the academic language proficiency (CALP) that bilingual students develop in their two languages is irrelevant to their academic progress. In fact, there is overwhelming evidence that for both monolingual and bilingual students, the degree of academic language proficiency they develop in school is a crucial intervening variable in mediating their academic progress. The vast majority of those who have argued that "semilingualism does not exist" have failed to realize that theoretical constructs are not characterized by existence or nonexistence but by characteristics such as validity and usefulness, or their opposites. Most have also declined to engage with the question of how language proficiency is related to academic achievement and how individual differences in academic language proficiency should be characterized (2000, p. 99).

MacSwan (2000) and MacSwan and Rolstad (2003) extend the discussion about semilingualism and academic language proficiency in recent works. In a review of research studies of language variation, linguistic structure, school performance, and language loss, they argue that all of the research findings are either spurious or irrelevant. The authors maintain that semilingualism, as the basis of the threshold hypothesis, is essentially indistinguishable from classical prescriptivism, because it ascribes special status to the language of school, and hence to the language of the educated classes. Thus, the threshold hypothesis itself, like semilingualism and the BICs/CALP distinction, assumes that the *academic* language of the school is richer or inherently superior to the *social* language spoken by minority children at home. While first language literacy "and knowledge of academic discourse and vocabulary

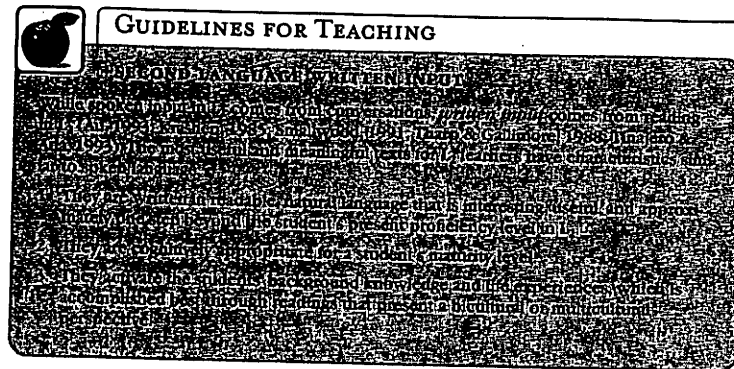
are certainly relevant to *academic* achievement, they are not relevant to *linguistic* achievement. All normal children achieve linguistically" (MacSwan, 2000, p. 35, emphasis in original). Wiley (1996), in his own critique of Cummins's distinction between "context-embedded/cognitively undemanding" social language and "context-reduced, cognitively demanding" academic language, similarly argues against the perspective that "literate academic language is *intrinsically* more cognitively demanding than oral language" (p. 171).

The deficit implications of the threshold hypothesis for policy and pedagogy have not been fully explored. On the one hand, the theory hypothesizes that helping children achieve academic or cognitive thresholds in L_1 first—which then theoretically contributes to academic success in L_2 —is only possible at school (in a bilingual education program, for example) and not in a language minority home where there are perceived linguistic and literacy deficiencies. On the other hand, the threshold hypothesis has been widely embraced by teachers and researchers alike and has been used as the justification for bilingual education program models that emphasize academic instruction in L_1 , accompanied by a gradual increase in English language development. Indeed, as we discussed earlier, many studies have indicated that cognitive and academic development in students' first language contributes positively to both the acquisition of English and academic success in school.

Input and Interaction

Essential to the language acquisition process is a source of input. This is best provided by speakers of the target language in a social setting in which the target language speaker selects and modifies the L_2 input in the context of social interaction with the L_2 learner so that real communication takes place (Wong Fillmore, 1991a). Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985) posits that the key to L_2 acquisition is a source of L_2 input that is understood, natural, interesting, useful for meaningful communication, and approximately one step beyond the learner's present level of competence in L_2 . In L_1 acquisition for children, adults and older children provide natural input through caregiver speech, and a modification of vocabulary and structures to enable meaningful communication with the child. Some common characteristics of caregiver speech are focusing on the here and now, shortening sentences, repeating through rephrasing, inserting pauses, modeling what the child seems to want to say, correcting errors indirectly, and focusing on communication rather than language form (Berko Gleason, 2001; de Villiers & de Villiers, 1978; Snow & Ferguson, 1977; Wells, 1985). A natural stage of beginning L_1 acquisition can also be observed in beginning child L_2 acquisition, a silent period of several months when children mostly listen to the new language, without being forced to produce the new language. Young ESL beginners who rarely speak in the new L_2 have been found to make just as much, and frequently more, progress in L_2 acquisition as their more talkative classmates by the end of the first year of exposure to L_2 (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; Saville-Troike, 1984; Wong Fillmore & Valadez, 1986).

While respecting an initial need for a silent period, as research has continued to discover the complexities of L_2 acquisition, most linguists today would agree



that language acquisition does not generally occur purely through a source of input, but through *interaction* with that source of input (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1985, 1990, 1994; Gass & Madden, 1985; Hatch, 1983; Swain, 1985; Wong Fillmore, 1989, 1991a). Researchers focusing on teacher talk as a source of L₂ input have found modifications in speech similar to those in caregiver speech, such as nonverbal pauses, gestures, and facial expressions; changes in volume and manner of delivery; simplification of syntax; repetitions, paraphrases, and expansions; use of visual aids and realia; and comprehension checks. Interactional features of teacher talk have added to the above strategies clarification and confirmation checks, explicit error correction and modeling appropriate form, as well as introducing playfulness with language (Smallwood, 1992).

Output is just as essential as input (Swain, 1985). Output comes from the L₂ learner in the form of speaking and writing. Interactional features mentioned above in spoken language are also available to students in written language through feedback from teachers and peers. Writing experienced through the writing process, with stimulation from peer and teacher interaction in response to each stage of the writing, leads to new language acquisition (Enright & McCloskey, 1988; Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Goodman & Wilde, 1992; Hudelson, 1994; Johnson & Roen, 1989). In summary, the negotiation of meaning through oral and written language between L₂ learners and native speakers is considered central to the acquisition process.

SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AS A NATURAL, DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

Research evidence has found that many aspects of L₂ acquisition appear to be driven by an internal capability of the brain to facilitate this natural process. This innate ability is available to children, adolescents, and adults, in both untutored and classroom-assisted L₂ acquisition (Chomsky, 1957, 1965). Research on interlanguage

(L₂ acquirers' language produced at various stages of L₂ acquisition) and language universals (properties common to many or all languages) continues to identify aspects of the process that most L₂ acquirers experience. While each student varies in the order and the rate at which specific language features are acquired, there are general, predictable stages that most learners pass through (Brown, 1994a; Ellis, 1985, 1994; Hakuta, 1987; Krashen, 1981; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

For example, there is a developmental sequence to the acquisition of negation, interrogation, and relative clauses in ESL acquisition. In the first stage, most acquirers commonly produce a word order that does not necessarily reflect the standard word order of English, and some sentence constituents are omitted. In the second stage, the acquirer begins to use English word order and most required sentence constituents are there, but grammatical accuracy is not. Grammatical morphemes begin to be used more systematically and meaningfully in the third stage. In the fourth stage, the acquirer moves to acquisition of more complex sentence structures (Ellis, 1985, pp. 58–64). Studies of ESL morpheme acquisition also provide evidence for a natural developmental sequence, regardless of the learner's background or L₁. For example, as a general pattern, the morpheme *-ing*, the plural, and the helping verb *to be* are acquired much earlier than the regular past tense, third-person singular present tense, and the possessive (Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1977, 1981; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

Teachers can facilitate the natural process by recognizing that acquisition of any given feature in the language cannot be mastered quickly. A morpheme, for example, will be acquired in stages, with gradual awareness and refining of rules surrounding that morpheme, as the detail of complexity of its use becomes more evident to the acquirer. Formal instruction cannot speed up the natural developmental process, but it can facilitate it. Errors need not be viewed as lack of mastery but as positive steps in the L₂ acquisition process. While recognizing that the natural L₁ acquisition process is an innate capability also available to L₂ acquirers, much greater individual variation occurs in L₂ acquisition than in L₁ acquisition (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Hakuta, 1986, 1987; Wong Fillmore, 1991a). This variation is due to the interaction of many other factors in second-language acquisition, including those discussed in the preceding section on linguistic processes, as well as sociocultural and cognitive variables to be discussed in the following sections.

Social and Cultural Processes

Social and cultural factors in the second-language acquisition process represent a wide range of mostly external forces that strongly affect the instructional context, such as students' socioeconomic status and past schooling, the functions of L₁ and L₂ use within a community, attitudes toward L₁ and L₂, social and psychological distance between L₁ and L₂ speakers, subordinate status of a minority group, cross-cultural conflict, and many more potential factors. While many social and cultural factors may not be easily modified by teacher or student, educators can adapt existing instructional practices and educational structures to provide as supportive an educational environment as possible for students' acquisition of L₂ and their successful academic achievement.

Extensive research from anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, social psychology, and education has identified many very powerful sociocultural influences on L_2 acquisition for schooling. To ignore these factors is equivalent to setting up a system for the academic failure of many L_2 students. The sociocultural context is different in each school setting, and it is therefore difficult to generalize findings from one community or school to another. However, research in each school setting can provide new insights into sociocultural patterns to illustrate the complexity of their interaction with the L_2 acquisition process. This brief review does not begin to cover the wide range of social and cultural processes that can interact with linguistic and cognitive variables. Only a few examples will be presented here, with expansion of this discussion in Chapters Five and Ten.

Language Use at School

An issue as seemingly simple as language use is fraught with sociocultural complications. Within school, what is allowed is often a reflection of language status within a given community. When the majority group wishes to keep a minority group in subordinate status, often school rules are subconsciously used to maintain the hierarchical relationship between groups. Use of a minority language is sometimes perceived as a threat by monolingual majority language speakers. Educational historians' analyses of U.S. school patterns in the twentieth century are replete with examples of repression of minority language use at school—including physical punishment (Crawford, 1992a; Tyack, 1974). Why do we feel so threatened?

While in most other countries of the world bilingualism is the norm and is present in everyday life for all classes of society and all age groups (Grosjean, 1982), in the United States the pattern during the twentieth century has been to encourage the eradication of bilingualism as quickly as possible. Yet in spite of this pattern, bilingualism persists. L_1 is used at home or in the language minority community because a person's L_1 is intimately connected to his or her self-identity. It is the first means of expression of soul, kinship, emotions, tastes, sounds, and smells. L_1 is associated with the most important and intimate aspects of existence. To take L_1 away is to rob a person of his or her most basic identity and meaning in life.

Estimates from the 1990 U.S. Census have found that 55.9 million persons, or 22.5 percent of the total U.S. population, speak a non-English language at home (Waggoner, 1991). While the fear is expressed that immigrants are not learning English, this is far from the reality. Research clearly shows that a language shift to English as the primary language occurs among language minorities faster in the United States than anywhere else in the world (by the second or third generation). Our high rate of immigration, with new arrivals daily, masks the language shift to English as the primary language that is actually occurring at a very rapid rate (Crawford, 1992a; Grosjean, 1982; Veltman, 1988).

Bilingual school personnel and educated language minority parents, who work on building students' cognitive development in L_1 , describe what an uphill battle it is to fight U.S. societal pressure for children to switch to English and lose

L_1 as quickly as possible. Lambert (1975, 1984) refers to the lack of societal support for a minority language, with gradual loss of L_1 , as subtractive bilingualism, a consequence of social pressure sometimes present in majority-minority relations. If L_1 loss occurs too early in life, however, it is associated with negative cognitive effects. Subtractive bilinguals (who lose L_1) perform less well on many cognitive and academic measures than additive bilinguals (who acquire L_2 and maintain L_1).

Societal and community patterns are reflected in school in relationships among various ethnolinguistic student groups and among students and staff. Conscious analysis of these forces can lead to constructive, democratic decisions for change for a classroom as well as for the whole school. Bilingual programs that provide strong instructional support for both L_1 and L_2 , with more equal status given to the two languages, are the most successful programs for language minority students, for both L_2 academic development and building students' self-confidence and self-esteem (Collier, 1989c, 1992c; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Among indigenous groups, L_1 revitalization in schools is crucial for cognitive development, to connect to the deep knowledge passed on within each ethnolinguistic community from generation to generation (Fishman, 1991; Hinton & Hale, 2001; McCarty, 2004; Ovando, 1994; Ovando & Gourd, 1996), such as intimate knowledge of the ecology of a region and human responses to that environment. L_1 loss can lead to "a destruction of intimacy, the dismemberment of family and community, the loss of a rooted identity" (Slate, 1993, p. 30). In schools with no instructional support for L_1 for language minority students, decisions can be made regarding social language use that reflect respect for the functions of L_1 for identity and cognitive development, as well as social and emotional support. Creating a school context for additive bilingualism demands respect and valuing of all minority languages, dialects, and cultures (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 1996b; Trueba, 1991).

Language use decisions apply not only to majority/minority languages in use in the school community, but also to regional varieties of language (such as the use of nonstandard dialects of a language). Linguists look upon all varieties of language as equally complex, grammatical, and purposeful (or they would not exist). Acknowledging that a language variety serves an important function in a given community and then assisting students with an analysis of the uses and contrasting features of that variety and the standard variety affirm students' identity and help with the process of bidialectal acquisition (Delpit, 1998; Ovando, 1993).

Sociolinguists and anthropologists have amassed a significant body of knowledge examining the functions of language use in many culturally varied ethnolinguistic communities for a comparison with typical genres taught in U.S. schools. These studies have generally found a wealth of functions of language use that support and broaden the academic uses of language in school, much richer than the narrow stereotypical perceptions that school staff members have of language development at home and in the community (Diaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1986; Heath, 1986; Minami & Ovando, 2004; Trueba, Guthrie, & Au, 1981). When closer school-community relations are developed, what is frequently revealed is a richer, more complex range of language use in the home, community, and professional

life, and a very narrow, restricted focus of uses of language at school. In several regions of the United States where a large ethnolinguistic community exists that has experienced discrimination and resultant low academic achievement in schools, researchers and school staff have worked together to forge linkages between the community and school, resulting in contagious excitement among students and staff as an expanded school curriculum is developed that recognizes the social and cultural nature of learning and language development. Exciting, ongoing school-community linkages have radically transformed school practices and L₂ academic achievement among, for example, African Americans (Heath, 1983), Ethiopian Americans, Haitian Americans, Portuguese Americans (Warren, Rosebery, & Conant, 1990), Hawaiian Americans (Au & Jordan, 1981; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993; Wilson & Kamanā, 2001), Mexican Americans (Ada, 1988; Delgado-Gaitán, 1987, 1990; Moll & Diaz, 1993; Moll, Vélez-Ibáñez, Gréenber, & Rivera, 1990), and Navajo students (McCarty, 2004; Rosier & Holm, 1980; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993).

Students' Socioeconomic Status

Any group of educators gathered together can very quickly identify many student background factors that they believe affect their students' success or lack of success in the classroom. How much these factors affect the L₂ acquisition process has not yet been analyzed extensively because it is difficult to control these variables in research, and their influence on L₂ development varies greatly from one student to another. For example, socioeconomic status (SES) was identified in educational research of the 1960s and 1970s as one of the most powerful variables influencing student achievement. A common approach to language teaching of the 1970s and early 1980s was to assume that students of low SES background were best taught through a carefully structured, sequenced, basic skills approach to language arts. Today, substantial research has found that this practice actually widens the gap in achievement between middle- and low-SES students as the students move into the upper grades; whole language approaches to language teaching hold more promise for addressing the language needs of students of all income backgrounds (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1988; Oakes, 1985; Rothman, 1991; Valdez Pierce, 1991).

For language minorities, severe poverty is not necessarily closely correlated with L₂ academic failure. The circumstances for each ethnolinguistic family in the United States may vary greatly, and many other factors may interact with SES to make it a less powerful variable in academic language development. Most new immigrants go through a shift in SES from home country to host country, some from higher SES to lower status in the United States, and others experiencing upward mobility upon emigration. Recent research on effective schools for language minority students has found that low SES is a less powerful variable for students in schools that provide a strong bilingual/bicultural, academically rich context for instruction (Collier, 1992c; Cummins, 1996b; Krashen & Biber, 1988; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Rothman, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Valdez Pierce, 1991).

Students' Past Schooling and Escape from War

Past educational experience is another factor in students' background that is much more powerful than SES for acquisition of academic L₂. Immigrants from an economically depressed region of the world may have experienced fewer school hours per day because of overcrowding of schools, or they may have come from a rural area with limited accessibility to formal schooling. Over the past decade, large numbers of new students have arrived in the United States from war-torn areas of the world, where they experienced long periods of interrupted schooling or crowded refugee camp conditions with little opportunity for instructional support. Very little research has been conducted on recent arrivals with little or no formal L₁ schooling. These students appear to need lots of academic support in the language in which they are cognitively more mature, L₁, in order to develop literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies knowledge as quickly as possible to make up for years of missed instruction. In special programs developed for students from war-torn areas, teachers say that some students may also need lots of emotional support and counseling to deal with the scars of violence they have witnessed, lost family members, and continuing trauma of establishing stable family relations and meeting their basic survival needs.

In an analysis of Hmong adaptation to the U.S. school culture, Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton (1990) concluded that the Indochinese children they studied who had escaped war and emigrated from refugee camps needed bicultural learning environments "to break the vicious cycle of stress, poor performance, humiliation, depression, and failure" (p. 109). The researchers recommended school curricula for the Indochinese students that would provide a meaningful way to integrate language, culture, and community knowledge, making each academic activity functionally meaningful and connecting it to students' prior knowledge, based on the model developed by Tharp and Gallimore (1988). This model has been successfully applied to language minority students in Hawaii, Arizona, and California, significantly increasing academic L₂ achievement.

Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore (1992) examined 6,750 Southeast Asian boat people who emigrated to the United States following devastating hardships suffered in war and relocation camps. The researchers collected extensive information on these Indochinese parents and their children, using survey data, interviews conducted in L₁, and students' academic records at school, including grade point averages and standardized test scores. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, they found that the strongest predictors of L₂ academic success for these Indochinese children were parents' maintenance of L₁ at home, reading books in L₁ to their children, and strong retention of their own cultural traditions and values, including providing a supportive home environment that placed a high value on love of learning. These were families who, for the most part, had not had extensive opportunities for formal schooling in the past; education had been a restricted privilege for the well-to-do. In spite of parents' lack of formal education and lack of English proficiency, they were able to provide the family support needed to help their children excel in L₂ academic achievement through continuing development of their first language and cultural heritage at home.

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To the memory of my ancestors,
who passed on to me
their cultural and linguistic heritage and
adventurous spirit
and for my father.

—Carlos J. Orlando

To my bilingual and bicultural daughters,
Claudia and Sarah Maria

—Mary Carol Combs

To my mother and father,

who envision the world as one.

—Virginia R. Collier