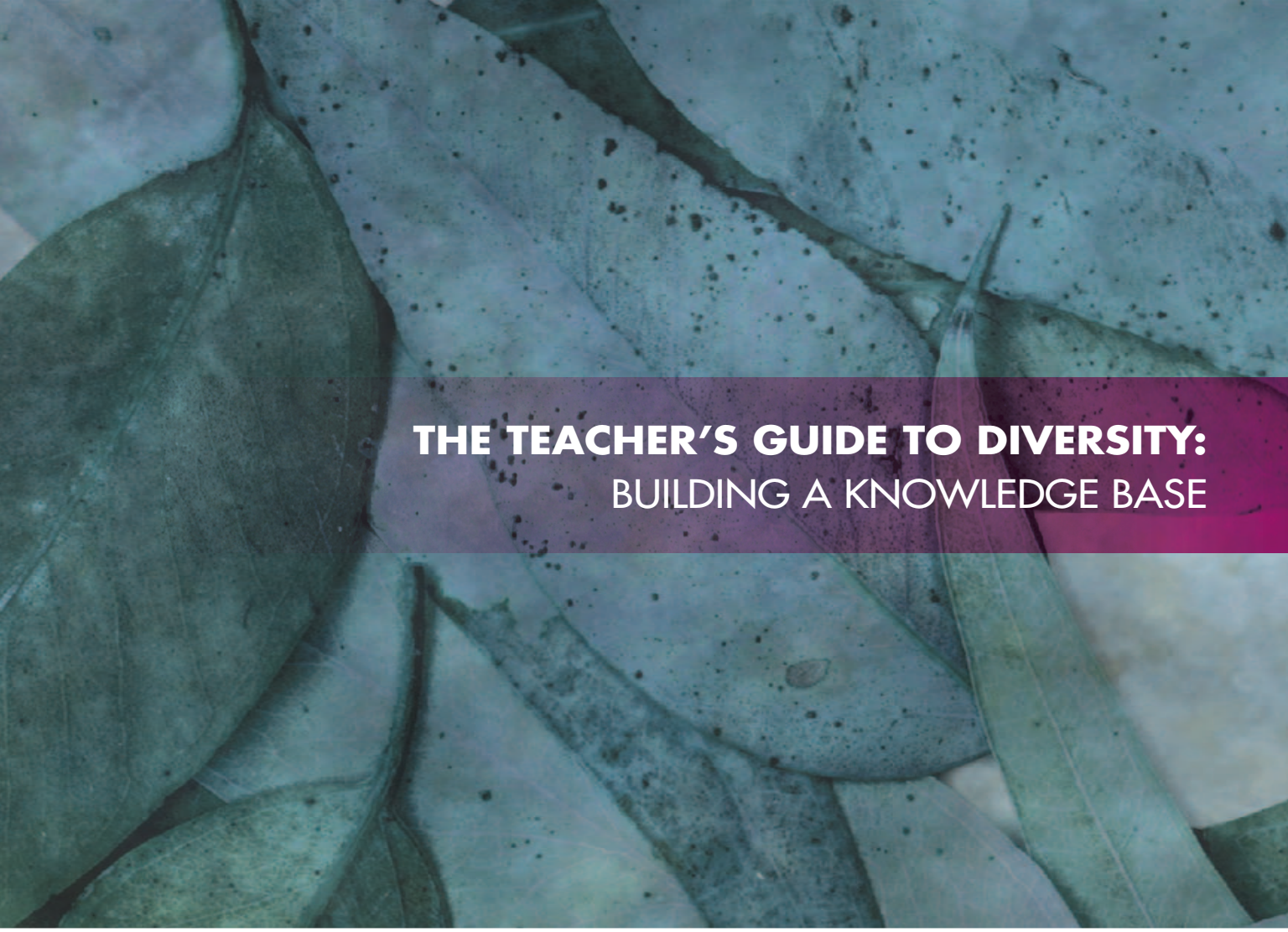


THE TEACHER'S GUIDE TO DIVERSITY:
BUILDING A KNOWLEDGE BASE

Volume II:
Language

Elise Trumbull and Maria Pacheco

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Volume II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is language proficiency? How does it interact with culture, human development, learning, and schooling? How can teachers best support English language learners (ELLs) and speakers of different English dialects? What are the current views of literacy acquisition and best approaches to literacy instruction? And how can assessments eliminate bias based on language? In *Volume II: Language,* we address these questions and many more.

We live in a world connected through language. All human beings have the desire to communicate, and this connection is achieved largely through language. In fact, as Fromkin and Rodman (1998) have observed, "Wherever humans exist, language exists" (p. 26). Given the universal nature of language, it might not appear to be worthy of study. But upon closer scrutiny, it is clear that language is an extremely complex sociocultural and cognitive phenomenon. Because language is at the heart of learning, development, and schooling, it bears investigation by teachers beyond the ways that it is usually presented in language arts courses.

In this volume, we ground our understanding of language in culture and cultural context. The noted sociolinguist Joshua Fishman (1991) has described three connections between language and culture:

- **Language indexes culture**: A language that has grown with a culture is the best language through which to describe and communicate that culture. So, cultures cannot truly be understood through another language—and when children lose the language of their parents, they become cut off from many cultural meanings that can be conveyed only through that language.

- **Language symbolizes culture**: Language reflects the status and social positioning of a culture. In Sweden, the Finnish language of immigrants and former immigrants marks them with a lower social status in schools than their native-Swedish-speaking peers. Terms like *Anglo* and *Hispanic* that are used to designate groups of English or Spanish speakers conjure up different associations related to social status.

- **Culture is partly created by its language**: Certain cultural events such as rituals, storytelling, greeting, praying, and joking encode and perpetuate deep cultural meanings across generations. It is unimaginable that such cultural content could be conveyed without language and without the particular language of the cultural group.

In Part 1: Language, Culture, and Schooling, we discuss the central role of language in culture and in human identity. We introduce the reader to cultural differences in communication style and language use, presenting examples and activities that illustrate these differences. We consider language attitudes and explore variations in language, including African American Vernacular English (also known as Black Language or Ebonics). In a way, we ask the reader to become an

educational linguist and to investigate the ways that language is used in nondominant cultural and linguistic groups. We take the position that teachers can empower students both by valuing their home-culture languages and dialects and also by teaching them what Delpit calls the "codes of power" (1995, p. 40)—the language of school and the dominant culture.

In Part II: English Language Learners, we describe the language learning goals that ELLs face and some of the most important factors that influence their progress toward accomplishing those goals. This material is intended as a basic resource for general education teachers who increasingly have ELLs in their classrooms. For this reason, we focus not only on instructional strategies but also delve into theories underlying second language acquisition, the developmental stages of second language acquisition, and some of the educational programs and models that support bilingualism and biliteracy. Here, we differentiate between language difficulties—which are common occurrences in the natural progression of second language acquisition—and language deficiencies, with which second language learners are often misdiagnosed, causing them to be disproportionately represented in special education classes.

Finally, in Part III: Language and Assessment, we discuss language as it relates to two very important realms of schooling. We review research-based approaches to literacy instruction and show how children need to relate oral and written language in the process of literacy acquisition. Understanding students' literacy acquisition is greatly enhanced by a basic grasp of the components of language as linguists have defined them—phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics. Development in these areas of language, along with an understanding of print, appropriate literary styles, and purposes for reading, make up the complex process of literacy acquisition.

In our discussion, we explore both language assessment and the role of language in subject-matter assessment. We suggest ways that teachers can evaluate their students' language proficiency, with a view to identifying areas in which students need support. And we explain how they can reduce inappropriate linguistic demands on subject-matter assessments. Not only ELLs but all students stand to benefit from assessments written in clear, simple language; it is important to distinguish between low assessment performance based on difficulties with language and lack of conceptual understanding.

As with *Volume I: Human Development, Culture, and Cognition*, we urge readers to engage in ongoing conversations in their schools and communities that address issues of diversity and the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. We also challenge the reader to raise questions about complex social phenomena and inequities—questions that may not offer simple solutions but do illuminate pathways toward social change.



PART I:

Language, Culture, and Schooling

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND SCHOOLING

…[H]uman culture in its great complexity could not have developed and is unthinkable without the aid of language….[A]ny particular language is a form…of learned behavior and therefore part of the culture" (Salzmann, 1993, pp. 151, 156).

Most teachers in the United States find themselves working with students and families who are from linguistic and cultural backgrounds different from their own. At the same time, most teachers have not received the necessary preparation to effectively reach all their students (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Part I explores the relationships among language, culture, and schooling and offers many suggestions that teachers at all levels should find useful.

Language
A symbol system that is the primary human means of communication, more flexible than animal communication by virtue of its productive use of a finite number of units (sounds, words) to create an infinite number of novel utterances via a system of implicit grammatical rules[1]; a particular human communication system (e.g., Japanese)

Symbolize
To represent one thing with another; in language, to use words (symbols) and sentences to express meanings; words convey meaning by convention, not on the basis of their form, making them symbolic

Phonology
The branch of linguistics concerned with study of the sounds (phonemes) and sound patterns of a language

Phoneme
The smallest linguistic unit of sound that makes a difference to meaning. For example, although the *a* in *apple* sounds different from the *a* in *damp*, it is still the same phoneme. The beginning sounds in witch and which are two different phonemes. Even though many speakers pronounce them the same, the phonemes distinguish many words from each other (e.g., *whale/wail, where/wear, while/wile*).

Morphology
The branch of linguistics concerned with the study of word structure beyond the individual sound units, or how morphemes are combined. Teachers may think in terms of how prefixes and suffixes alter the meaning and grammatical function of root words

[1] Sign, the language of the deaf and hard of hearing, uses hand and body shapes and motions instead of sounds.

Morpheme
The smallest unit of language that bears grammatical or semantic (meaning-related) information; can be a word or a word part (e.g., *think-ing* is composed of two morphemes)

Syntax
The branch of linguistics concerned with the study of word combinations and sentence patterns, commonly thought of as grammar

Semantics
The branch of linguistics concerned with the study of how meaning is conveyed via language

Pragmatics
The branch of linguistics concerned with the study of how language is used in social interactions to accomplish various goals

Communicative Competence
A characterization of language proficiency that emphasizes the ability to use all of one's phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic skills to communicate in a wide range of ways

Dialect
A variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by features of phonology, grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics, and discourse conventions

Most learning experiences involve language to some degree. Language is the primary tool we use to symbolize what we experience and think and to communicate with others (Crystal, 1987; Gardner, 1983; Oller, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962). However, different cultural groups use language in different ways (Heath, 1983, 1986). Languages have evolved to serve the cultural needs of their speakers, as surely as language is the principal vehicle for cultural transmission across generations. In fact, foreign language study is touted as essential for learning about other cultures, although exactly how to incorporate cultural study in language instruction is a contested topic (Kramsch, 1993).

In the same way that culture influences our theories of child development (Rogoff, 2003), culture influences how we use and develop language (Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 1993; Heath, 1983; Hymes, 1971; Nelson-Barber, 1997; Philips, 1983). As culture changes, so too does language, reflecting new realities and values. In fact, culture and language are so thoroughly intertwined that loss of one leads to loss of the other (Brown, Hammond, & Onikama, 1997; Fishman, 1991; Hinton, 1994; Wong-Fillmore, 1991).

"Languages are like…archives," says researcher Kevin Connell, who is a speaker of Onondaga, an Iroquoian language. "All of [a culture's] history is in there somewhere. One of the things that's

archived in a language is a completely different way of being here, of thinking and of logic." Contrasting Onondaga and English, Connell says, "English is a language of tense….You are obliged in English to pay attention to a timeline.…Onondaga is a language of space, and how you are in that space" (Grace-Kobas, 2000, p. 1). Likewise, in the Inuit language (Inuktitut) spoken by some Alaska Natives, suffixes are added to verbs to show the direction of an action (*up, in, over there*) and to indicate from whose perspective the action is taking place (Ascher, 1991). English does not incorporate spatial information in the form of suffixes attached to verbs and has fewer grammatical resources than Inuktitut for representing space in relation to listener and speaker perspectives. With regard to time, English does have a more explicit tense system than some languages do: The –ed ending shows past tense, and a system of auxiliary verbs (*have, will, do*) denote past and future time. African American Vernacular English makes tense distinctions that standard English does not make. Whereas English and Spanish have similar tense distinctions, Spanish speakers tend to make greater use of these distinctions when they write (Slobin & Bocaz, 1988, cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

English verbs do not include information about the speaker's knowledge source in making an assertion. Andean Indian languages and varieties of Spanish spoken in the Andean highlands add information to the verb to indicate whether the speaker knows the information through hearsay, first-hand knowledge, or inference (Aikhenvald, 2004). Such differences in verb structure led theorists such as Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf to argue that our language shapes the way we perceive the world (Whorf, 1956).

To succeed within their cultural group, all children need to learn not only the linguistic code of that group but also the ways in which language is used (Heath, 1986; Ninio & Snow, 1996). Language use includes the goals of speaking (i.e., what is accomplished by using language) as well as rules about when children should speak, to whom they may speak, and the circumstances surrounding what topics are spoken (Gleason, 2005). These are the pragmatic or social expectations surrounding language. Children learn these conventions along with pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, but these social aspects of language are so automatic (and learned so unconsciously) that neither children, nor their parents, nor their teachers tend to be consciously aware of them. Some researchers believe that language use is the most powerful cultural element in the classroom (Heath, 1986; Villegas, 1991).

A. What Is Language Proficiency?

Proficiency in a language means being able to use that language to express a wide variety of meanings in a range of contexts—academic, social, informal, and formal. It means mastery of the phonological (sound), semantic (vocabulary), morphological (word forming), syntactic (grammatical), and pragmatic (social/functional) systems of language. Those learning a new language will be gradually developing skills and knowledge in all of these domains in order to use language to accomplish particular goals. Figure 1 shows three different ways of categorizing the components of language proficiency.

Figure 1: Three Views of Language Proficiency

Language Arts View				
Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	(Signing)
Traditional Linguistic View				
Phonology	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics	(Pragmatics)*
Communicative Competence View*				
Grammatical competence	Pragmatic competence**	Discourse competence	Strategic competence	

(Based on Trumbull & Farr, 2005, p. 13)

* relatively recent additions

** also known as sociolinguistic competence

Teachers, naturally, tend to think of language in terms of the domain of language arts and its standards for achievement. Reporting on student progress is usually expressed in language arts terms as well. However, it is also useful for teachers to examine their students' language from a linguistic perspective. The categories listed under "Traditional Linguistic View" in Figure 1 refer to the components of language proficiency[2], each of which is part of the processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For example, phonological knowledge is involved in listening, as students detect small differences between similar words. It must be applied in speaking, as students make distinctions in pronouncing words. And it plays a strong role in reading and writing, as students bring oral knowledge of the sound patterns of the language to word identification and spelling. Likewise, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge apply to each language arts domain. Being able to examine student performance using these categories can help teachers hone in on specific developmental issues that may need particular attention in instruction.

[2] These are also the terms for branches of linguistics.

The communicative competence view to language proficiency (Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Hymes, 1972) focuses on language learning and teaching in meaningful situations, how a student's language skills are learned and applied appropriately in various contexts. From the perspective of communicative competence, grammatical competence refers to mastery of pronunciation (phonology), vocabulary (semantics), word formation (morphology), and sentence formation (syntax). Pragmatic or sociolinguistic competence refers to knowing how to use language appropriately in different social circumstances. It includes the ability to make decisions about what dialect or level of formality is appropriate to a situation.

Discourse competence is proficiency in carrying on conversations and combining sentences meaningfully and cohesively into other oral and written forms (e.g., discussions, arguments, explanations, and narratives). Strategic competence means being able to get one's message across through use of repetition or volume, paraphrase, corrections of errors, and the like. It is useful for teachers to have a basic grasp of these different ways of regarding students' language, not only for the sake of ELLs and second dialect learners but also for all learners. We focus on the communicative competence view because of its emphasis on language use, which is a critical determinant of a student's success in school (Cazden, 1999; Gee, 1990; Heath, 1983, 1986). In addition, much current theory about how languages are learned most readily emphasizes learning in meaningful contexts (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995; Ninio & Snow, 1988; Owens, 2005). In addition, students benefit from explicit instruction in particular skills.

Although much of the literature on communicative competence addresses the issue of teaching ELLs, it can be extremely useful to teachers of all students. Two short publications, *Language and Culture Bulletin* and *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*, can help teachers become familiar with ways of understanding students' language use with a view to tailoring classroom instruction in support of language development (These are available online and listed in Resources for Teachers at the end of this part).

Academic language proficiency can be a challenge for many students because they are expected to use language in increasingly complex ways to communicate what they are learning as well as in different ways from what they typically do at home. At school, students may be expected to recount a past experience, framing it in a way that outsiders to the experience can understand. They may have to explain how they solved a mathematics problem or to speculate about what would happen if they took an alternative approach in a science experiment.

According to Cazden (1999), all of the various uses of language in a classroom can be subsumed within three broad categories of "universal macro-functions: the referential construction and communication of ideas, the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, and the expression of participants' social identities and attitudes" (p. 39). Cazden asserts that in the classroom, "[l]earning new ways with words thus entails taking on new interactional roles and the new identities they create and express" (p. 32).

B. The Power of Language to Influence Student Outcomes

It can be argued that we do not create language; rather, it creates us. The language surrounding children teaches them who they are, what their place in the world is, and what they need to do to become autonomous and valuable citizens. If they are unable to interact with and negotiate

cultural discourses with critical insight and confidence, they will be less autonomous and more isolated. The term *discourses* refers to the daily linguistic interactions, both academic and social, that take place either inside or outside of school. People become empowered when they can use and adapt language for their own purposes, but too often the discourse of the dominant culture (and the school) displaces the discourse of students from minority or nondominant cultures (Gee, 1990; Gutiérrez, Stone, & Larson, in press).

Success in education is highly dependent on a student's ability to display knowledge, usually through the spoken or written word. Teachers' first impressions of students are often based on the ways they use language (Ramirez, 1985). In later stages of education, verbal contact through formal or informal assessments is the main link between students and those who decide their educational fate. In fact, formal education is largely a process of teaching the rules for using words and other signs in academic meaning systems (Corson, 1995) and then judging how well those rules have been learned.

Beyond school, students' life opportunities are influenced by their ability to interact with the discourses around them. These interactions are largely based upon assumptions and expectations about language and communication. Much of the discourse that controls outcomes for students is shaped by institutions over which parents from non-mainstream linguistic and cultural groups often have little influence (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Young, 1999). Schools need to be linguistically flexible and deliberate about both introducing new forms of discourse and recognizing non-school discourses as valuable assets in order to improve the life opportunities of language-minority students (Gee, 1990; Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999).

C. Language and Identity

"[Language] is the key to the psychology and philosophy of a people and is the lens through which the national and individual psyche (soul) may be understood. Through its structure, phenomenological data are strained and even altered in accord with a manner the people can comprehend and make part of their worldview" (Bunge, 1992, p. 377).

Language is intimately connected to one's identity as an individual and as a member of a cultural group (Salzmann, 1993). Perhaps that is why such vehement and personal arguments often arise over language, particularly in relation to immigrants' speaking their home language. At heart, many of the complaints about immigrants' not speaking English reflect a desire to have one's own language (and all that is associated with it) maintain dominance or power. Bretzer (1992), who has studied social change in Miami since Cuban immigration, says, "Language, it would seem, is audible evidence of loss of power for non-Hispanic whites. The battle over language acts as a surrogate for ethnic conflict" at a time when overt racial conflict has become unacceptable (p. 215). Bretzer also points out that whereas a person cannot change his ethnicity or race, he can change his language—so "language choice replaces race as a means of defining inclusion and exclusion in the community of Americans" (p. 215). When this is the case, students lose—socially, emotionally, cognitively, and academically (Bialystok, 1991; Skutnab-Kangas, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

Activity 1: Language Attachment

Instructions to Participants

Think about how you pronounce each word in Figure 2. Think about where your pronunciation originates. Be prepared to discuss your reflections with the group.

Figure 2: How Do YOU Pronounce It?

nuclear

percolator

caramel

wash

Boston

mischievous

grease (as a verb)

literature

licorice

etc. (et cetera)

often

forehead

Discussion

- **How do you pronounce each of the words on the list in Figure 2?**
- **What other pronunciations have you heard? What do you think or feel when you hear another pronunciation?**
- **Has anyone ever attempted to correct your pronunciation of a word, either directly or indirectly? How did that make you feel?**

For students, acceptance of their languages and dialects constitutes one component of a caring environment where they can feel they belong (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Goodnow, 1993; Osterman, 2000). A sense of belonging is not just a feel-good feature of schooling; it is a factor in student engagement and academic performance (Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996). When students do not feel as though they belong, they tend to have more behavioral problems, lower achievement, and a greater risk of dropping out of school (Osterman, 2000).

Schools can take an "additive" rather than a "subtractive" approach to students' language (Cummins, 2000a; Valenzuela, 1999) by creating an environment in which all languages and dialects are valued, even as new languages and dialects are taught and acquired. It is to a student's advantage to continue to develop his or her first language while learning a new one, and better educational outcomes are associated with an additive rather than a subtractive approach (Thomas & Collier, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

Valenzuela (1999) documents the ways in which pressures to abandon one's native language can add stress to students' lives in school—stress that their peers who are being taught in a culturally responsive way, through their home language, do not experience. In Valenzuela's account, Mexican American students in a Texas high school suffered alienation from their families as well as peers because they could no longer speak Spanish, their home language. Newer Mexican immigrant students insulted them by calling them *agringados* (gringoized/whitened) (Valenzuela, 1999). With whom did they belong? With whom could they identify? Not all schools can provide dual language immersion (Lindholm-Leary, 2000) in which native-English speakers and native speakers of other languages (e.g., Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese) learn one another's languages—with equal status accorded the two languages. But teachers can take a constructive stance and encourage continued development of both students' home languages and English.

D. Differences in Communication Style and Language Use

Communication styles vary across cultures, and communication norms are expressions of each culture's values. Cultures have informal rules that govern speaking and listening behaviors. The patterns of communication and interaction in a student's home culture may be very different from the dominant patterns in schools (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Gudykunst, 1998; Heath, 1983). The cultural communication styles of students within a school are diverse. Instead of regarding these differences in communication style as deviant, teachers need to recognize the sources of these styles and should not deem a single style of communication as the only acceptable one in the classroom.

Students whose ways of using language differ from those approved in school may find school language conventions baffling. They have learned different conventions from those required for participating in the classroom. If teachers do not have information about their students' cultures, they may believe that students are shy, slow, or nonverbal (Dumont, 1979; Labov, 1969; Philips, 1983). Studies with American Indian students and African American students have shown that their verbal responsiveness depends on social circumstances, how questions are posed, and who is posing the questions (Labov, 1972; Swisher & Deyhle, 1992). Other research with Hawaiian, Navajo, and Yup'ik Eskimo students has shown how different classroom organization patterns can lead to good or poor student participation (Au & Jordan, 1981; McCarty & Schaffer, 1992; Nelson-Barber & Dull, 1998). For example, both native Hawaiian students and Yup'ik students responded better to teachers' questions when more than one student was allowed to answer at the same time—a normal practice in their communities where group success is emphasized over individual competition.

Cultural Variations in Language Socialization

Cross-cultural variations in language use have many implications for teaching. A classroom represents a mixture of cultures with distinct beliefs about how children should use language. Some cultural groups emphasize listening over speaking and believe that wisdom entails speaking selectively (Philips, 1972). Other groups (such as the dominant U.S. culture) believe that power and knowledge come through active use of language in social situations (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000). Some groups use language with children primarily to socialize them to expected behaviors (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986). Others encourage small children to talk about what they observe or experience in ways that are similar to how language is used in schools (Snow, 1983).

Parents in some cultures may socialize their children to speak one at a time (a common practice in U.S. classrooms), whereas others allow children to speak at the same time (Au & Jordan, 1981). Some parents believe that questioning an adult is a sign of critical thinking (as in U.S. dominant culture), and others believe that this is a sign of poor upbringing and lack of respect (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997; Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996; Valdés, 1996). These differences can have a profound effect on how comfortable a student feels within the language practices of his or her classroom. Teachers will be in a much better position to encourage student participation in classroom talk if teachers understand how talk takes place in their students' homes. Students may need time to learn the school-based language conventions. However, teaching new ways of using language need not result in a devaluation of students' own cultural communication styles (Heath, 1983).

Cultural Variations in Storytelling

One important way to use language is telling stories. Although most cultural groups tell stories, the conventions for storytelling—an activity all children are asked to do as early as kindergarten—vary tremendously (Heath, 1983; McCabe & Bliss, 2003; Michaels, 1981). Some cultural groups use a *topic-associating* or episodic style, in which a string of personal anecdotes makes up the discourse. The theme of a string may not be immediately clear to the listener because there is no evident beginning, middle, or end—at least, those elements are not perceptible to a listener who is not expecting that form of story (Cazden, 1999; Heath, 1983). Most teachers in the United States are often more comfortable working with children who use a *topic-centered* style. This approach establishes a primary topic and structures the story around it. Speakers typically begin with the time and place, followed by the central character or agent and some action (Cazden, 1988, 1999). A child may begin, "Yesterday, me and my father went out for a sundae, and then we came home and we…" (Cazden, 1988, p. 9).

A topic-associating or episodic story may begin similarly with time and place but then move through several episodes that are not connected in the way that a dominant-culture teacher expects. Such stories can be very long and seem never-ending. Cazden (1988) cites an explanation offered by an Arapaho elder about why Arapaho stories never seem to have an ending. As elder Pius Moss says, "There is no ending to life, and stories are about Arapaho life, so there is no need for a conclusion" (p. 12).

Teachers need to be aware of the different possible ways of telling stories if they are to understand students from nondominant cultural backgrounds such as American Indian and African American students (Cazden, 1988; McCabe & Bliss, 2003). Many aspects of stories differ cross-culturally. For example, three seems to be the magic number in stories of European origin: three bears, three little pigs, three wishes. Four is significant in Navajo stories: four sacred mountains, four directions, the first four clans, four parts of the day (Dyc, 2002; Zolbrod, 1984). The creation myth entails the journey of the earliest Navajo people from the First World (the Black World) to the Second World (the Blue World), Third World (the Yellow World), and finally to the Fourth World (the Glittering World) (Zolbrod, 1984; Redwebz, n.d.).

Shirley Brice Heath (1983) compares the storytelling styles of two communities, one African American and one white:

> People in both Trackton and Roadville spend a lot of time telling stories. Yet the form, occasions, content, and functions of their stories differ greatly. They structure their stories differently; they hold different scales of features on which stories are recognized as stories and judged as good or bad… [The white] community allows only stories which are factual and have little exaggeration; the other uses reality only as the germ of a highly creative fictionalized account. (p. 184)

As Heath notes, these communities share a common emphasis on storytelling but differ in how they understand what a story is and how it ought to be told. The types of oral stories that students are expected to produce in the classroom (e.g., at circle time) are usually true accounts of some experience outside of the classroom. The tacit assumption is that fictional elements will not be introduced, yet that may not be natural for some students.

Research has shown that Vietnamese students tend to emphasize characters and their internal states and focus less on plot than native-English speakers (Söter, 1988). A Vietnamese American student who has been exposed to this tradition may spend what a teacher considers a disproportionate amount of time describing characters and not enough time developing the plot (Söter, 1988). Students from an Arabic writing tradition appear to digress when they use elaborate description (Kaplan, 1966) or when they repeat important elements (a strategy based in an oral tradition) (Sa'Adeddin, 1989). In such cases, students and teachers find themselves focusing on different elements of the text. These cases can result in inaccurate assessment of a student's writing skills, but they also provide an opportunity for student-teacher discussion about differences in narrative styles and expectations for students in an academic setting.

Understanding students' storytelling approaches is only one reason that teachers need some basic knowledge of *sociolinguistics*. Sociolinguists study the relationship between language and society (Crystal, 1987), that is, how language is used differently by people in different social settings and from different sociocultural backgrounds. The communicative competence view of language is rooted in sociolinguistics. Sociolinguists also study language form; they investigate variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax of different dialects. Without some sociolinguistic knowledge, teachers may perceive differences in students' language as deficits and thereby perpetuate biases in judgments about what students are capable of learning (Meier, 1999).

Activity 2: Comparing Narrative Styles

Instructions to Participants

Read the two oral stories in Figure 3 narrated by elementary school children. Discuss the questions following the stories in pairs, small groups, or the whole group.

Figure 3: Oral Story #1

Nellie's Story

I'm Nellie, and I want to tell about my dog. My dog he's a big German Shepherd. He stays down at my granmamma's house. … My mamma doesn't like dogs. And he's big, too. … My granmamma's got another old dog, and they fight. My dog got a big hole in his shoulder. We had to take him to an old man. He put some white stuff on it. And that's all. (Based on Heath, 1983, pp. 302–303)

Figure 4: Oral Story #2

Jason's Story

One day my mom said we had to go take my dog to the vet to get his shots, and we put him in a special dog box and put the box in the car. My dog's name is Spunky, and Spunky howled when we took him in the car. He didn't want to go to the vet. When the vet gave him his shots, he whined, but pretty soon it was over. Then we took him home, and he took a nap.

Discussion

- **What are the similarities and differences in the ways that the two students have structured their stories?**
- **How would each story be rated or evaluated by most teachers? Excellent? Good? Poor? Why?**
- **Identify the storytelling skills of each student, trying to judge each story on its own merits.**

- **Given Nellie's storytelling style, how would you, as a teacher, introduce her to more "school-like" structures? How could you avoid having school expectations displace home expectations?**
- **Could the same activity help Jason to hone his storytelling skills? How?**

Figure 5: Written Story #1

When a Dream Comes True, by Miguel Flores[3]

It was a sunny day. There were birds flying around the school. It was a small, simple but peaceful school that is located in a very little town in Oaxaca exactly in the southwest part of Mexico. I was sitting on an old bench watching the birds flying, when my teacher came to me and smiling said, "Miguel, you have been chosen to represent our school in the next testing competitions in Santa Ana."

"My God," I exclaimed in surprise. "How did that come to be?"

"Because your score on the last test was above average. In fact, it was better than anyone else's score." He then added, "One more thing the test will be in three weeks from now. I am telling you this to give you a chance to study because we need to win so keep in mind that you must win."

My mouth was dry, and I started to sweat, my heart pumped my blood faster. It was a terrible way to start. At the end of the test I was so tired and bored. In addition each student was nervous waiting for the results. Finally the results were ready after two hours of waiting.

"Please stand in a line, I'm going to give you the results," said the principal.

As soon as possible we made the line. I was praying to win the competition. The school principal started to give the results from the lowest to the highest, and he went until he got to the second place. I was very nervous almost crying when the principal said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of this competition is Miguel from Agua Blanca. (name of the town where I'm from) I felt very excited and proud of my self. I felt happy when all the people on campus started to sing the National Hymn to me.

[3] Pseudonym

I couldn't say anything, my mouth was dry as in the beginning of the test. I remember when I arrived home and told my mother what happened on campus, and she felt happy and proud of me. "Incredible," she said.

At the school I was nominated the star student. It was a really interesting event in my life. Since this event happened to me, I believe that starting something is always hard but never impossible.

(Adapted from "When a Dream Comes True," *Writing/Diagnostic Assessment Guide for English Language Learners*, 1999, p. 61)

Figure 6: Written Story #2

My Grandfather, by Elton Yazzie[4]

I never realized my grandfather was such a hard worker until recently. He is currently 70 years old and was born October 10, 1926. On some nights when I go to see him I usually like to sit and listen to what he has to say. At times I regret not learning how to speak Navajo. He knows how to speak Navajo and Spanish fluently. He says modern English is not our true language so therefore he does not speak it. Often times he doesn't like it when we, as grandchildren, speak only English. He is a very serious person. He's not the type to make jokes and laugh about them. His determination all started when he became a Christian. At first he grew up the traditional way of living but that never did any good for him, Meaning he was a young man who ran wild and free. He was an alcoholic for sometime which made him crazy. He had friends who were Spaniards. He worked with them as a Construction Worker. But that all changed, after his marriage with Nannabah who is my grandmother he became Christianized into "Friends Church." He practiced to become a preacher after that. He then started traveling to other churches of his kind and met new people. People who are now his friends.

(Adapted from "Details Make the Difference," Writing/Diagnostic Assessment Guide for English Language Learners, 1999, p. 52)

[4] Pseudonym

Discussion

- **What are the similarities and differences in the ways students have structured their stories?**
- **How would each story be rated or evaluated by most teachers? Excellent? Good? Poor? Why?**
- **What types of writing errors affect teachers strongly? How can teachers see beyond the errors to the strengths of a student's writing?**
- **Identify the storytelling skills of each student, trying to judge each story on its own merits.**
- **Are there instructional steps you would want to take to help either of these students develop additional writing skills, focusing on structure and organization?**

Contrasts in the Purposes of Classroom Discourse

Discourse
A stretch of language (oral or written) consisting of two or more sentences, often called "text." Examples of forms of discourse are narratives, speeches, interviews, and conversations. Sometimes educators speak of the "discourse of a domain," meaning, the ways of speaking associated with mathematics, science, or language arts. Gee (1990) uses "Discourse" with a capital *D* to signify the socially accepted (dominant-culture) way of using language, along with a set of associated values and behaviors. Similarly, one might consider "classroom discourse" as the socially accepted way of using language in the classroom.

One cross-cultural difference in classroom communication relates to expectations about how personal communication should be—whether the personal should be separated from the academic in classroom discourse and what the forms of interchange should be. Research examining the forms and functions of circle time illustrates cross-cultural differences in expectations about discourse. It also illustrates how students' opportunities for shaping classroom discourse vary culturally.

In U.S. classrooms studied by Michaels (1981, 1991), circle time was seen as an opportunity to develop oral language, in particular, narrative skills—skills that have been related to literacy acquisition (Snow, 1983; Snow & Kurland, 1996). In Spain, by contrast, circle time (*la ronda*) was seen as an opportunity to build a classroom community that shared certain moral values and where members shared affective ties. Poveda (2001) elucidates these perspectives in his comparison of a Spanish kindergarten and a U.S. kindergarten. Because the purposes are different, content (topics) and participation structures also differ. In the United States, the purpose is to build discourse skills, and U.S. teachers regulate students' contributions, discouraging skipped turns and curtailing the length of turns so that each student nominated to speak will get to practice and develop skill in particular forms of discourse. Personal contributions about family are discouraged in favor of topics that are linked to school learning or that require skills such as sequencing and description.

In the Spanish kindergarten classroom observed by Poveda, all students' contributions were valued, no matter the topic, and the teacher did not restrict topics in any way—permitting not only personal stories but also fantastical ones (e.g., *I came to school in a plane*) (Poveda, 2001, p. 311). Students could skip a turn if they wished, and sometimes the teacher took a turn, allowing students to ask questions. This practice added a personal element in the way that the U.S. teacher's participation did not. According to Poveda, Spanish teachers believe that their own sharing helps build social ties and classroom cohesion. Poveda says that his observations were similar to those of other Spanish researchers who had studied *la ronda*. The Spanish approach makes sense if the point of sharing is to socialize students into a classroom community rather than promote individual discourse skills. It may be useful for teachers to find ways to have circle time serve both purposes.

This example illustrates how several assumptions related to language and communication intersect in a single instructional format. Like the storytelling example, it is a reminder that one needs

to look below the surface level in order to understand student participation and why students may use language in particular ways. The circle time example also points to differences in communication conventions that teachers and parents bring to conversation. For instance, in a parent-teacher conference, parents from many cultures will expect to greet teachers with personal inquiries about their families (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). The teacher may try to immediately get down to business and discuss the student's needs or performance, and parents may find this behavior abrupt or ungracious. As teachers learn about such culture-based differences, they may find ways to meet parents and students halfway (Trumbull et al., 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003).

It takes experience to understand the implicit sociolinguistic rules related to what topics are appropriate in the classroom, when they can be raised, and how one talks about them. Students from group-oriented (collectivistic) cultures, especially those from families who have not had access to a lot of formal education, may not be used to the expectations of classroom discourse. They may naturally talk about interactions with family members as they explain an item they bring to circle time, rather than focus on the physical attributes of the object, as the teacher may expect. In subject-matter discussions, they may not focus on the academic content to the exclusion of family experience. And, even though current educational practice wisdom calls for linking to students' prior knowledge and interests (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Doherty et al., 2003), the academic discourse expected in schools does not typically entail interspersing scientific explanation with personal experience.

In the vignette that is part of Activity 3, one teacher bridges the gap between the cultures of her students—who are mostly Latino immigrants—and the culture of school, with its requirements for a particular discourse.

Activity 3: Linking Home and School Discourse

Instructions to Participants

Read the vignette in Figure 7 and the discussion questions following it. Discuss responses as a group.

Figure 7: The Field Trip

Ms. Anderson's fourth-grade class was preparing to take a field trip to the Ballona Wetlands Park near their Los Angeles school. They were lucky enough to have a wildlife docent from the park, Mr. Kane, come to their classroom twice before the trip to help them understand what they would be doing and seeing. When Mr. Kane asked the students what they knew about various animals they would likely see on the trip, they routinely answered with stories about animal experiences with their families. On the second visit, he let a couple of stories go by and then issued the admonition, "No more stories!" Ms. Anderson knew that what Mr. Kane wanted was a "scientific discussion" with no "extraneous" commentary. She wasn't surprised, though, when his next question was met with silence.

Discussion #1

- **Why did Ms. Anderson's students suddenly become quiet?**
- **What could Mr. Kane have done to direct the discussion the way he wanted?**
- **What do you think Ms. Anderson was thinking when the students stopped responding to Mr. Kane?**

Ms. Anderson's Next Steps

Ms. Anderson's students are largely from immigrant Latino families whose cultures do not always stress the separation of content knowledge from social experience. After the docent left, Ms. Anderson invited her students to tell their stories that related in some way to the planned field trip. As they talked, she constructed a T-chart on the board with key elements from the students' stories on the left. Then, she asked them to help her extract the "scientific information" from their stories. For example, she used a student's comment that "the hummingbird's wings moved so fast" to draw out information about the bird's metabolism and feeding habits. The students were participating, and the science lesson was taught in a culturally responsive way.

The classroom extension in Figure 8 shows a reconstruction of the T-chart Ms. Anderson and her students developed. Through her instructional strategy, Ms. Anderson helped students move from a familiar discourse style to the more academic style expected in the classroom. She used students' strengths and values (including a strong orientation to family) to shape the instruction. She allowed students to relate their stories—stories that often involved trips or other family activities. The result was a high level of student engagement, ready identification of students' prior knowledge, and a joint construction of the scientific knowledge that was the goal of the lesson.

Figure 8: Classroom Extension

Student Experience	Scientific Information
Carolina's Story	Hummingbird
I was playing in the garden with grandmother and I saw a hummingbird near the cherry tree.	Brownish with bright iridescent green and red coloring around head and neck
The bird "stood in the air." I tried to go close to the pretty little bird, but it kept darting away.	Wings beat rapidly.
	Bird can hover and fly in any direction.
	Has to eat frequently because it uses so much energy in its movements

(Adapted from Trumbull, Diaz-Meza, & Hasan, in press)

Discussion #2

- **How does Ms. Anderson's strategy both show respect for students' forms of discourse and scaffold their acquisition of school discourse?**
- **What language skills is Ms. Anderson teaching through the T-chart activity?**

When teachers have students from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, how can they both support home language norms and acculturate students to school language norms? This question is a recurrent theme throughout this volume, and it represents the ongoing challenge to find culturally responsive ways to teach while ensuring that students meet the standards set out by states and districts. Actually, these two demands are not in conflict: In order to engage students as active learners, teachers must connect with students' ways of knowing and using language (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000).

Discourse and Power

It is not possible to talk about language use in schools without talking about power. Those who know the "right" ways to communicate and negotiate within the social networks that comprise the educational system tend to wield power over what happens in the school and to students. Some students know how to participate so as to be heard (Cope & Katlantis, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Gee, 1996; Valdes, 1996). As mentioned earlier, Gee (1990) distinguishes "Discourse" with a capital *D* as the ways to use language and to behave that are accepted by the dominant culture. Knowing how to talk and interact in these accepted ways is associated with power. Parents from nondominant cultural and class backgrounds are much less likely to know these conventions and often feel that their concerns are unheard and not acted upon (Trumbull et al., 2001). Teachers who understand this social dynamic can intervene by advocating for parents' opportunities to be heard in the ways with which they feel comfortable (Trumbull, Rothstein-Frisch, & Hernandez, 2003).

Interaction styles that differ from what is expected may be poorly received by either teachers or parents. For example, dominant-culture teachers may experience the communication of African American parents as aggressive or loud and emotional when parents speak about a topic of importance to them. These same parents may find the teachers' unemotional communication disingenuous—lacking or obscuring real feelings (Kochman, 1989). African American parents may also consciously or unconsciously fear that their needs will not be heard or taken seriously because of historical and ongoing institutional racism in U.S. society.

Research suggests that allowing community-based organizations to act as intermediaries between schools and families can be a successful strategy for enhancing family involvement in schools (Lopez, Krieger, & Coffman, 2005). As discussed in the final section of *Volume I*, this strategy may be particularly effective in working with refugees or families whose cultures are very different from the dominant culture of the United States (Collignon, Men, & Tan, 2001).

Direct and Indirect Speech

Another cross-cultural difference that can cause misunderstanding is the varying degree of directness in interpersonal communication. Some cultures embrace indirectness and ambiguity, while others emphasize directness and confrontation (Lustig & Koester, 1999). In the United States, the norm is to be direct, even at the expense of the listener's comfort at times. In fact, many Americans from the dominant culture would think it insincere to communicate any other way. However, this valued style of communication is in distinct contrast to what Japanese, Mexican, or Micronesian students, for example, may have learned. People from such backgrounds are likely to go out of their way to avoid direct communication.

In Japan, communication is viewed not only as an exchange of information, but also as social interaction in which the speaker expects the listener to use intuitive knowledge to infer meaning. "[T]he ideal interaction is not one in which the speakers express their wishes and needs adequately and listeners understand and comply, but rather one in which each party understands and anticipates the needs of the other, even before anything is said" (Clancy, 1988, p. 217). Micronesians may go to a relative and hope that the message eventually gets to the targeted person. From their perspective, everyone can save face through the indirect communication of a complaint. A European American might be befuddled or annoyed and ask, "Why didn't they tell me directly if they have a problem with something that I have done?" (Lustig & Koester, 1999, p. 93).

It isn't hard to see why misunderstandings arise among students or between teachers and students who have been socialized to such different communication norms. One student's direct comment may be another's insult.

Activity 4: Taking Different Points of View

Instructions to Participants

Read the vignette in Figure 9. Think about whether you have had a similar experience and can identify with either the postal clerk or the tourist. Respond to the discussion questions following the vignette.

Figure 9: Communicating Bad News

I was visiting an island in the Pacific whose indigenous culture has remained relatively intact, despite incursions by Europeans and Americans over the past centuries. As a speaker at an educational conference, I was thrilled to have several days to meet educators from this island, and many others throughout Micronesia, and learn from them how they taught in culturally relevant ways. Of course, I wanted to send post cards of this lovely island to family and friends; so I sneaked away to the post office one afternoon to buy some beautiful stamps depicting local arts that I had seen firsthand. I stood in line for nearly half an hour, along with perhaps 20 island residents, tourists, and conference guests. As I neared the counter and the lone postal clerk, I heard murmurings to the effect that there might not be any stamps. Suddenly, the tourist ahead of me turned around and announced in tones that everyone could hear, "They are out of stamps, and there won't be any until three o'clock this afternoon when the plane from Hawaii arrives!"

(Elise Trumbull, personal experience)

Discussion

- **Why do you think the postal clerk did not make a public announcement about the lack of stamps?**
- **What is the positive value of not making the public announcement?**
- **How might members of the postal clerk's culture have interpreted his behavior?**
- **How might those same people have interpreted the tourist's announcement?**

This example shows how cultural values intersect with norms of communication. Teachers can consider what the norms of communication are among the different communities of their students, not only to create inclusive classroom discourse but also to improve the ways of communicating with parents.

E. Language Varieties: Pidgins, Creoles, and Dialects

Pidgin
A simplified language that has developed as the means of communication between speakers of two or more languages who do not know each other's languages

Creole
A language variety derived from a pidgin that has become a speaker's first language through intergenerational transmission, acquiring greater grammatical complexity than the pidgin

Dialect
A variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by features of phonology, grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics, or discourse conventions

Patois
A regional dialect, often considered sub-standard by speakers of the standard dialect; often applied to Jamaican Creole English

The term *language variety* refers to any form of a language—whether a geographical or social dialect, a patois, a pidgin, a creole, or some other code of a language. Most speakers of any language use a variety of forms that differs in recognizable ways from the standard form; none of these varieties is in any sense inherently inferior to the standard variety in grammar, accent, or phonology. At the same time, these sociocultural and geographical variations within a language signal matters of great importance to those who use them. In addition to all the usual functions of language, varieties serve valuable group identity functions for their speakers; they express interests that are closely linked to matters of self-respect and other psychological attributes.

Pidgins

Sometimes speakers from different groups will learn one another's languages (becoming bilingual) or even learn a third language useful in other contexts as well. But sometimes they make up a new code, whether signed or oral. The common language learned or devised by groups of speakers in language contact situations is referred to as a *lingua franca* (Taylor, 1981). English has become a lingua franca in many parts of the world, for doing business or exchanging scientific information. But frequently the chosen lingua franca is a *pidgin*—a highly simplified language based on the language of one of the groups.

Pidgins often arise in situations where people from many different language backgrounds need to communicate about business or trade. The word itself is thought to have come from the word *business* as pronounced by Chinese speakers trading with English speakers. Pidgins retain important content words (nouns and verbs) and usually maintain the basic word order of the

target language (e.g., subject-verb-object in a pidgin version of English) but eliminate the small grammatical words (prepositions, conjunctions, articles, and some pronouns). Tense is indicated by context or words like *before, after*, or *by and by*. Number is usually implied in the context. For example, a person might say, "Farmer sell vegetable bymby" (*by and by*), to mean, "The farmers will soon be selling their vegetables."

The driving force behind the development of many pidgins has been the process of colonization and enslavement. At times, workers from many different language backgrounds have been transported, often against their will, to distant countries and forced to work alongside each other. Having no common language, they develop a new code to communicate. This multilingual situation contrasts with bilingual contexts, where sooner or later one group of speakers learns the other group's language (Lefebvre, 1998).

The colonization of the North American continent created situations in which American Indians and European colonizers had to find a common code. In some cases, American Indians learned European languages such as French and English, at first in pidginized form (Taylor, 1981). Ojibwe (Anglicized as Ojibwa, Ojibway, or Chippewa) served a similar purpose and was widely used by many Indian nations as well as traders in the Hudson's Bay Company, most likely in pidginized form (Taylor, 1981). A lingua franca does not have to be an oral language: Plains Sign Language, for example, is one that "represents the most sophisticated of its kind in the entire world" (p. 176).

Creoles

When a pidgin becomes a group's first language through intergenerational mother tongue transmission, it is called a *creole* (from the Spanish, *criollo*). Once it is acquired as a true language of primary communication, a creole becomes more complex than its parent language. Additional grammatical features develop, such as verb tenses, prepositions, conjunctions, plural markers, and articles (Carr, 1972; Crystal, 1987). A creole is a fully functional system with the creativity of any natural language. Even though the creole does not have the social status of the accepted language variety, it is an adequate language variety that requires the same linguistic skills as any other.

An excellent example of the creolization process is the movement from pidgin English to Hawaiian English Creole in the last century. There is evidence that a Hawaiian pidgin was the original pidgin produced in the early 1800s after the arrival of English-speaking traders. Its use continued until around 1890, after the immigration of speakers of many other languages. This pidgin, as its name implies, was based not on English but on Hawaiian (Roberts, 1995), whereas the basis of the current Hawaiian Creole is English. Although commonly called pidgin by Hawaiian citizens, the present-day vernacular language is a creole—a form of English influenced by Hawaiian, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and at least two Filipino language varieties. Carr (1972) suggests that there were still a small number of speakers of true pidgin English in isolated areas as late as 1972. Many Hawaiian speakers move back and forth between Creole and the more standard form of English. As we have observed, language use is contextual, and speakers choose the variety that fits the context.

Another example is Louisiana Creole, a contact language developed by French-speaking colonists and African slaves to communicate with each other (Tom Klingler, interviewed in Heilman, 2002). It is very similar to Cajun French, a dialect of French spoken by whites with at least some

French or Acadian (French Canadian) ancestry. Intermarriage and social interaction among African Americans, Acadians, French immigrants, American Indians, and other European immigrants (beginning in the early eighteenth century) have blurred the ethnic and linguistic bases of Cajun French and Louisiana Creole. In fact, the overlap in the two varieties quite likely has more to do with group social identity than linguistic difference (Klingler, interviewed in Heilman, 2002).

A third creole spoken in the United States is Gullah, the home language of many African Americans in the Atlantic coastal regions of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Thought to have originated in the 1700s, Gullah is derived from a pidgin ancestor that was based on West African languages (Nichols, 1981) and related to Jamaican and other West Indian patois (McWhorter, 1998).

The United States is home to speakers of creoles who have immigrated from other countries and whose children now go to U.S. schools. Many of these children speak a creole as their home language. Two examples of such creoles are Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) and Cap Verdean Creole. Haitian Creole began developing in the late 1600s when African slaves who spoke several different African Niger-Congo languages and French colonizers came into contact. It is based on those African languages (most prominently on Fongbe, in the Gbe language group) and French (Lefebvre, 1998). Although Haitian Creole sounds a great deal like French, it retains grammatical and word formation properties from the African sources.

Dialects

Arguments about what counts as a language versus a dialect are common in linguistic literature. Decisions about whether to label a code a dialect or language are often influenced as much by sociopolitical factors as linguistic factors. It was Yiddish-speaking linguist Max Weinreich who coined the apt and oft-quoted metaphor (in Yiddish) about the difference between a language and a dialect:

> *A shprakh iz a diyalekt mit an armey un a flot.*
>
> "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy" (Weinrich, 1945, p. 13).

Linguists often define dialect as a variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by features of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Pace of speech, volume, and other nonlinguistic behaviors—such as how close one stands to a conversational partner—are also likely to vary. Discourse conventions often vary from dialect to dialect; these may include those governing the structure and narration of stories; the rules of conversation; and the genres, structures, and uses for written language (Cazden, 1999; Lee, 2000; Smitherman, 1986).

The traditional definition of dialects holds that they are mutually intelligible versions of the same language. For example, despite variations in pronunciation or usage, a speaker of Southern U.S. English can generally understand a speaker from the Northwest. However, in the case of Chinese, different varieties, such as Mandarin and Cantonese, are usually considered dialects even though they are not mutually intelligible in spoken form. (The fact that they use the same

characters means that they are mutually intelligible in written form.) Swedish and Norwegian are often mentioned as a classic example of two codes that are mutually intelligible but are treated as separate languages for sociopolitical reasons.

Dialects are distinguished by their use in particular groups that are separated geographically or socially. For example, in the United States, we might distinguish at least the following regional dialects: Southern, Mid-Atlantic, New England, New York City, Midwestern, Southwestern, Appalachian, and Northwestern. There are other dialects representing smaller numbers of speakers within these regions. In Pennsylvania, for example, Pennsylvania Dutch speakers use a dialect influenced by German, and Alaska has many varieties of English used in different communities of Alaska Natives. An example of a language variety that is based on social group rather than region is African American Vernacular English (Black English).

Immigrants to the United States who have learned English in their home countries speak different varieties or dialects of English. For example, immigrants from Jamaica, Liberia, Nigeria, the Philippines, and India may speak different varieties of English. American Indian students who have grown up in environments where an indigenous language is spoken are likely to speak a variety of American Indian English (Leap, 1993). The varieties of Indian English all have particular distinguishing features in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and usage, depending upon their association with ancestral language. For example, American Indians of the Southwest such as Navajos may speak a form of English in which certain final consonant sounds are devoiced. *Job* may be pronounced as "jop," *has* as "hass," and *judge* as "juch" (Language Samples Project, 2001).

F. Addressing Language Varieties in the Classroom

What Background Knowledge Do Teachers Need?

Teachers need a basic understanding of what a dialect or language variety is—that it represents a functioning, rule-governed language system, not a substandard language in any linguistic sense. Note that pidgins are rule-governed systems but are much more limited than creoles or dialects. Their function is typically very limited as well: to facilitate basic communication for purposes of trade or other cross-group activities. Speakers of pidgins have, by definition, another language that they speak.

People have a tendency to confuse the social status associated with a dialect with its linguistic adequacy or value, but this is a dangerous mistake that can lead to misjudgments about students' language abilities or intelligence. In fact, sophisticated language skills are needed to master any variety of language (Rickford, 1999a). "A child doesn't need to know any linguistics in order to use language to learn, but a teacher needs to know some linguistics…to understand how the process takes place—or what is going wrong when it doesn't" (Halliday & Martin, p. 9). Although teachers do not routinely get the opportunity to learn about language structures and usage the way linguists do, they need to become linguists of a sort in order to understand how language is part of the learning process. In particular, they need to understand what constitutes a language deficit versus a language difference (Bernstein & Tiegerman-Farber, 2002; Genesee, 1994; Langdon, 1992).

Although most people recognize that learning a new language presents challenges, they may not realize that for some children learning a new dialect of their native language is one of the most daunting tasks that they face in school (Rickford, 1999a). Simply immersing students in the new dialect is not likely to be effective because "extensive overlaps in vocabulary, phonology, and grammar can cause speakers to miss subtle but significant differences between their own and the target variety" (p. 12). In addition, schools rarely have programs or practices in place to help students with this task.

Standard English is simply one form among many equally valid and complex varieties of English. What is grammatical to a person depends on what dialects he or she has learned (Crystal, 1987). Teachers may make the mistake of considering students' dialect-based language differences merely as deviations from standard English and strive to override them with corrections. Research has shown that simply correcting students can actually result in decreased use of target forms in the new dialect (Piestrup, 1973).

One school district that has explicitly taken on the task of dialect awareness and Standard English dialect acquisition is the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). As part of a broader plan to improve the education of African American students, the Instructional Support Services unit of LAUSD has designed a program called Academic English Mastery for Standard English Learners. This program provides professional development for teachers and other school staff in order to integrate academic English mastery in all aspects of curriculum. Conducted by Dr. Noma LeMoine, the program is a key component of the effort toward improving the academic achievement of African American students.

Many people master more than one language variety (Harris-Wright, 1999). Because our schools focus so intensely on helping ELLs master English or helping nondominant speakers master the standard form, it is often forgotten that many students have already mastered complex linguistic systems that will continue to be meaningful and useful in their personal lives.

Children may use two or more language varieties in their everyday communication—one at home, another in the peer group, and a third at school. However, many children arrive in schools with little or no face-to-face interaction with speakers of the standard form used in education. Often these students are penalized socially and in the classroom for speaking a variety that is accorded low status in the school. Some language varieties that have routinely been disparaged include Appalachian, Southern, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE)[5]. With greater understanding of the issues surrounding dialects, teachers are more likely to respect and value students' language and to seek strategies that help students become bi-dialectal (Harris-Wright, 1999).

[5] As discussed, the terms *Ebonics* or *U.S. Ebonics*, *Black English Vernacular, Black Dialect*, and *Black Language* are also used, each reflecting a particular theoretical or social perspective.

Activity 5: Exploring Dialects

Instructions to Participants

Read the excerpts in Figure 10 one at a time. Take a minute to read each one and a minute to discuss it with a partner. Discuss responses as a whole group.

Figure 10: Samples of American Speech

Excerpt #1

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH WOMAN:
Well, they call me "Dutchified."

INTERVIEWER:
Does that get you upset?

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH WOMAN:
Well, in a way, because they get people on television, you know, like you watch these programs, they're from a different country. Well, I can tell they're from a different country, but I wouldn't make fun of them because they talk the way they do, and you accept them like that, don't you? I do. But why make fun of me because I sound Dutchified. You're dumb, just as soon as it's Dutchified or German, you're dumb.

Excerpt #2

WHITE MISSISSIPPI MAN:
I think you see more change in the way the Blacks talk than you do the way the Whites talk because some of this yakkety-yak junk that they do an' just go on and on and on, and when they get through when it all boils down they just say "good morning" but yet they'll talk fifteen minutes on that that same thing.

Excerpt #3

TEXAS WOMAN AT DELI IN NEW YORK CITY:
Do y'all have chicken fried steak? I would like chicken fried steak, hush puppies on the side, cream gravy and an' ice tea, please.

DELI MAN 1:
What's that?

DELI MAN 2:
This hush puppies… This is a New York deli. If you want to nosh, if you wanna eat, you could schlep all over the world and you wouldn't find what we got here. How about a poppy smear? How about a knish?

DELI MAN 1:
How about a kishka?

DELI MAN 2:
How about a nice bialy?

TEXAS WOMAN:
Hey, wait, wait. Time out, y'all. I don't understand a word you're saying.

Excerpt #4

WASHINGTON, DC WOMAN:
At times, I go back to my Southern dialect, you know. It's certain words I feel more comfortable, and then there are other settings that I correct that.

INTERVIEWER:
When must you correct that?

WASHINGTON, DC WOMAN:
When I'm in my professional field, more so than anything and when I'm in my own social group and I'm more relaxed, my Southern dialect seems to come out a little bit more and I feel more relaxed, and then they begin to call me a Southern girl and that's my identity and I like that.

(Speech samples from a transcript of the video, "American Tongues," [1987], directed by Louis Alvarez and Andrew Kolker, produced by Center for New America Media. Retrieved Feb. 11, 2005, from http://www.cnam.com/downloads/amt_ts.html)

Discussion

- **What attitudes (both positive and negative) toward dialects do you notice in the excerpts?**
- **What perpetuates stereotypes about dialects and accents?**
- **How do the excerpts illustrate how people show prejudice against the speech of a particular region, class, or social group?**
- **What effect does it have on people to be constantly told—directly or indirectly—that their dialect is inferior?**

(Questions adapted from Wolfram's Study Guide for the videotape [n.d.])

Language Attitudes

Attitudes toward language influence our perceptions about our own and other people's social identities, social status (Cazden, 1999; Fishman, 1991), and intellectual abilities (Ramirez, 1985; Tauber, 1997). All speakers use one or more dialects of the language they speak. Regional dialects have traditionally symbolized allegiance to a region, conveyed positive and shared connotations associated with valued traits, and signaled social bonding within class and ethnic groups. However, dialectal variations such as regional accents have also had negative connotations, and in many societies they are impediments to social, educational, and economic opportunities.

Attitudes and values attached to some facets of language (e.g., regional or national accent) are evident and widely acknowledged. These are often captured in jokes and parodies. However, people are rarely aware of the depth of reactions to divergent language styles and the speakers who use them. "The ideal of linguistic democracy, in which the speech of every citizen is regarded with equal respect by all others, is perhaps the most unrealistic of all social ideals. Speech is one of the most effective instruments in existence for maintaining a given social order" (Christian, cited in Peñalosa, 1980, p. 183).

Teachers are in a powerful position to counteract ignorance and misjudgments about their students' ways of talking. Effective teachers recognize that correcting differences between students' dialects and standard English should be handled carefully. If responding to a question becomes an opportunity for the teacher to correct the students' speech, how likely are students to raise their hands again?

Terry Meier, a professor at Wheelock College in Boston, describes a classroom observation in which a student teacher is eliciting rhymes for various words.

> The mood is light-hearted, especially when one child offers the word *kiss* as a rhyme for *miss*. The mood changes abruptly, however, when another child calls out "*twis(t),*" following the rules for consonant cluster reduction in Ebonics. "*Twis/ Twis*?" asks the student teacher, clearly at a loss. She wrinkles her face in confusion. "What do you mean *twis*?*"* she asks, the heavy emphasis on *twis* making it sound like something repugnant. The child who called out his word with such enthusiasm and confidence says nothing. (Meier, 1999, p. 102)

The teacher could have accepted the contribution, and if another child disagreed, she could have acknowledged that some people say "twis'" and some say "twist." If the child wrote *twis*, in a writing lesson, she could have simply shown him the standard spelling and perhaps a few other words of a similar pattern (e.g., *fist, list, insist*).

African American linguist and educator Anna F. Vaughn-Cooke notes that "…the ill-founded belief that some languages are better than others is deeply entrenched in the minds of millions of Americans" (Vaughn-Cooke, 1999, p. 138). Many people have difficulty understanding that the status of languages and dialects is an accident of history and not based on any linguistic value. Vaughn-Cooke cites fellow linguist Merritt Ruhlen, who offers the following assessment regarding black and white English.

> If history had gone differently and Africans had come over and founded America and raided Europe and brought white slaves over, and this country ended up with a 10% white minority that was kept in ghettos and spoke white English, you'd find the same problems in reverse… People would be saying, "Why can't the whites learn good black English?" We spend all of our time in school learning "good" and "bad" grammar and can't see that it's an historical accident that white English is called the best. (Weiss, 1997, p. A10, cited in Vaughn-Cooke, 1999, p. 139)

Language attitudes—both positive and negative—also operate within the classroom and can affect the teaching and learning process. Language plays a major role in establishing the social identities and relationships of teachers and students in the classroom. As Ramirez (1985) has observed, the initial impressions that teachers form about students are often based upon features of their speech. After they are established, these views appear to remain relatively fixed and may influence teachers' expectations of students. Moreover, negative teacher attitudes may reinforce similar student attitudes toward their own or others' nonstandard language use. Thus, students may be subjected to teacher, peer, and internalized prejudice because of the dialect they speak (Hall & Guthrie, 1980).

Should Students Have to Learn Standard English?

Decisions about whether to require students to speak and write standard English in school are fraught with controversy. Insistence on standard English may add a layer of demands that make acquisition of other skills more difficult for students. In addition, students who choose to use standard English must often confront peer pressure and accept corrections that they may interpret as insulting to their own speech patterns and identities. However, if students do not learn standard English, their life opportunities may be limited (Christian, 1987; Delpit, 1995; Rickford, 1999a). As Delpit (1995) puts it, students need to learn the codes associated with power (p. 25), that is, the language of the dominant culture, in order to succeed. Gee (1990) uses the term Discourse with a capital *D* to refer to the dominant ways of using language, which hold social and economic power (p. xv).

If standard English is to be required, students need to understand the value and purpose of learning it in terms that are meaningful to them (Christian, 1987). Nevertheless, students may still be faced with a dilemma. As Chaika (1982) observes, the speech of children and adolescents resembles that of the people with whom they identify. Because language is an integral part of identity, students may feel conflicted adopting a new variety not spoken by family or community members with whom they identify.

Case in Point: African American Vernacular English (Black Language)

This volume includes an extended treatment of one prominent dialect of English, African American Vernacular English, or Black Language, spoken to varying degrees by a large percentage of African American students. The topic is relevant in many schools and districts because of the high numbers of African Americans students. Social values and judgments surrounding the use of this dialect have obscured important findings from linguistic research that could be useful to educators. And uninformed approaches to the linguistic education of these dialect speakers have interfered with educational equity for and the optimal development of African American students. Rickford (1999b) calls for recognizing that the linguistic issues in educating African American students are interrelated with other problems such as inadequate preparation of teachers, ignorant attitudes toward African American Vernacular English, and access to adequate educational resources.

Many African Americans speak what has been called variously *African American Vernacular English*, *Black English Vernacular*, *Black Language*, *Black Dialect*, or *U.S. Ebonics* (Perry & Delpit, 1998). This variety, like all other natural linguistic systems, is rule governed and capable of serving all of the intellectual and social needs of its speakers. We use the term *Black Language* except when citing particular research because it seems to be preferred by many African American educators.

Black Language has multiple forms—oral and written, formal and informal, vernacular and literary (Perry, 1998). Its forms and uses derive from its heritage of West African and Niger-Congo languages (Nichols, 1981; O'Neil, 1998). Black Language has been influenced not only by African languages but also by the social circumstances surrounding the histories of African Americans in the United States. Words and phrases have been coined in order to keep some things private from the dominant white culture (particularly during the time of slavery). For example, railroad terms were used in reference to the Underground Railroad, the system that helped runaway slaves to freedom: *Conductor* referred to a person who helped the slave and *station* to a safe hiding place (World Book Online, 2003).

The oratorical devices (e.g., rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, repetition) used by African American preachers are distinctive elements of Black Language (Perry, 1998). Many discourse conventions distinguish Black Language, including particular structures for storytelling or narrative writing (Ball, 1997; Heath, 1983; Michaels & Cazden, 1986) or argumentation (Kochman, 1989).

Black Language is strongly valued by many African Americans as a symbol of intimacy and solidarity, representing "intergroup distinctiveness from the white community" (Beebe, 1988, p. 65). As such, it is an important sociocultural resource. Scholars do not agree on whether Black Language is diverging from or converging with standard English at this point. Both processes are probably occurring. However, like any other dialect, Black Language is changing on an ongoing basis (McWhorter, 1998), and as standard English (which is also changing) adopts Black Language terms like *hip*, new terms arise to replace them (*live*, *fresh*) (Rickford, 1999b).

What Instructional Approaches Support Acquisition of Standard English?

The most common method of teaching a new dialect to students is immersion, that is, putting learners in an environment where they are surrounded by the target dialect (Rickford, 1999b). However, many linguists and educators who have studied the outcomes prefer a bi-dialectal approach, incorporating explicit instruction in dialect awareness and standard English (Delpit, 1995; Rickford, 1999b; Vaughn-Cooke, 1999; Wolfram, 1999). A recent study of 217 urban African American students in kindergarten through second grade showed that students who were sensitive to differences between their home dialect and *School English* (the term used in the study) had substantially superior performance measures in reading (Charity, Scarborough, & Griffin, 2004). Immersion cannot guarantee that all students will develop sensitivity to such differences, and explicit instruction would benefit those students who do not develop it on their own.

Rickford (1999a) suggests, "Immersion seems to be more successful in the acquisition of a second language rather than a second dialect, where extensive overlaps in vocabulary, phonology, and grammar can cause speakers to miss subtle but significant differences between their own and the target variety" (p. 12). Because they do comprehend most communication, second dialect learners do not attend to the differences between school language and home language in the way that ELLs do.[6]

Teachers need to learn about the norms of the varieties that their students speak, whether Black Language or another variety. For example, research suggests that students who speak Appalachian, like speakers of Black Language, often encounter misunderstandings and misjudgments about their abilities (Heath, 1983).

Below we outline four principles for bi-dialectal instruction and three strategies for fostering dialect awareness and skills. These principles apply to any situation where more than one dialect is present in the classroom, and teachers can modify the strategies to suit the particular dialects in question.

[6] Immersion as an instructional method for ELLs can be successful when the home language has high social status and is not in danger of being lost by the learners (Cummins, 2000a). However, research shows that ELLs in the United States have performed best academically in the long term when their home language is incorporated in instruction (Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, Pasta, & Billings, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2001).

Four Principles for Bi-dialectal Instruction

1. Address Status Differences

It is important to treat all dialects as equally valid in the classroom and also to ensure that African American students have "equal status interaction with their peers" (Cazden, 1999, p. 37). Cazden suggests keeping "the mix of discourse styles in two-way stylistic balance" (p. 36). Teachers balance activities that heighten dialect awareness and explore specific differences. Standard English speakers can benefit from learning about the patterns and expressive strengths of another dialect. Furthermore, if Black Language speakers and speakers of other nondominant dialects simply experience dialect study as correction, the implied insult to their own languages and identities can block their willingness to participate (Delpit, 1995; Piestrup, 1973). Carrie Secret, an elementary school teacher in Oakland, California, encourages her students to use standard English when they are writing, but she also acknowledges the value of their language (which she calls *Ebonics*):

> We read literature that has Ebonics language patterns in it. For example, last year in fifth grade we read Joyce Hansen's *Yellow Bird and Me* and in fourth grade we read her book *The Gift Giver*. The language was Ebonic in structure. The language was the bonding agent for students. The book just felt good to them. (Secret, 1998, p. 81)

In a mixed classroom, native-English speakers would also benefit from this activity as an opportunity to learn a particular style of writing and language forms.

2. Use Dialect Study as an Opportunity for Expanding Language Awareness

Whether a classroom is monolingual/monocultural or has a mix of students from different dialect backgrounds, all students can benefit from activities to heighten language awareness. "Studying dialects provides a wealth of information on the historical and cultural contribution of various groups to American society, as well as on the dynamic nature of language" (Wolfram, 1999, p. 64). (See Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999, and Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999, for excellent treatments of dialect issues and suggestions for dialect study in the classroom.) Dialect study can pique students' interest in language in a way that traditional approaches to language arts may not, particularly when they are asked to help identify language patterns and make judgments about what would be acceptable in one or another dialect (Wolfram et al., 1999).

3. Tap Home Dialect Competencies

All of the strategies recommended by researchers and educators entail connecting with students' home dialects and tapping the competencies that students have already developed (LeMoine, 2001). Students who speak Black Language may not recognize their home dialect knowledge as a valuable asset because of the widespread public disparagement of their dialect—even by members of their own linguistic and racial group (Vaughn-Cooke, 1999). They have implicitly, if not explicitly, learned that it is inferior. However, teachers need to help students make their dialect knowledge explicit. By building on what students already know and can do, teachers will both use effective teaching practices and communicate that the dialect has value. For example, in reading a speech by Martin Luther King, a play by August Wilson, or a poem by Nikki Giovanni, teachers can help students identify features of Black Language rhetoric and vocabulary that are powerfully expressive (Lee, 1995, 2000). Younger students can explore the Black Language features in books such as *Irene's Big Fine Nickel* by Smalls-Hector (1991) or *Willie Bea and the Time the Martians Landed* by Virginia Hamilton (1983). Furthermore, such analysis benefits all students.

4. Maintain High-Level Curriculum and Teach Skills

Students whose dialects are nonstandard do not need a simplified curriculum or remedial instruction. The notion that some students need to build low-level skills before they can have big ideas is misguided and works against what students do need (Purcell-Gates, 1995, 2002). Black Language speakers benefit from a high-level curriculum that engages them intellectually and also provides systematic opportunities to examine the differences between their own dialect and the dialect of school (LeMoine, 2001). However, students also need explicit instruction in particular skills, such as recognizing spelling patterns and exceptions and analyzing syntactic differences (Delpit, 1995; LeMoine, 2001).

Three Productive Strategies for Bi-dialectal Instruction

1. Use Drama

Numerous educators have recommended engaging in role playing or dramatic activities as an excellent language awareness activity (LeMoine, 2001; Wolfram et al., 1999). Sociodrama is a technique shown to help students develop proficiency in using standard English in various situations without relying on excessive use of grammar and pronunciation exercises (Chaika, 1982; Wolfram et al., 1999).

In a typical sociodrama exercise, students assume roles and act out situations in which they need to use standard forms of the language (e.g., interviewing for a job, complaining to someone in authority, or testifying in court). Other roles are associated with use of their home dialect (e.g., having dinner with the family, greeting an old friend, or going out with peers). As Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999) point out, such activities should highlight not only language norms but also norms of interaction. For example, students should become familiar with differences in ways of entering and participating in a conversation, responding to questions, or situating oneself physically vis-à-vis the other person (proximity, posture). The role-playing context acknowledges that one must make choices about when to use a particular language variety. In this way, students do not get the message that only one variety is legitimate.

2. Do Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive analysis is a strategy associated with second language learning. It entails helping language learners identify the most important features of two languages or dialects that differ. Table 1 lists a number of activities, most of which engage students in contrastive analysis—whether of pronunciation, syntactic, or stylistic differences. Rickford (1999a) makes a plea for teachers to learn about the patterns of contrast between standard English and Black Language and teach their students about them. He notes that contrastive analysis programs "have been advocated for dialect speakers for more than 30 years" because students and their teachers "are typically not aware of the systematic differences" between standard English and Black Language (p. 13).

The point of contrastive analysis is to focus on the areas of predictable difficulty in going from Black Language to standard English. Wolfram et al. (1999) state, "The teaching of standard English should produce an understanding of the systematic differences between the standard and vernacular forms" (p. 120), and they suggest beginning with the most stigmatized elements of difference. Among these are the use of negation (*I don't want no dessert* vs. *I don't want any dessert*), the deletion of *–s* at the end of the third person form of verbs (*do/does*, *think/thinks*), and pronunciations that mark speakers as nonstandard dialect users such as saying "ax" for *ask*.

Table1: Addressing Dialect Differences Between Black Language and Standard English

Issues Related to Bridging Between Dialects	Instructional Strategies
Differences in pronunciation Implications for spelling	• Draw attention to pronunciation contrasts. Generate a list of words with a pattern, (e.g., *cold, bold, mold, fold, hold)* and have students pronounce them according to their own dialect. Many students who speak Black Language will omit the final consonant sound, /d/. Have students discuss how the words will be spelled in texts and when alternative spelling could be used. • The same process applies to other patterns of difference such as use of /v/ for voiced /th/ in *mother* and *father* or /f/ for unvoiced /th/ as in *with* or *birthday*. Note: The purposes of the activity are to increase language awareness for speakers of different dialects and explore implications for spelling—not correct pronunciation.
Differences in verb patterns	Have students contrast ways of using the verb *to be*. For instance, Black Language speakers may say, "He be workin'," whereas standard English speakers may say, "He's always working." Some speakers omit the copula (the verb *to be*) (e.g., *She thrilled about her good luck* vs. *She is thrilled about her good luck).* Discuss when Black Language or standard English is more appropriate or expressive.
Differences in the pattern of showing possession	Have students contrast Black Language usage with standard English usage. Black Language speakers may say, "My daddy car," whereas standard English speakers may say, "My daddy's car." Help students make explicit the differences between the two dialects and make conscious choices about when to use either one.

Differences in discourse style	Use sociodrama to have students take on different roles, highlighting how they would communicate effectively in different situations, such as requesting information by telephone from a public agency, preparing to give a plea to the school board for additional resources for a special program, greeting an old friend on the street, or having a personal conversation with a peer or colleague who also speaks Black Language. Sometimes Black Language will be more effective and sometimes standard English will be; identify which applies where. This activity is difficult to do in two-way fashion because standard English speakers will not be able to use Black Language effectively and because it can be offensive to speakers of "minority" dialects when standard English speakers adopt their dialect.
Differences in writing style	Have students write for different audiences and purposes. Have students read their writing aloud and discuss whether or how it is effective to their purpose in writing. Discuss features of oral language used by standard English or Black Language speakers. Black Language speakers may incorporate dialect pronunciation and syntax in dialogue, they may use a more topic-associating narrative style than standard English speakers, and they may use repetition and emotion to emphasize a point. The student's strategy could be effective or ineffective depending on his or her intended audience.
Differences in writing style of published authors	Have students discuss different styles of writing in published work and compare the effects of different styles. Have them make translations and back translations across styles (Downing, 1998).

Activity 6: Aspects of Dialectal Difference

Instructions to Participants

Follow the directions in Figure 11. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the group.

Figure 11: Pronunciation, Vocabulary, or Grammar?

For each item below, decide whether the dialectal difference in each pair of sentences is due to pronunciation (P), vocabulary (V), or grammar (G). Mark with the appropriate letter (P, V, or G) or combination of letters.

1. _____ Adrienne usually goes for coffee after work.
   Adrienne be goin' for coffee after work.

2. _____ Yo! What you doin'?
   Hey! What are you doing?

3. _____ There are so many skeeters around here in August.
   There are so many mosquitos around here in August.

4. _____ I use my mother's recipe for roast beef.
   I use my mother recipe for roas' beef.

5. _____ My dad and I went to services at the tabernacle on Friday.
   My dad and I went to services at the temple on Friday.

6. _____ Bryan bought ten pound of tenderloin.
   Bryan bought ten pounds of tenderloin.

7. _____ He axed Carrie to slow cook it.
   He asked Carrie to slow cook it.

8. _____ Ari's new car is outstanding.
   Ari's new car is all that.

9. _____ Jon, he worked hard on his biology test.
   Jon worked hard on his biology test.

10. _____ Ethel doesn't appreciate the new management at her apartment building.
    Ethel don't dig the new management at her apartment building.

(Adapted from Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999, p. 179)

Discussion

- **What are the dialectal differences in each pair of sentences?**
- **What difficulties did you have distinguishing among the three kinds of differences?**

3. Provide a Language-Rich Classroom Environment

Despite the importance of this strategy, students in lower tracks, students from lower socio-economic groups, and students from nondominant ethnic and racial groups often find themselves in classrooms that are not stimulating or even interesting (Miramontes & Commins, 1991; Oakes, 1985). Having a language-rich environment means providing opportunities for meaningful oral communication through different participant structures. Teachers can vary formats for student participation in classroom talk: having some small cooperative group as well as whole-group discussions (Wolfram et al., 1999); using strategies like Think/Pair/Share (Lyman, 1992, cited in Wolfram et al., 1999) in which students jointly discuss a topic; and engaging in an instructional conversation (Goldenberg, 1991) in which teachers facilitate student participation but do not dominate it.

Another aspect of a language-rich environment is provision of a wide array of well-chosen literature. Galda (1998) speaks of choosing both "powerful" books that can transform readers and books that reflect "the world that we inhabit," using "multiculturalism as our selection principle" so that the books provided "represent the best depictions of the many cultural experiences that make up our world" (p. 9). Good literature is not only stimulating; it also builds vicarious experience and exposes children to new models of language. Literature by African American writers has often drawn upon the features of oral Black Language (e.g., James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and others), and sometimes upon pronunciation and syntax (e.g., Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, and August Wilson). Authors of high-quality children's literature have also made use of Black Language patterns (e.g., Lucille Clifton, Christopher Paul Curtis, Eloise Greenfield, Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard, June Jordan, and Connie Porter). Students should become aware of these devices and how they can convey meaning. Teachers may find, however, that students resist accepting dialect features in writing—despite the fact that their teachers treat them as valued (Lee, 1995, 2000). Such resistance is, no doubt, the product of the widespread denigration of Black Language (Vaughn-Cooke, 1999).

Part of developing a language-rich classroom has to do with expectations for students. Teachers need to consider students as capable of developing all the discourse skills needed to succeed in school. As Cazden notes, this expectation means that learning opportunities are extended to all students.

> The kinds of classroom discourse being recommended in current school reforms offer rich opportunities for students to adopt authoritative stances as they present, explain, and

argue about knowledge. But what about the distribution of such opportunities? Are such discussions happening in the classrooms of African American students? And are they getting their fair share of air time to discuss their ideas with their peers? (Cazden, 1999, p. 35)

General Recommendations to Teachers of Black Language Speakers

Thompson (2000) has identified seven recommendations for teachers, on the basis of research and his own extensive experience with students who speak Ebonics (his preferred term):

1. Shift your thinking about the child's language to recognize that difference doesn't mean deficit and that the child's home language is dear to him.
2. Demystify the topic of Ebonics, that is, ignore all the media noise surrounding it and look for new information about patterns of difference between Ebonics and standard English.
3. Recognize that Ebonics is more than just words; rather, it is a whole system of communication that has cultural meaning. Like any other language, it is a cultural resource that serves many purposes.
4. Understand that maintenance of Ebonics in a child's linguistic repertoire is connected to his or her development of group identity, empowerment, and cultural self-esteem.
5. Realize that teachers do not need to learn to speak Ebonics, but they do need to learn about it so that they can better teach mainstream American English.
6. Use the strategies associated with teaching English as a second language, supporting students to acquire a new dialect or language system rather than replacing their original one.
7. Work with the child to help him or her understand the importance of acquiring the new dialect. *Bi-dialectal fluency* means retaining the home dialect and becoming proficient in the dialect of the school (mainstream American English)—something that Blacks from earlier generations have shown is a time-proven minority adaptive and survival strategy. (Thompson, 2000, pp. 438–439)

To this list, we add:

8. Work with school personnel to promote the understanding that all dialects are linguistically equal and that it is not necessary to lose one dialect (e.g., Black Language) in order to acquire another (e.g., standard English).
9. Acknowledge and attempt to address nonlinguistic factors that interfere with equitable education for nonnative standard English speakers (Rickford, 1999a). Linguistic intervention alone is not adequate.
10. Link programs for standard English learners to clear curricular goals (Wolfram et al., 1999).

G. Language, Culture, and Human Development

Theorists have argued about the relationship between language and cognitive development (Piatelli-Palmarini, 1980). But whether language is primary in shaping cognition (Vygotsky, 1962), led by cognitive development (Piaget, 1980), or a particular form of cognition with its own biological basis (Chomsky, 1993), it is a close partner of human development. Culture is also an important partner in the relationship between language and human cognitive development. Parents' ideas of how children develop and what constitutes an "ideal child" are rooted in culture (Greenfield, 1994); as we have discussed, language is itself both a cultural phenomenon and a bearer of culture across generations. In *Volume I*, we discuss how notions of intelligence, the ecology of a community, and parental approaches to childrearing all influence cognitive development.

H. Intersection of Language With Other Aspects of Diversity

Language also intersects with aspects of diversity besides culture. Among these are gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (class). Appalachian dialect and Black Language are both associated with class differences vis-à-vis standard English because, on the whole, their speakers have had less access as groups to the privileges of higher education and economic stability. This does not mean, of course, that there are not Black Language speakers or Appalachian dialect speakers who are educated and economically well off, but as groups they have had less access to education and economic security.

Gender differences in language have long been documented and have implications for instruction, just as dialect differences do. In fact, the term *genderlect* commonly refers to typical differences between male and female speech (Owens, 2005; Tannen, 1997). Teachers may find that female students tend to mitigate their statements of opinion or fact with words and phrases such as *perhaps*, *it seems to me*, *I'm not sure, but…*, whereas male students tend not to use such language (Edelsky, 1981). This language conveys a tentativeness that may not reflect what girls actually know. Another documented difference between males and females is the frequency and duration of their responses to teachers' questions (Krupnick, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), with teachers calling on boys more frequently and boys outtalking girls more than two to one, by some accounts. Given the belief that active participation and opportunities to engage in classroom discourse are important to both boys' and girls' learning, teachers need to pay close attention to ensuring equitable opportunities to use language.

Gender interacts with every other aspect of diversity. In recent years, research has focused interest in how gender roles and expectations intersect with students' learning of English and academics in a variety of classrooms. Wolfe (1998) investigated how girls and boys fared in different types of English as a second language (ESL) classrooms and concludes:

> Girls in ESL classrooms are often doubly shut out of the opportunity to participate in the academic community because not only are they offered restricted access to academic language but are also labeled in research literature as somehow deviant (i.e., as silenced, as shy, or as lacking self esteem) (Losey, 1995). Perhaps the most important question educators can ask on behalf of these girls is not who talks and who doesn't, but what kind of classroom discourse structures are built from and enact a more equitable approach to classroom language production. (p. 20)

In fact, girls from many cultures are socialized to be quiet and to defer to boys, and it takes a knowledgeable and sensitive teacher to identify ways to support their active participation in the classroom (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004).

I. Communicating Across Cultures With Families

Cultural differences in communication styles can affect parental involvement in schooling as well as student behavior. Schools today often expect parents to participate in parent-teacher conferences and, at times, on committees that set educational policy or support the school in other ways. The intent is positive: to foster participation and empowerment of parents. It shows an effort to reflect parents' priorities and enable parents to have an investment in their children's education. But parents sometimes have a different conception of what their role should be in their children's education (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000).

Parents who come from cultures that hold teachers in high esteem may believe that decisions about practices and policies should be left to professionals (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Valdés, 1996). Parents with these cultural values are puzzled when a school tries to involve them in goal setting at parent-teacher conferences and decision making on advisory councils. Teachers, on the other hand, may misinterpret parents' unwillingness to participate as a lack of concern about their children's education. If the parents speak little or no English and the teacher cannot speak the parents' language, communication problems are compounded. However, it is more often the values and intentions underlying the language—rather than the language difference itself—that cause misunderstandings between home and school (Trumbull et al., 2001).

To address the communication problems and the underlying assumptions, teachers and other school personnel need particular knowledge and skills. As discussed in *Volume I,* ethnographic inquiry with parents and other community members is a way of learning how families see their roles and finding out how they want to interact with their children's schools. Parents' own educational backgrounds form the basis for the understanding of how they can and should participate.

Sometimes the most well-meaning communication from school to home can backfire and produce highly undesirable results. For example, posting impersonal signs notifying parents that they must report to the school office or are not permitted to go into the cafeteria is very insulting to parents whose notion of respect includes personalizing communication (Trumbull et al., 2001). Likewise, parents may attempt forms of communication with schools that are unacceptable from

the perspective of teachers and administrators. For example, a parent may send an older child to ask the teacher of a younger sibling if the student can leave school early for a doctor's appointment. When the child is not released, the parent may not understand that a form of communication appropriate in her hometown in Mexico is not effective in Los Angeles (Valdés, 1996).

Parents may perceive invitations from school to home as unwelcoming, particularly if they are always related to specific, formal activities (McCaleb, 1997; Trumbull et al., 2001). Notes sent home that carry a serious message about a student's needs or behaviors may be negatively received by parents whose cultures implicitly emphasize the importance of face-to-face communication—particularly in the case of a serious matter. Sometimes parents are sent forms to fill out that ask for a lot of personal information. These can seem invasive and rude for families whose cultures focus more on relationships than on efficient sharing of information (Dyson, 1997). Such families often value informal communication; they may prefer to speak briefly with a teacher when they come to pick up or drop off a child. Conversation at such times may be primarily social, but it serves to build a relationship—something that may be far more valuable to the parent than information about testing schedules, academic performance, or the like.

Some parents are more comfortable talking in small groups with other parents and the teacher. They may prefer to converse about the classroom of children as a group and goals for its success. Grouping parents for conferences can address a number of communication issues: discomfort with an individual focus on one child, the need for linguistic support to communicate in English, and the opportunity to hear from other parents and draw upon the group to solve problems (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Altchech, 1999).

J. Resources

Print Materials

Adger, C. T., Christian, D., & Taylor, O. (Eds.). (1999). *Making the connection: Language and academic achievement among African American students.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics and McHenry, IL: Delta Systems.
Well-known educators and sociolinguists contributed to this volume, addressing the role of language and its treatment in the achievement of African American students. The book makes the case for bi-dialectism (mastery of home and school dialects) and dialect awareness on the part of both teachers and students. This is an excellent resource for teachers, professional developers, and teacher educators.

Corson, D. (2001). *Language diversity and education.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
This volume, intended primarily for graduate students, draws upon a variety of disciplines including sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropological linguistics, and education. The work explores the range of language varieties that currently exist in many schools, including standard and nonstandard varieties, those influenced by a second language, and gendered and culturally different discourse norms.

Demo, D. A. (2001). *Discourse analysis for language teachers.* CAL Digest, EDO-FL-01-07. Available: http://www.cal/org/resources/digest/0107demo.html
The term *discourse analysis* refers to the examination of students' language use in particular situations. Discourse analysis of a student's use of language in a class discussion could entail evaluating the student's ways of responding to questions and interacting with other students. In writing, it might focus on the ways a student organizes a narrative.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
This is a seminal ethnographic study of language in social context. More than 20 years old, it continues to be relevant, read, and discussed by those interested in social differences in language use. Heath's account of how children from different communities encounter the linguistic world of the classroom and how their teachers interpret their behavior is fascinating and informative reading.

Language and Culture Bulletin. The 12 Cs for school success: What is communicative competence? (2000). *Language and Culture Bulletin, 3*(2). Available: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/programs/eac/langcultbltn/lncblt_v3-2.shtml
This three-page article provides a simple but useful introduction to the notion of communicative competence and how to promote it in the classroom. Although it focuses to some degree on second language learners, the strategies and principles delineated are appropriate for instruction of any learner.

Leap, W. L. (1993). *American Indian English*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
For teachers who work with American Indian students, this book is a boon. Using examples from many American Indian languages, Leap shows what is special about those languages and illustrates the differences that may influence the speakers' use of English. His chapter on language and schooling (chapter 7) uses the Northern Ute context in eastern Utah, but as with any good case study, this example serves to highlight the kinds of issues teachers of American Indian students will want to know about. The book is technical at times, but much of it is accessible to any reader.

Perry, T., & Delpit, L. (Eds.). (1998). *The real Ebonics debate.* Boston: Beacon Press.
Is Ebonics a language? A dialect? Is it a valid linguistic system? The editors of this volume have compiled a rich and vast array of work from educators, linguists, practitioners, and students. Each piece provides a distinct viewpoint and clear voice in the Ebonics debate. In addition, the volume adds depth and insight to any conversation of language, power, and identity. Caution: Smith's inference that Ebonics (or Black Language) is an African dialect is disputed by linguists, who characterize it as a dialect of English.

Trumbull, E., Rothstein-Fisch, C., Greenfield, P. M., & Quiroz, B. (2001). *Bridging cultures between home and school: A guide for teachers.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
The Bridging Cultures Project, a collaborative action research project involving teachers and researchers, used a framework of individualism-collectivism to generate ideas for improving the education of immigrant Latino students in the Los Angeles area. The book focuses on how to improve linkages between home and school both in instruction and in relationships with families.

Wolfram, W., Adger, C. T., & Christian, D. (1999). *Dialects in schools and communities.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
The premise of this book is that teachers can involve their students in learning about dialects. The book presents a rationale for the authors' point of view and proceeds with examples of different dialects of English and activities for exploring their systematic differences. It is a useful resource for teachers who want to understand the concept of dialect and investigate how common American English dialects vary.

Other Materials

Alvarez, L., & Kolker, A. (Producers/Directors). (1987). American Tongues [Motion Picture]. (Available from the Center for New America Media, PO Box 1084, Harriman, NY 10926). Transcript available from http://www.cnam.com/downloads/amt_ts.html

This 56-minute videotape presents varieties of American English from all over the country. (The Web site listed above provides a written transcript.) It illustrates regional and social differences in language as well as negative responses to those differences and the impact of such judgments. Wolfram's study guide is available at http://www.cnam.com/%5Cdownloads%5Camt_sg.html.

Web Sites

Atlas of North American English
http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/home.html

This site, developed by the Linguistics Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania, provides maps showing the geography of regional dialects in the United States along with commentary by Professor William Labov, one of the most celebrated sociolinguists in the country.

Bert Vaux's Dialect Survey
http://cfprod01.imt.uwm.edu/Dept/FLL/linguistics/dialect/

Bert Vaux, a professor of linguistics at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, has conducted a large-scale study of U.S. dialects. Results of the study are available at this site.

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
http://www.cal.org

Located in Washington, DC, CAL represents a group of scholars and educators who conduct research and disseminate what is learned about myriad language issues related to education. CAL conducts professional development, stages conferences, and publishes a large number of documents and materials useful to teachers interested in language.

Ethnologue's Catalog of World Languages
http://www.ethnologue.com/country_index.asp?place=Americas

Anyone interested in knowing the languages spoken in more than 100 countries will find this site fascinating. For each country, a listing of languages and their distributions is provided, and viewers can click on links to more information about the country and language.

John Rickford's Ebonics Web Site
http://www.stanford.edu/~rickford/ebonics/

This site posts the writings of linguist John Rickford. These are very accessible to nonlinguists. Rickford also provides links to many other important sites on language.

Teaching Diverse Learners
http://www.lab.brown.edu/tdl/

This site is devoted to helping educators teach ELLs equitably and effectively. It offers information, publications, and educational materials that can be downloaded.



PART II:

English Language Learners

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The latest U.S. census data reveal that nearly one out of every five children between the ages of 5 and 17 comes from a home in which English is not the primary spoken language (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2001). This statistic reflects an increase of over 50% from the 1990 survey (Crawford, 2001). These facts are not surprising to anyone living or working in an ethnically or linguistically diverse community in the United States; however, there remains widespread misconception among the general population about how languages are learned and what can facilitate language learning and bolster academic support of ELLs. Even teachers who exhibit a high degree of caring and respect for their ELL students and maintain high standards through challenging curricula may not recognize the further need for linking instruction to their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences (Pacheco, 2004).

Although there is an emphasis on bilingual students' need to learn English, it is important to emphasize the accomplishments of such students and recognize them as, for instance, Spanish language proficient or Vietnamese language proficient. Moreover, in order to understand the learning processes of students whose home language is other than English, teachers need to recognize the important role that the first language plays (Bialystok, 1991, 2001; Cummins, 1981; Valdés & Figueroa, 1994; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). There are many reasons to support the first language, including the following:

1. The first language interacts with the second language in the process of learning.
2. Bilinguals use both of their languages as intellectual and social resources.
3. A bilingual student will not perform exactly like a monolingual speaker on any meaningful task involving language because he or she is always influenced by two languages.
4. There are cognitive, emotional, and social advantages to knowing, maintaining, and developing the home language. Recognition of these advantages can influence teachers' attitudes and actions toward the home language.

Wong-Fillmore (1991) documented the rate of first language loss among young immigrant children in the United States. Her study revealed that language loss holds negative consequences for intergenerational relationships within a given family structure. The conclusions are stark:

> What is lost is no less than the means by which parents socialize their children—when parents are unable to talk to their children, they cannot easily convey to them their values, beliefs, understandings, or wisdom about how to cope with their experiences.... When parents lose the means for socializing and influencing their children, rifts develop and families lose the intimacy that comes from shared beliefs and understandings. (p. 27)

English Language Learner (ELL)
A person who is not fully proficient in English commensurate with native-English-speaking peers[7]

Bilingual
A person who is proficient in two languages; a *balanced bilingual* has roughly equal proficiency in both languages

Learning a second language[8] as a necessary way of participating in a new social, cultural, and political community is different in many ways from voluntarily learning a foreign language. Not only is learning a second language a necessity rather than a choice for students, but also second language learners often have to use the new language as a learning medium while they are still acquiring it. In California, for example, approximately 8% of students who are learning English as a second language receive academic instruction in their first language (California Department of Education, 2005). The rest spend the majority of their school day immersed in English, using English to learn mathematics, social studies, and other subjects—with some receiving support from English language development specialists.

Because most ELLs are now placed in general education classrooms, preparation and professional development related to their educational needs must not be restricted to language specialists (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2002; Trumbull & Farr, 2005). Teachers need a basic understanding of what is involved in learning a second language and how to support students with that process. However, many teachers have not been educated on how to reach an increasingly diverse student population, and their access to professional development on appropriate topics may be limited (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000). In Part II, we introduce many topics of benefit to teachers.

A. Legal Provisions for Educating ELLs

Ensuring that ELLs have access to appropriate education is not only a desirable goal for schools, but it is a legal requirement. Specific legislation and case law based on court rulings have established legal requirements for schools with regard to the education of ELLs. Table 2 lists five of the most important legal foundations of the rights of ELLs to an appropriate education. The federal Office for Civil Rights enforces these laws, and any citizen can initiate an inquiry into the practices of a school or district if he or she has evidence that the practices are unfair to students on the grounds of their civil rights. States also monitor compliance with these laws through various review and evaluation mechanisms.

[7] Bilingual and multilingual speakers are technically never commensurate in their second or third language knowledge and performance with monolingual or native speakers; judgments are usually based on tests that yield approximations of language proficiency.

[8] The term *second language* refers to any new language a child or adult has to learn in order to negotiate new social circumstances.

Table 2: Legal Benchmarks

Law or Legal Decision	Provisions or Implications
Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964	This act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974	This act prohibits discriminatory acts such as segregating students on the basis of race, color, or national origin as well as discrimination against faculty and staff; requires school districts to address barriers to ELLs' meaningful participation in a school's educational programs.
Lau v. Nichols, 1974	This case affirmed that school districts are required to address barriers to ELLs' meaningful participation in a school's educational programs.
Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981	Following this case, school districts are required to meet three criteria in provision of programs to ELLs: (1) Theory – A program must be based on sound educational theory or a reasonable experimental strategy; (2) Practice – Such program must be implemented with adequate practices, resources, and personnel; and (3) Results – The program must be jettisoned if it fails to produce results.
Plyler v. Doe, 1982	In accordance with the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the state cannot deny free public education to undocumented immigrant children.

Sources: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs (2002) (http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/faq/07court.htm); Office for Civil Rights (http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/q-ell.htm); and U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section (http:www.usdoj.gov/crt/edo/faq.htm).

Most recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has had implications for the education of ELLs. Because it requires standardized testing of students who have not fully mastered English, some educators are concerned that it may have a negative impact on ELLs (Abedi, 2004; Crawford, 2004). The law's provisions for accountability for all students are intended to promote equity for ELLs and other students with particular educational needs, yet those same provisions contradict the recommendations of national professional organizations concerned with education. Of concern is NCLB's testing policy: (1) It requires ELLs to be academically assessed via instruments designed for native-English speakers, a practice that the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education (1999) have advised against; (2) It requires some ELLs to be tested long before they have become proficient in English; and (3) It pushes teachers to spend blocks of instructional time drilling students for tests—a practice that may improve scores in the short run but take valuable time away from higher level instruction (Crawford, 2004; McNeill, 2000). Clearly, we need to resolve the tensions that arise in meeting the needs of accountability, ensuring that ELLs are not ignored, and avoiding practices that are not recommended (Abedi, 2004).

B. The Goal of Communicative Competence in English

ELLs need to develop full proficiency in English, but what does that mean? A *communicative competence* view of language (see Part I) can offer one useful understanding of what ELLs need to accomplish to be proficient in English. Communicative competence refers to the ability to exercise sufficient control over all of the forms and functions of language in order to communicate successfully in a wide range of contexts. This requires the ability to use oral and written language as a tool for learning in and out of the classroom.

Students need to use language in social situations both inside and outside their home communities, such as school and other institutions (e.g., the bank or the post office). They need to be fluent with a sizeable vocabulary, master syntax, and pronounce words well enough to be understood. They also need to be proficient in written language forms and both learn from and construct written texts (Bachman & Palmer, 1992; Canale, 1983). Figure 12 summarizes some of the major aspects of communicative competence.

Communicative Competence
The ability to exercise sufficient control over all of the forms and functions of language in order to communicate successfully in a wide range of contexts

Figure 12: Primary Elements of Communicative Competence

Grammatical competence
Knowing the language code: vocabulary, word formation and meaning, sentence formation, pronunciation, and spelling

Sociolinguistic competence
Ability to produce and comprehend language in different social situations, taking into consideration such factors as the age and status of participants, the purposes of the interaction, and the norms or conventions of interaction appropriate to that setting and participants

Discourse competence
The ability to combine and connect utterances (spoken) and sentences (written) into a meaningful whole. Discourse ranges from a simple spoken conversation to long written texts.

Strategic competence
The ability to manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals. This includes the use of specific strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication (e.g., paraphrase or gesture) or to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g., raise or lower voice for effect) (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

(Adapted from Trumbull & Farr, 2005, p. 139)

As discussed earlier, language use differs across social and cultural settings. Schools typically have a predictable repertoire of language uses, which may or may not coincide with those to which children have been exposed in their homes. Table 3 outlines some of the principal uses that language serves in school for both teachers and students. The examples are largely related to oral language, but many apply to written language as well. The emphasis is on what a student or teacher is trying to accomplish with language. Each of the elements of communicative competence is involved to varying degrees and in different ways for each activity.

Table 3: Uses of Language in School and Examples

School Language Use	Example
Regulating behavior	The teacher asks students to behave in certain ways. A student asks another student to do something.
Expressing needs and feelings	A student asks the teacher or another student for help. A student lets the teacher or another student know his or her feelings about a social interaction. A student expresses feelings in response to literature.
Labeling and describing	The teacher names items or asks students for names or attributes of items (e.g., "What…?" "What kind of…?"). A student initiates labeling.
Recounting	A student retells an experience or provides information—tells about an event, retells a passage read, summarizes material, and displays knowledge in oral and written form.
Following or giving directions	The teacher provides a running narrative of events at hand or forecasts events (e.g., The teacher tells what the day's events will be or what steps to take to complete a task. A student may be asked to give directions to a classmate.).
Obtaining or giving information	Language is used as a heuristic, or a tool for learning. The teacher seeks student interpretation or explanations. A student interprets actions or text and answers "why" questions. A student may use language to learn from others orally, by asking questions, or interviewing someone.
Commenting	A student or teacher volunteers remarks on an event, on another's performance, or on readings, etc.
Narrating	Accounts of true experience or knowledge: A student tells about experiences to the teacher or other students or reinterprets known information (e.g., show and tell and reports). Stories: A student gives a factual or fictional account that follows the format of an animate being moving through a series of events with goal-directed behavior.
Arguing and persuading	A student participates in an argument, debate, or discussion, offering evidence for statements (may use evidence as well as appeal to emotions to persuade).
Expressing creativity	A student engages in creative, imaginative, or poetic use of language.

Expressing identity	A student uses language variety to express in-group membership or closeness to others.
Talking about language	A student or teacher talks about features of language (e.g., phonology, word meaning, discourse structure), paraphrases, and defines words.

(Adapted from Trumbull & Farr, 2005, p. 46; partially based on text by Heath, 1986, pp. 166–170, and a chart by Wolfram et al., 1999, pp. 95–96).

Although one can identify the uses to which language is put in the classroom and outline a general description of proficiency, the exact nature of the proficiency that a child needs to develop varies (Bialystok, 2001). There is not one single version of successful language acquisition that captures what each and every child needs to acquire—particularly when the focus is on language in use, as it is from a communicative competence perspective. As Bialystok (2001) observes:

> As an aspect of human knowledge, language use includes a social context, pragmatic applications, cultural and regional variation, motivational and other individual differences, conceptual (cognitive) content, experience and history, and probably many other nonlinguistic factors. So just what is it that we wish to explain when describing children's acquisition of language? (p. 59)

This question brings us back, once again, to the need to understand the contexts of students' lives and to be clear about the nature of language expected in the classroom.

Activity 7: Exploring Language Use in the Classroom

Instructions to Participants

Select a partner and discuss which language uses are most common in your classrooms. Using Table 4, write specific classroom examples for each language use. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the whole group. You may want to refer to the sequence of your day (elementary school) or your course (middle and high school) to organize your thoughts.

Table 4: Uses of Language in School

School Language Use	Example
1. Regulating behavior	
2. Expressing needs and feelings	
3. Labeling and describing	
4. Recounting	
5. Following or giving directions	
6. Obtaining or giving information	
7. Commenting	
8. Narrating	
9. Arguing and persuading	
10. Expressing creativity	
11. Expressing identity	
12. Talking about language (metalinguistic function)	

Discussion

- **For which uses was it easiest to name examples?**
- **Do all students exhibit skill with each use? If not, what differences do you see?**
- **Are there differences between ELLs and other students, or among ELLs in the ways they engage in these language uses?**
- **Are there particular uses you would like to increase the frequency or quality of? How could that be accomplished?**

Conversational Language

> ***Conversational Language***
> The oral language of everyday interactions, including the vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics required to make communication understood and socially acceptable

Children can often acquire considerable oral skill in a second language quickly (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). They can chat with playmates at recess, use language to meet basic needs, and forge social relationships through language—at least in part. Many second language learners master *conversational language* within two to three years, but the rate of acquisition is variable, with some children taking as long as five years. One study noted that children took from one to six-and-a-half years to acquire "native-like" oral proficiency in English (Pray & MacSwan, 2002, cited in Crawford, 2004). Academic proficiency (discussed below) has been shown to take four to seven years to develop (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1981; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).

Academic Language

> ***Academic Language***
> The advanced oral and written forms and functions of a language required to achieve in school and the workplace, including the vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling, pragmatic knowledge, and discourse conventions associated with different disciplines and settings

There are many definitions of *academic language*, and each one contributes something to our understanding of what is involved in developing the language proficiency needed to successfully progress through formal schooling (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1979; Scarcella, 2003; Solomon & Rhodes, 1995; Spanos, Rhodes, Dale, & Crandall, 1988; Valdez Pierce & O'Malley, 1992). Surveying characterizations of academic language proficiency, Farr and Richardson Bruna (2005) identify the following elements:

- Knowledge of the vocabulary of subject matter domains
- Ability to use appropriate grammar
- Knowledge of the structures and conventions of different written genres or discourse styles
- Ability to use metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies to comprehend written text
- Ability to use language to obtain and interpret information, to compare and contrast, to express cause and effect, to conduct research, and engage in other school language functions (Dutro, 2001)

- Ability to understand the language of tests and to engage in the kinds of activities demanded on tests, such as summarizing, evaluating evidence, and interpreting word problems (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000)

Scarcella (2003) also mentions the following:

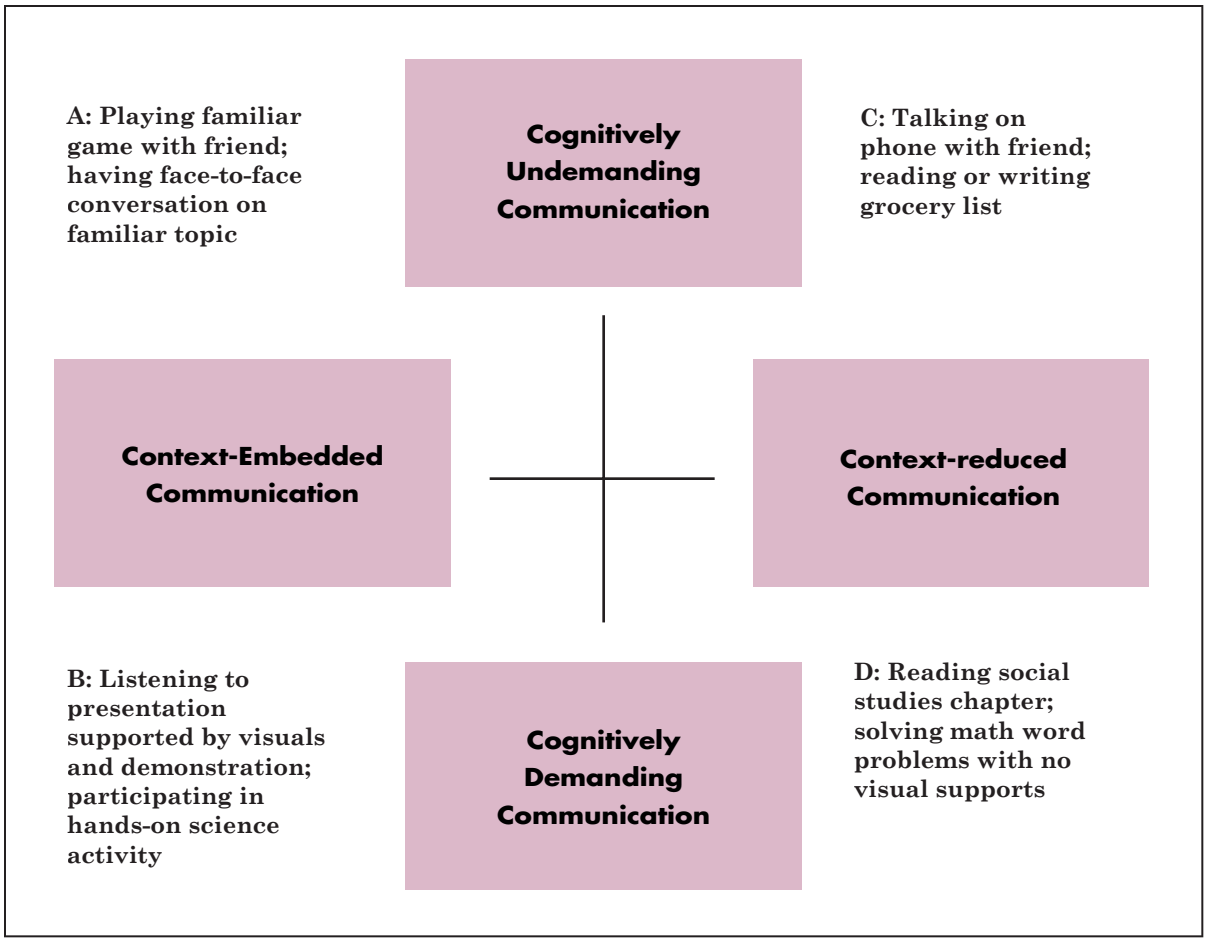
- Mastery of high-level phonological skills, such as the ability to recognize and produce the appropriate stress patterns of multi-syllabic words (e.g., *democracy/democratic*, *interpret/interpretation*, and *facile/facility*)
- Knowledge of how words are formed from roots (e.g., *receive->reception*, *differ-> difference*, *different*); and knowledge of the constraints on how words can be used (e.g., One can say, "He inflicted pain on the intruder," but not, "He inflicted the intruder," or "He inflicted pain the intruder.")
- Sociolinguistic knowledge, such as how to initiate a topic in an academic setting, when and how to use terms of politeness, and how long to talk (or write) depending upon the purpose and context of the communication

Theorist and researcher Jim Cummins brought attention to the difference between what he called basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as long ago as 1979. However, some find casting conversational and academic proficiencies as dichotomous to be misleading because they overlap to a degree. Many of the skills associated with conversational proficiency are entailed in academic language proficiency. Scarcella (2003) has critiqued Cummins's schema on the grounds that it is not useful in pointing the way to instructional practices.

And yet these constructs, which Cummins now refers to as *conversational fluency* and *academic language proficiency* (Cummins, 2000b), have served as a useful way to think about the different types of language skills required by activities inside and outside of school. The distinction has alerted teachers to the potential for overestimating the language proficiency of students on the basis of their conversational and social skills with language. Because young children quickly acquire interpersonal language from interacting with other children, and because their accents tend to be more native-like than those of adults learning English, they may be judged generally proficient when they are not (Cummins, 1981; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).

Cummins's theory later advanced to further address the types of communication and the cognitive demands placed on second language learners. Figure 13 describes these four dimensions: *context-embedded* versus *context-reduced communication* and *cognitively undemanding* versus *cognitively demanding communication*.

Figure 13: Cognitively Un/Demanding Communication and Context Embedded/Reduced Communication



(Cummins, 1981)

Context-embedded communication occurs in face-to-face interactions, where communicative supports (e.g., objects, gestures, or intonations) are available for a student. These supports help the student discern the meaning of the communication. *Context-reduced* communication occurs when there are few, if any, communicative cues to support the interaction (e.g., this can occur in written language in contrast to oral language). The second dimension, cognitive demand, intersects with the level of context surrounding an instance of language use. *Cognitively demanding* communication occurs frequently in a classroom setting where students are required to analyze and synthesize abstract information. In contrast, *cognitively undemanding* communication may occur on a playground or at a local shop.

Scarcella (2003) and Kern (2000) address the cognitive component of academic language in their research. In order to develop academic language proficiency, students need to build a substantial knowledge base in various domains and develop higher order thinking skills (e.g., comparing/contrasting, interpreting) as well as the ability to evaluate what they read or hear, using the kinds of reasoning and evidence associated with the particular domain (Scarcella, 2003).

Teachers can use Cummins's model as a way to quickly evaluate the language demands of various activities of the classroom—and to ensure that activities are adequately dispersed across all quadrants (Robson, 1995). For example, a teacher would not want all activities to fall in quadrant D (cognitively demanding and context-reduced). A sample quadrant D activity is having the student read a chapter on a set of earth science concepts for which he or she has not been prepared in class. Reading the same chapter after classroom preparation, including scaffolding for the vocabulary and organization of the chapter, could push a quadrant D activity into quadrant C. The cognitive demand would have been reduced, presumably, by the preparation. An example of how scaffolding can make a cognitively and linguistically demanding task more accessible comes from a vocabulary study with third-grade ELLs whose first language was Spanish (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). Teachers previewed a reading selection in Spanish, students read it in English, and teachers reviewed the story in Spanish; as a result, students' knowledge of 20 key English vocabulary words improved. This approach was more effective in promoting vocabulary knowledge than concurrent translation of the story into their first language (Spanish) or simply reading the story to children (control condition). Researchers reasoned that building background knowledge and reviewing important points in Spanish made the English vocabulary easier to acquire.

(Note: See Section E: Addressing the Needs of ELLs in the Classroom for suggestions for building students' academic language proficiency.)

C. How Do Children Learn a Second Language?

Second language acquisition processes parallel first language acquisition processes in many ways (Bialystok, 2001; Dulay & Burt, 1974). By noting regularities in language forms and uses through ongoing exposure and quality interactions, learners advance their language ability.

Research suggests that learners acquire their second language systematically, according to a somewhat predictable developmental route, although acquisition of particular grammatical forms may be more or less difficult depending upon the learner's first language (Ellis, 1997). For instance, students whose first language marks plurals with a separate morpheme (as English does with *–s*) are likely to acquire the English form with greater speed and accuracy (Ellis, 1997). Of course, one difference between first and second language acquisition is that the second language learner already has a language system in place to one degree or another, a situation that provides him or her with some generalizations about how language works—but not necessarily specific information on how the new language will operate. Farr and Richardson Bruna (2005) call second language learning "a process of 'creative construction' equally influenced by both the first *and* second language systems" (p. 127). Selinker (1972) coined the term *interlanguage* to refer to this developing, transitional, second language system.

Children can acquire their first language naturally and without great effort. However, when a second language is learned later on, after the age of seven, the outcome is much more variable from child to child (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). This is due in part to differences in individual learners, the educational system, and social attitudes toward the child and his or her home culture and language, among other factors.

Factors Influencing Second Language Acquisition and Learning

Many factors affect the rate and success of second language acquisition. These are categorized broadly as cognitive, linguistic, affective/emotional, personality, social, political, political, and historical—and, of course, instructional. These factors interact: One cannot understand them without viewing the whole picture in which the student is learning a second language. For instance, "attitude toward second language learning" is often cited as a source of variation in learning outcomes (Farr & Richardson Bruna, 2005), yet it is also affected by a student's aptitude for language learning (a cognitive factor) and the social context in which he or she is learning the new language. Teachers need to understand the linguistic and social contexts of their students' lives. A one-size-fits-all approach to promoting English acquisition will not work for ELLs any more than for other students. Exposure to a new language is also essential as it provides opportunities for interacting with the language—not merely hearing it (Owens, 2005).

Nature of the First Language

A student's first language may facilitate or inhibit the process of learning the new language, depending upon its similarity to and difference from the second language. The facilitation is referred to as *transfer*, while the inhibition is referred to as *interference*. In more general terms, transfer occurs when students use any of their first language knowledge to help them understand and use their second language. One example of transfer is how ELLs have access to their first language as they speak or read (Cummins, 1980; García, 2000; Upton, 1997). They are not approaching a new language from scratch. The principle applies to written as well as oral language (Cummins, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1995; García, 2000).

Language Aptitude

Children and adults naturally vary in their aptitude for learning new languages, whether in sensitivity to sounds and sound patterns (phonology) or ability to infer grammatical rules from hearing and reading discourse (Carroll, 1981). Teachers need to recognize that students from similar language backgrounds will also differ from each other in their various linguistic aptitudes—and a single student will exhibit different kinds of aptitude depending upon the linguistic task (Farr & Richardson Bruna, 2005).

Students who exhibit problems in first language acquisition are at risk for problems in learning a second language; however, without first language assessment, these problems may not be identified (Langdon, 1992). In such cases, lack of academic progress may result and be wrongly attributed to slowness of acquisition of English rather than a language disability.

Other Cognitive and Developmental Factors

Verbal memory and inductive reasoning skills have been cited as factors in second language learning (Wong-Fillmore, 1991), along with certain types of learning styles (Bialystok, 2001). However, studies have not pointed to the same conclusions. In addition, there are serious problems with using standardized tests designed for mainstream students in order to evaluate cognitive development. Second language learners are likely to differ not only in terms of language background but also experience. Although experts agree that a student's cognitive/developmental profile must interact with second language learning in some ways, they cannot yet agree on exactly how.

Affective and Personality Factors

Sociability and the inclination to interact with speakers of the second language have been cited as positive factors in second language acquisition; however, they are only useful if a student has a significant number of second language speakers with whom to interact (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). A student's degree of self-confidence and willingness to take risks affects second language acquisition, but the relationship is not direct. Rather, these personality factors seem to both influence language interactions and be influenced by the environment in which the student is learning the language (Ellis, 1997; Farr & Richardson Bruna, 2005). For example, a student may take risks in one classroom and not in another.

Age

Research shows that learning a new language as an adult has certain advantages, and learning the same language as a young child has other advantages. Bialystok (2001) concludes that ability to acquire a new language declines with age, particularly after puberty. Others note, however, that adults are more facile at learning formal systems of grammar because they can build on existing systems (Cummins, 1981; McLaughlin, 1992). Most language learners do have difficulty acquiring a native-like accent past the age of puberty and even after the age of seven (Bialystok, 2001). Once again, however, individual differences in aptitude and experience interact with age as a factor.

Social, Political, and Historical Factors

A student's attitude toward learning a second language is heavily influenced by how much he or she is motivated to acculturate to the new culture associated with the language (Ellis, 1997; Schumann, 1978). When acquiring the new language does not threaten the loss or devaluation of the home language, a student is more likely to be positively motivated to learn it (Cummins, 2001a; Ellis, 1997).

Classrooms are extensions of the social context; they mirror the larger society in its implicit or explicit regard for a student's home language (Cummins, 1993, 2001b; Peirce, 1995). Attitudes toward English and the home language also reflect the historical dimension of relations between the student's cultural group and the dominant culture. For example, speakers of American Indian languages may be ambivalent about English because learning English has been associated with forcible loss of their own languages and cultures (Reyhner & Eder, 1992). Speakers of Spanish, according to Zentella (1997), may experience the political context of the United States as disparaging to their identity and to their home language. However, when students' home languages are socially valued, students are not likely to experience this ambivalence about learning a new language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Sequential Bilingual
A person who has learned a second language after the first language is established

Simultaneous Bilingual
A person who has learned two languages at the same time

It is useful for teachers to have some grounding in the most influential theories of second language acquisition. Although teachers are often eager to go directly to "best practices," "…it is the command of basic foundational knowledge in a given field that allows teachers to make principled rather than ad hoc curriculum decisions" (Kroll, 2003, p. 5). These theories contribute to our understanding of second language acquisition and implicitly underpin the instructional strategies recommended in various programs and materials.

Theories of second language acquisition relate to general schools of thought in first language acquisition. Most theories begin with the assumption that language has some biological basis—whether through a language-specific module and language acquisition device that eases language learning (Chomsky, 1965; Pinker, 1994) or through more general human cognitive and perceptual faculties that pave the way for the acquisition of language. Theories also tend to focus on either form or function (Bialystok, 2001). Formalist theories represent language acquisition as a rather uniform process, no matter what language is being learned in what setting; functionalist theories claim that the timing and context of language acquisition matter (hence, *sequential* and *simultaneous bilingualism* would be expected to occur differently because of differences in experience). The functionalist theoretical realm attends to culture and social context, as in the view of language proficiency as communicative competence.

Formalist Theories

Many formal theories are based on theoretical groundwork by linguist Noam Chomsky (1965, 1972, 1975). Chomsky's theory of language acquisition has changed somewhat over time, but it has always been highly "nativist," reflecting a belief in the innateness of language as an autonomous cognitive system, particular to humans and coded explicitly in the genes. The nature of what is encoded is argued about, but it has often been characterized as a *universal grammar*, or set of principles about how language works that every human being is born with and that captures what all languages have in common.

According to Chomskian theory, learners must be exposed to a language in order to activate the principles, and they subsequently learn the specific parameters of the languages to which they are exposed. For example, the child has to learn the different parameters such as whether or how plurals are marked, how word order signals syntactic roles, and how questions are formed. Syntax and language structure take a central role in Chomsky's original conceptualization of generative grammar because of the way in which an infinite number of utterances can be generated from a finite number of words and rules for combining them.

Because the child is primed with the basic principles, he or she readily attends to the salient linguistic input in his or her environment and infers the rules of the specific languages in that environment. From this perspective, all languages are learned in similar fashion—and Chomskians point to the fact that virtually all children learn their native languages (some learn several) along rather similar paths of development across the world. The implication for ELLs would be that they can naturally acquire a second or third language in the same manner (see Krashen & Terrell, 1983, and others who favor a "natural" approach).

Functional Theories

Functional theories emphasize language development as specialized cognitive development situated in social and cultural context. "In these approaches, language emerges out of children's ordinary experience to fulfill specific cognitive, social, and communicative functions" (Bialystok, 2001, p. 40). The child's environment, in particular the linguistic input, is thought to be of paramount importance. The child makes meaning out of linguistic units (words, phrases, sentences) at first in large part by using the pragmatic and social information available in the environment (Nelson, 1996).

There are many different functional theories, focusing on language use from cognitive, discourse, or cultural perspectives. For instance, Schumann's (1978) Acculturation Model was based on the premise that the extent to which a second language learner adapts to the new culture influences acquisition of the target language. Among the factors affecting a learner's acculturation are his or her attitudes toward the new language and the group with which it is affiliated as well as the similarities and differences between the two groups and languages. This theory lacks a cognitive dimension, yet educators in the field of second language instruction find it meaningful because it points to an extremely important element in second language acquisition—motivation.

Discourse theory (Hatch, 1978) focuses on the use of language in social interaction as the primary impetus to language acquisition. Hatch observed that native speakers adjust their input (the way they speak) to new speakers, presumably influencing the order of acquisition of various grammatical features. This environmentally based theory emphasizes meaningful exchanges in context as the source of second language development (Nelson, 1996).

A survey of the literature on how to promote language development in ELLs reveals a strong emphasis upon creating situations in which learners can use language meaningfully in context—in other words, a functional approach (Brisk, 1998; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Cummins, 2001a; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Ovando & Collier, 1995).

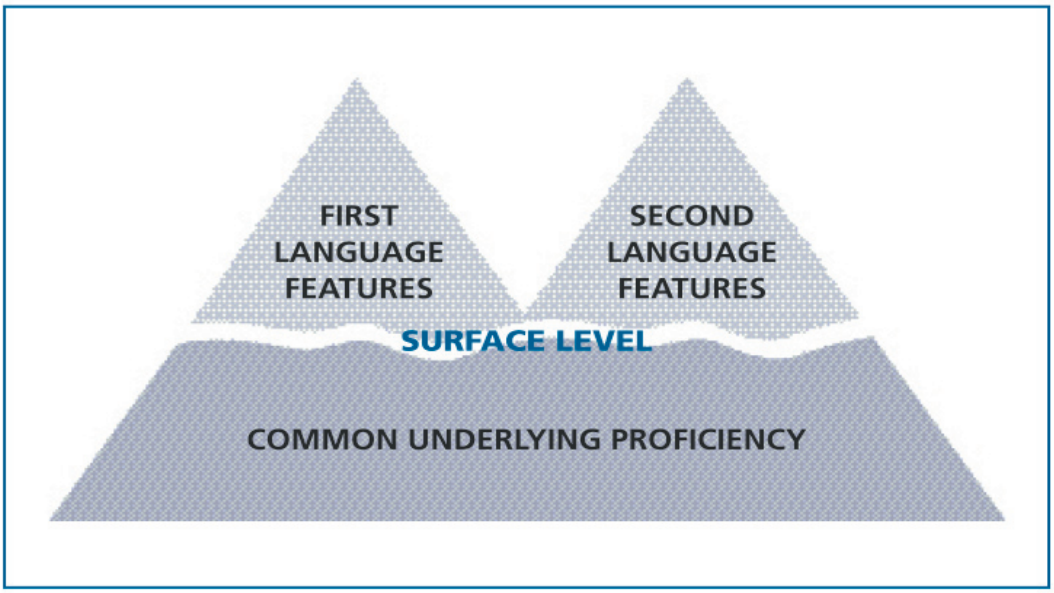
Cummins's Theory of Common Underlying Proficiency

Cummins has contributed a vast amount of theory to the field of second language acquisition and teaching, particularly in relation to the influence of social context and language policies on student learning outcomes. Cummins (1980) proposed that second language learners have "a common underlying proficiency" (CUP)—a single operating system responsible for language processing. The CUP theory holds that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are derived from the same central capacity (and localized in common language areas in the brain) and that these four functions may be developed and enhanced through either the first or second language. The

common underlying proficiency theory is represented in Figure 14 as an iceberg with above and below surface-level features. The figure shows that individual languages may appear distinct at the surface level. However, below the surface, both languages share a common operating system.

Current neurological research supports the belief that the neural mechanisms of bilinguals are the same as those of monolinguals and that the same areas of the brain are largely involved in language processing (Fabbro, 2001). The one exception is with later acquisition of a second language: The two languages may be represented in slightly different parts of the same general area. "[T]he representation of grammatical aspects of languages seems to be different between the two languages if L_2 [the second language] is acquired after the age of seven, and automatic processes and correctness are lower than those of the native language" (p. 219). Early language development has an automaticity that later learning does not, and this shows up in the brain's organization. However, Paradis (2000) cautions against speculative over-interpretations of brain research that result in ill-advised educational interventions, such as trying to activate one or the other brain hemisphere. At this point, it is safer to assume that brain processes of monolinguals and bilinguals are more similar than different.

Figure 14: Common Underlying Proficiency



(Cummins, 1980)

However, although the first language may be a cognitive resource for learning a new language, "second language learning [is] not a process of modifying what you already [know] to arrive at the second language" (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994, p.31). It is, instead, a process of constructing a new language system. The actual organization in the brain of the two or more languages is a topic of continuing research.

Attending to Form and Function

Many educators and researchers are now emphasizing the need for attention to both form and function, that is, to both explicit features of grammar and to conversational and general discourse competence (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Ellis, 1997; Frodesen & Holten, 2003; Lightbown, 1998). For optimal English language development, it is not enough to provide meaningful instruction in English: Students also need explicit instruction in English (Brisk, 1998; Dutro & Moran, 2003). College educators who teach former and current ELL students express concern that many of those students have not mastered a level of oral or written expression that is commensurate with the demands of college or the job market (Scarcella, 1996, 2003).

Research (Lightbown & Spada, 1999) suggests that approaches focusing on communication and comprehension are beneficial in the early stages of learning a second language. However, "they may not be sufficient to get learners to continue developing their second language abilities to advanced levels. In particular, comprehension-based instruction may make it difficult for learners to discover and eliminate patterns already present in their interlanguage that are not grammatical in the target language" (p. 135). Without explicit instruction, faulty patterns may become "fossilized,"—that is, they may be frozen in an inaccurate form. However, researchers stress that natural communicative situations alone are not enough; learners need explicit instruction in all aspects of language (Dutro & Moran, 2003; McLaughlin, 1989; Scarcella, 2003).

Few believe that language acquisition can proceed naturally without strong support from a teacher and motivation on the part of the learner. Wong-Fillmore (1991) cites three important conditions for students to succeed with second language learning: (1) they must recognize that they need to learn the target language, (2) they need access to proficient speakers of that language who can help them learn it, and (3) they need a social setting in which they interact on a frequent basis with speakers of the target language (pp. 52–53).

Activity 8: Applying Cummins's Theory

Instructions to Participants

Evaluate the cognitive and linguistic demands of the activities listed in Figure 15 (for the age group of interest) with a partner or group and place them in the appropriate quadrant in Figure 16. Some apply to elementary school students, some to middle and high school students.

Figure 15: Categorizing Classroom Activities

For teachers of younger students . . .

- Talking to a friend at lunch
- Describing a weekend trip to the zoo at circle time
- Participating in a phonics lesson on a new sound-letter relationship
- Telling Mom what happened at school today
- Performing in a play
- Reading aloud from a new story in the basal reader
- Listening to a favorite story

For teachers of older students . . .

- Reading the instructions for a multi-step, standardized assessment task
- Reading a persuasive essay against littering
- Following a science demonstration by the teacher, assisted by visual props
- Participating in classroom discussion about a social studies topic the teacher has taught and one has read a chapter about
- Writing an explanation of one's solution to a math problem
- Writing an explanation of why one was late for school

Figure 16: Quadrant Worksheet

A Cognitively undemanding and context-embedded	C Cognitively undemanding and context-reduced
B Cognitively demanding and context-embedded	D Cognitively demanding and context-reduced

Discussion

- **How did you decide where to place each activity?**
- **Did you feel you needed additional information to evaluate the language and cognitive demands of some activities? Which ones? What kind of information**
- **What other classroom activities would go in each quadrant?**
- **Pick a quadrant D activity and discuss how it could be moved into quadrant C with modification. How could it be modified and moved into quadrant B?**

D. Stages of Development in Second Language Acquisition

As with young children acquiring their native language, second language learners may listen to and process language before actually producing it. The difference is that second language learners, by definition, already have access to a first language. Therefore, they are more sophisticated learners; they understand how language works and can use that first language knowledge as a bridge to acquisition of the second language. Cummins's linguistic transfer theory (discussed above) postulates how this occurs. For each individual, the degree to which the first language has been developed directly influences the acquisition of the second language.

Developmental Trends

Selinker (1972) describes a learner's knowledge of a second language at a given point as interlanguage. Interlanguage refers to a language system produced by a second language learner that is not equivalent to either the first or the second language. Interlanguage may be viewed best as a continuum between the first and second languages. At any given time, a language learner's knowledge of the second language is situated at a point along the interlanguage continuum. Selinker also identified the phenomenon of fossilization, which occurs when a language learner's acquisition of the second language wanes or even halts along the interlanguage continuum. This may occur when a language learner has acquired enough of the rules of the second language to communicate adequately.

Scholars of second language acquisition have identified a common developmental sequence that second language learners pass through while learning a second language (even though they may refer to these stages differently). We provide an overview of these stages below. It is important to note that there is great individual variability in second language acquisition, in particular with the rate at which learners pass through the various stages and the influence of the first language on the second. It is also important to remember that learners who appear to have made progress learning the target language by demonstrating correct performance may still demonstrate incorrect performance at a later stage. As learners begin to unravel the grammatical rules of the target language and test out new rules, errors often reappear. In fact, the errors are indicative of progress as the second language learner gains deeper understanding of how the second language works.

Dilingual Discourse

In the first stage of the developmental sequence, second language learners may continue to use the home language in second language situations. In this stage, the child may assume that others understand his or her first language; more likely, the child may simply have no other resource for communication. It may take several months for the child to discontinue use of the first language when the second language is called for. Saville-Troike (1987) has referred to this type of child discourse as *dilingual discourse*.

Preproduction

The preproduction stage is often characterized by a "silent period" (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). In this stage, the learner absorbs the sounds and rhythms of the new language and processes language input through listening and comprehension skills. Communication may include using nonverbal means such as pointing or picture drawing. During this period, access

to context-embedded communication is very important and likely to help the student move efficiently through the preproduction period. Cues in the immediate environment, such as gestures and *realia* (real objects), will facilitate language understanding during this stage. Context-embedded communication is highly desirable for students in the pre-production stage, and teachers can help make input comprehensible. Although second language learners may stop talking, this does not mean that they will stop communicating. In addition, their comprehension (receptive language) probably outstrips their production (expressive language), much as it does with first language learners in this stage.

Early Production

During the early production stage, researchers have observed two types of speech: telegraphic speech and formulaic speech. Telegraphic speech refers to the use of a few content words that generally omit grammatical morphemes. Briefly, grammatical morphemes are words or components of words—markers that carry meaning, such as the definite article *the* or the plural marker *–s*. Other examples of grammatical morphemes are prepositions (e.g., *from*, *to*, *by*, *for*, *on*) and conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *or*, *but*). Telegraphic speech commonly consists of a second language learner's reference to nouns or objects. An example of telegraphic speech may be *Tommy ball*, which omits a verb and definite article (*Tommy has the ball*). In contrast, formulaic speech refers to the use of specific, unanalyzed utterances that language learners have observed around them. An example is a greeting such as, *How ya' doin'?*

Extending Production

As second language learners progress in language acquisition, they pass through the extending production stage. In this stage, utterances become longer and more complex, and speakers use short, complete sentences. Students will begin to recognize and correct some of their own errors, and they become more comfortable initiating and sustaining conversations. At this stage, the second language learner speaks in short sentences. Learners also begin to expand on simple sentences, displaying knowledge of additional grammatical elements of sentences. The student may begin to master conversational language skills but is not likely to have developed extensive proficiency in academic language. That will develop over a period of several years.

Other Schemes for Characterizing Second Language Stages

Teachers can use a scheme for characterizing ELLs' language development stages that are linked to English language development standards. For example, California educators use a scheme from the California Department of Education. It maps second language development levels to the English Language Arts Standards (Carr, 2002). Table 5 shows the levels and descriptions of what teachers can expect at each stage of functioning.

Table 5: English Language Development Levels and Sample Standards

Level	Standard
Beginning	Begin to speak with a few words or sentences, using some English phonemes and rudimentary English grammatical forms (e.g., single words or phrases)*
Early Intermediate	Begin to be understood when speaking, but may have some inconsistent use of standard English grammatical forms and sounds (e.g., plurals, simple past tense, pronouns he/she)
Intermediate	Be understood when speaking, using consistent standard English grammatical forms and sounds, but may not show some rules (e.g., third person singular, male and female pronouns)
Early Advanced	Be understood when speaking, using consistent standard English grammatical forms and sounds, intonation, pitch, and modulation, but may have random errors
Advanced	Speak clearly and comprehensibly using standard English grammatical forms, sounds, intonation, pitch, and modulation**

*May include a silent period

** May still not reach native-like proficiency

These same levels are also applied to written language development and standards.

Code Switching: A Normal Process in Bilingual Learners

One of the most challenging aspects of teaching second language learners—particularly for general education teachers—is determining what is normal for ELLs and what are grounds for remediation or referral for evaluation. There is a certain amount of normal variation among learners, depending upon the many factors identified above. One of the most common behaviors that confounds general education teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms is *code switching*.

Code switching is using two or more languages or language varieties within a single utterance or speech event (Gumperz, 1973). Switches may occur within a sentence (*intersentential*) or within a larger unit of language, such as a conversational turn. Usually, code switching refers to the use of more than a single word in a given language. For instance, when a student says *lonchera* to refer to *lunch box* within an utterance that is otherwise in English, the switch would be characterized as a *borrowing* (Reyes, 2004). Code switching is a pragmatic strategy speakers use to communicate more effectively. Early in the development of a new language, code switching (or language mixing) can be a sign of weaker skills in one of the languages (Bialystok, 2001). In such cases, learners substitute portions of utterances from their stronger language until they have acquired enough proficiency in the weaker language.

Many theorists believe that code switching in school-age children is a normal and positive aspect of language creativity and communicative proficiency; it does not automatically imply deficit in one or another language (Genesee, 2002; Reyes, 2004; Zentella, 1997). In fact, there are documented uses of code switching that have nothing to do with a person's level of language proficiency in a second language and are characterized as making a "language choice" (Wei, Milroy, & Ching, 2000). Moreover, code switching equally entails use of the second language in the context of a first language utterance as it does use of the first language to fill out a second language utterance (Poplack, 2000).

Following is an example of code switching in the conversation of two English-Spanish bilingual students:

Claudia: *y luego se va salir a las cuatro y media* from school
[and then she's getting out at four thirty from school]

Jimena: *de la* project school?
[from the school project?]

(Adapted from Reyes, 2004, pp. 84–85)

In the following example, a Chinese British mother begins speaking in English and then switches to Chinese. The son answers in English:

Mother: Finished homework?

Steven: (no response)

Mother: Steven, *yiu mo wan sue*?
(Want to review [your] lessons?)

Steven: I've finished.

(Adapted from Wei, Milroy, & Ching, 2000, p. 202)

E. Addressing the Needs of ELLs in the Classroom

What has been discussed to this point serves as a foundation for thinking about instructional approaches and strategies likely to support ELLs in their language learning and academic progress. For example, recognition of how a student's first language is important to social and identity development and how it serves as a linguistic and intellectual resource should point teachers in the direction of supporting a student's first language in whatever ways possible. It also suggests that first language use in the classroom should not only be allowed but also encouraged in certain circumstances.

This section reviews approaches and strategies for supporting ELLs' linguistic and academic development. There are many resources designed for teachers: books as well as Web sites, videos and CDs, and professional development workshops. Some of these are listed in Resources at the end of Part II.

CREDE's Standards

The Center for Research on Excellence and Diversity in Education (CREDE) developed five standards of educational practice (see *Volume I*), which are a good starting point for discussing instruction for ELLs within both general education classrooms and special programs. Most accepted techniques for teaching ELLs incorporate one or more of these standards, in addition to others that pertain specifically to second language acquisition. These standards are:

1. Teachers and students producing together (joint productive activity)
2. Developing language across the curriculum (language development)
3. Making meaning: connecting school to students' lives (contextualization)
4. Teaching complex thinking (cognitive challenge)
5. Teaching through interactive discussions (instructional conversation)

Resnick's general principles of teaching and learning as well as Nieto's more culturally oriented principles (both discussed in *Volume I*) are also applicable to the ELL instruction.

Dutro and Moran's Principles

Dutro and Moran (2003) developed a set of six principles specifically related to supporting language development. They are based on extensive research literature as well as their own personal years of experience with teaching (see Figure 17). They overlap to some degree with CREDE's more general principles. These educators believe that natural opportunities to learn English and explicit instruction are both necessary. Although English language development (ELD) or English as a second language (ESL) specialists may be available to work with ELLs, general education teachers need to be aware of how to use these kinds of strategies.

Figure 17: Dutro & Moran's Principles

1. **Build on students' prior knowledge of both language and content.** It is essential that every lesson take into account what students bring to the lesson and build on that existing knowledge and language skill.
2. **Create meaningful contexts for functional use of language**. Creating context is essential for students to map new knowledge onto prior knowledge or new forms and labels onto existing concepts. The use of visuals, gestures, *graphic organizers*, and *word banks* to reinforce concepts and vocabulary is effective. At the early levels of English proficiency, use of simulations, gestures, realia (real objects or props), and theater are powerful, while comparisons, metaphors, and analogies can be useful at higher levels of language functioning.
3. **Provide comprehensible input and model language use in a variety of ways**. Learning occurs when modeling is clear, information is presented in small, comprehensible chunks, and frequent feedback is provided.
4. **Provide a range of opportunities for practice and application**. Creating situations for focused interaction through debates, theater, interactive writing, and the like gives students opportunities to try out new language learning. Cooperative group work in relation to a situational task offers students the chance to use language purposefully and receive feedback on their performance.
5. **Establish a positive and supportive environment for practice with clear goals and immediate corrective feedback.** Particularly in settings with few English-speaking models, teachers must create many opportunities for English learners to hear, use, and receive corrective feedback on academic language for the purpose of building the linguistic competencies required to achieve grade-level standards. While it is important to create an environment where mistakes are seen in a positive light, corrective feedback must be a part of the equation to develop academic language skills to an advanced level.
6. **Reflect on the forms of language and the process of learning**. This principle is not commonly followed in American classrooms. It is the process of helping students become metacognitively aware of the language they are using/developing and the processes they use to learn (i.e., questions like, "How did you go about solving that problem?" and "What new vocabulary did you have to learn for this activity/lesson?") by discussing these processes with them before or after they engage in a learning activity (i.e., with questions like, "How did you go about solving that problem?" or "What new vocabulary did you have to learn for this activity or lesson?"

(Farr & Quintanar-Sarellana, 2005, p. 239.)

Graphic Organizers
Visual aids that include story or text structure charts, Venn diagrams, story maps, timelines, discussion webs, word webs, clusters, thinking maps and so forth (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000)

Semantic Map
A graphic organizer that shows relationships among words, often centered on a single concept or topic (e.g, A simple map on fruits might have a central circle with the word *fruits* in it and spokes radiating to other circles, each containing the name of a fruit.)

Word Banks
Personal collections of words identified by students that interest them or that they want to remember how to read or spell; often a small file box of cards filed alphabetically, with or without picture cues

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)

At the stage of intermediate language proficiency, second language learners begin to engage in verbal conversations with a higher level of comprehension. They are typically able to produce narratives and to interact more extensively with other speakers. They make fewer speech errors, have a good command of conversational fluency, and build their academic language.

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1995), also known as *sheltered instruction* (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000), is a technique that a teacher may use after the student has attained intermediate fluency in English. SDAIE is intended to support ELLs to engage in challenging curriculum through the modification of the language demands of instruction. Research has shown that sheltered instruction is an effective set of strategies for promoting the achievement of ELLs (Doherty et al., 2003). The results of well-executed SDAIE are grade-level learning of content, increased higher level thinking skills, and acquisition of academic English. As students learn content, they learn language; as they learn more language, they learn more content.

SDAIE is a strategy that addresses the common complaint that second language learners are handed a watered-down curriculum. Rather, SDAIE aims to make input comprehensible so that second language learners can acquire academic language in the context of a supportive, effective learning environment. Teachers may simplify syntax, scaffold new vocabulary understanding through semantic webbing and other techniques, and "use contextual clues such as gestures, visuals, facial expressions, props, maps, graphs, advanced organizers, realia, manipulatives, dramatizations, and overheads" (Farr & Quintanar-Sarellana, 2005).

At the intermediate stage of language development, students' exposure to increasingly complex texts is critical to their acquisition of academic language. Cummins (2001b) has suggested that at higher levels, the constructs of vocabulary acquisition (namely students' lexicon or dictionary) and academic language proficiency converge. However, it is not only vocabulary but also specialized grammatical and discourse structures that students are learning, as well as the pragmatic skills to interact appropriately in academic contexts. With support, students can comprehend texts with increasingly complex academic language.

Vocabulary Instruction

Although every aspect of language is important developmentally for ELLs, vocabulary in particular is a key element of academic language and reading comprehension (Pearson & Hernandez, 1994). ELLs cannot be expected to know the numbers of words in English that their native-English-speaking peers do; however, it is important to remember that they may have words for concepts in their first language that they have not acquired in English (Pearson, Fernandez, & Oller, 1992).

Tested instructional techniques are readily available to teachers (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Juel & Deffes, 2004; Lehr, Osborn, & Hiebert, 2004). Although much of the literature on vocabulary instruction is based on work with native-English speakers because of similarities in language acquisition processes, this literature is a good place to start in looking for strategies. Books teaching ELLs usually address vocabulary building, and some focus on that topic alone (Coady & Huckin, 1997).

Cognitive Approaches to Vocabulary Instruction

Research shows that cognitive approaches such as *semantic mapping* and discussion of word meaning in context are more productive than common methods such as looking up a word in the dictionary and using it in a sentence. As students develop vocabulary knowledge, they not only acquire new words but also elaborate on their knowledge of words (Pease & Gleason, 1985). ELLs' elaborated knowledge of words in English is predictably lower than that of their native-English-speaking peers, but certain activities can build such knowledge. Nation and Newton (1997) describe a set of strategies they call *collocation activities* that help students elaborate their understanding of common words and their use in different contexts. Figure 18 describes the strategy.

> ***Collocation***
> The relationship between words that habitually go together (e.g, *blond* and *hair*, *fair* and *play*; or *repeat* and *offender*. Such pairings of words are often idiomatic; *black tie* signifies formal attire.)

Figure 18: Collocation Activities

1. Make two columns of words, and have students match the ones that go together. Then discuss the meanings of the terms and why they came about or make sense. The pairs can be chosen from students' reading and classroom discussions.

golden	flag
fairy	fine
burning	question
auburn	hair
red	goose
hefty	tale

2. Take a word with multiple meanings and have students brainstorm all the meanings they can think of. Rather than asking for definitions, ask students to use the word in a sentence and record the sentences. Look for the common denominator of meaning across all of the collocations of the word. Words that have different meanings in different subject areas, such as *figure*, *plane*, *state*, and *solution* can prompt interesting discussion as can simple words like *run*, *play*, and *change*.

(Adapted from Nation and Newton, 1997)

Like semantic mapping or *webbing*, where students pool their knowledge to construct a visual representation of relationships among many words in relation to a central concept, collocation activities are probably best done in a group. Collocation is based on the idea of a word's having an underlying meaning. For example, the word *fade* has a range of uses. A color may fade. A TV picture fades. Light fades. Music fades. Memories and feelings fade. Our looks fade (unfortunately!). A smile fades. Someone can fade into the background.

These uses of the word *fade* can be considered as several different meanings, and comparison with another language would often encourage such a division. However, examining all of these, one can see a common underlying or core meaning—"gradually disappear." By looking for a core meaning, we then regard the various uses as examples of different collocations rather than as different words. This approach is more economical in terms of teaching and learning and more educational in terms of seeing how "different languages organize experience in different ways to look for underlying meanings and develop collocational knowledge" (Nation & Newton, 1997, p. 50).

Talking About Words and Using Context

By talking about words in a discussion related to what students are reading, teachers can model how to use context to figure out word meaning and they can also offer explicit information about important words (Fritjers, Barron, & Brunello, 2000; Juel & Deffes, 2004; Marzano, 2003; McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999). Pre-reading activities tap students' prior knowledge and link it to what they will be reading; by building a richer context for reading, these activities prime students for understanding words. Although using context to figure out word meaning has been touted as one of the most profitable ways to promote vocabulary development (Freeman & Freeman, 2000), it is still not a very efficient way to learn new words. Context is simply not a reliable guide to word meaning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Studies show that the likelihood of learning a new word encountered in a text is about 1 in 10 (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985; Shu, Anderson, & Zhang, 1995). Therefore, vocabulary development cannot be left to incidental word learning; explicit instruction is necessary.

Alerting Students to Cognates

> ***Cognates***
> Words in two or more languages that have a similar surface form and are historically derived from the same source (e.g., *action* in English and *acción* in Spanish)

For certain groups of English learners (e.g, those who speak a Romance language—Spanish, French, or Portuguese), their first language may act as a source of learning through the use of *cognates*. Pairs of words such as *civilization/civilización*, *education/educación*, *population/población*, *result/resulta*, and *architect/arquitecto* are cognates. Instruction in cognates should also draw attention to false cognates (*embarasada* does not mean "embarrassed" but "pregnant") and words from other languages (*rodeo, enchilada, loco*). Raising students' awareness of the relationships among words—especially through exposure to text and classroom discussion about language—will help them draw upon their own linguistic repertoires and will facilitate their acquisition of academic language (August, Calderón, & Carlo, 2002; Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003).

Building Academic Language Proficiency

Of major concern to teachers is how to help ELLs develop academic language proficiency. Many of the instructional activities referred to above build aspects of academic language, such as particular vocabulary and word awareness skills. One key principle is to use and support the development of academic language early on. It is not necessary or advisable to wait until ELLs have mastered conversational language (Dutro & Moran, 2003), much in the same way that learners can and do grapple with higher level thinking problems long before they have mastered basic skills (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989). The goal is for students to learn "the vocabulary and sentence structures needed for a range of cognitive tasks and uses of language" (Dutro & Moran, 2003, p. 234).

Teachers can orally model vocabulary, discourse structures, and discourse signals (words or phrases that orient the reader to a transition). They can use specific texts to highlight the elements that they want students to acquire. For example, with younger students, a teacher might use a story such as *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* (Barrett, 1978) to draw attention to the language related to identifying a problem and seeking a solution to it (Micheau, 2002). A nonfiction story such as *Eliza and the Dragonfly* (Rhinehart, 2004), which tells about and illustrates the developmental stages of a dragonfly, can be used to teach discourse signals of sequence. A follow-up activity using a matrix to compare the developmental stages of other creatures (e.g., frogs or caterpillars) can give students experience with related academic biological terms as well as with comparison terms.

Sheltered programs for older students, such as SDAIE, are dedicated to the notion that language can be made more accessible without sacrificing the level of content or cognitive activity of the classroom. Coltrane (2002) explains that sheltered secondary science must not be reduced to lower level activity but should "mirror the process of scientific inquiry" (p. 47). "Rather than presenting learners with a list of facts or terms, sheltered science instruction should involve hands-on activities and tasks that involve creating a hypothesis, testing that hypothesis in a systematic way, organizing information, and drawing conclusions" (p. 47). Although these activities are cognitively demanding, they are also interactive and foster comprehension. In addition, Coltrane points out, students need to learn the pragmatic language skills of choosing a lab partner, clarifying directions and procedures, and working in a group to negotiate task assignments and discuss the outcomes of a project (pp. 47–48).

A well-known approach to promoting academic language development is Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), designed by Chamot and O'Malley (1994). For secondary school students, CALLA integrates academic language development with grade-appropriate, content-area instruction as well as instruction in learning strategies for both language and content. CALLA is described as a cognitive model based on viewing students as active learners who can benefit from learning and using metacognitive strategies (Chamot, 1995). Instructional activities include cooperative learning, hands-on experiences, and higher level questioning (Chamot, 1995, p. 384). For instance, a cooperative group might work on building electric circuits or growing plants.

Wong-Fillmore (1997, cited in Cummins, 1998, p. 4) has described the role that teachers can play in making texts work as input for academic language learning as follows:

- Provide the support learners need to make sense of the text;
- Call attention to the way language is used in the text;
- Discuss with learners the meaning and interpretation of sentences and phrases within the text;
- Point out that words in one text may have been encountered or used in other places;
- Help learners discover the grammatical cues that indicate relationships such as cause and effect, antecedence and consequence, comparison and contrast.

F. Instructional Program Models for ELLs

ELLs are served through a variety of program models, ranging from placement in English-only classrooms with little or no specialized instruction to fully bilingual programs that promote development of their home language and English while ensuring that they make adequate academic progress. Figure 19 lists many instructional program models.

Figure 19: Instructional Program Models

Type of Program	Typical Type of Child	Language of the Classroom	Societal and Educational Aims	Aim in Language Outcome
Submersion	Language minority	Majority language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
Submersion (withdrawal classes)	Language minority	Majority language with "pullout" second language lessons	Assimilation	Monolingualism
Structured English immersion	Language minority	Majority language with minimal native language support	Assimilation	Monolingualism
Transitional	Language minority	From minority language to majority language	Assimilation	Relative monolingualism
Immersion	Language majority	Bilingual (emphasis on second language)	Pluralism and enrichment	Bilingualism and biliteracy
Two-way/dual language immersion	Language majority and language minority (50:50 or 90:10)	Minority and majority	Maintenance for minority students, pluralism, and enrichment	Bilingualism and biliteracy

(Adapted from Baker [1997] and Cuevas [1996])

One difference among these models is the amount of first language used in instruction, that is, the amount used during a school day and the number of years. Dual immersion (also known as two-way bilingual) programs are some of the most successful at fostering continued first language acquisition, acquisition of the second language, and academic success (Lindholm-Leary, 2000). Dual immersion programs serve a student population that is usually about 50:50, meaning half of the children are native speakers of one language and half are speakers of the other language. Each language is spoken and used for instruction a portion of the day. Students usually remain in a program for at least several years—long enough to acquire a high level of proficiency in the target language. At the other end of the spectrum are submersion programs that provide no specific language support for ELLs.

G. Resources

Print Materials

Baker, C. (1997). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
This book is a remarkable resource for gaining a broad understanding of second language acquisition, bilingualism, and bilingual education. Each section provides a solid foundation of information on which readers can build and explore topics of interest in further detail. Baker not only synthesizes theory and research but also discusses his own work in the areas of language attitudes and the Welsh context of bilingual education. The book provides a much-needed international perspective on issues of bilingualism and bilingual education.

Cheng, L-R. L. (Ed.). (1995). *Integrating language and learning for inclusion: An Asian-Pacific focus*. San Diego: Singular Publishing Group.
Cheng includes chapters on language issues related to many different cultural and linguistic groups, including inner-city Chinese Americans, Southeast Asians, Pacific Islanders, and American Indians. Accounts are written often with a personal perspective by authors from many different backgrounds. There is a helpful chapter on parents as resources.

Coady, J., & Huckin, T. (Eds.). (1997). *Second language vocabulary acquisition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
This excellent book, full of research-based strategies, is useful for teachers of ELLs. It lays out a foundation for understanding vocabulary issues—oral and written—and elucidates useful methods for teaching vocabulary through reading, explicit instruction, and particular memory strategies.

Echevarria, J., & Goldenberg, C. (1999). *Teaching second language minority students* (Research Brief No. 4). Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE). Available at http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs/ResBrief4.htm
Written by two well-known language experts, this four-page case example links the five CREDE standards to the instruction of "Tommy," a seventh-grader who needs some support to improve his English reading. Specific instructional strategies are explained.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP Model* (2nd ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
In this book, the authors present a version of sheltered instruction that has been thoroughly field-tested and researched. The book offers explicit guidance and numerous illustrative examples of good instruction based on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

García, G. G. (Ed.). (2003). *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
Leading researchers and theorists have written reader-friendly chapters on a substantial range of topics of critical interest to teachers of ELLs, whether they are in special English language development programs or English-only classrooms with native-English-speaking peers. The focus is literacy, but broader concerns are also addressed, such as a blueprint for academic success and collaborating to meet the needs of learners.

Lehr, F., Osborn, J., & Hiebert, E. H. (2004). *A focus on vocabulary*. Honolulu: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning.
This short (43-page) publication is part of a series produced by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL). Although not directed to teachers of ELL students, it provides an excellent foundation for any teacher on the importance of vocabulary and on the nature of vocabulary knowledge and acquisition. The publication is full of examples to illustrate concepts as well as strategies that teachers can immediately use.

Tabors, P. O. (1997). *One child, two languages*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
This appealing book discusses the language of several young children in a pre-school setting as they develop two languages, documented with photographs of children and their teachers. Tabors presents linguistic portraits of children in interaction with teachers and peers and then talks about the teacher's role in fostering second language development and working with families. Implications for the design of pre-school programs are discussed.

Wei, L. (Ed.). (2000). *The bilingualism reader*. London: Routledge.
Wei has compiled 18 seminal articles on bilingualism of interest to any serious student of bilingualism. Topics include a description of bilingualism, early bilingual development, code switching, brain organization in bilinguals, and a model of bilingual product. The section on code switching is extensive. This book is for teacher educators, professional developers, or teachers who want to deeply investigate theoretical issues.

Other Materials

Chamot, A. U., & O'Malley, J. M. (1994). *The CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Chamot and O'Malley developed the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) as an instructional model for ELLs. This handbook explains the theoretical basis of the model and offers guidelines for how to implement it in various curriculum areas, including how to evaluate its success and assess student progress.

***Student Voices*. Video and discussion guide available from The Education Alliance (http://www.alliance.brown.edu/)**

In this 30-minute videotape, nine ELL students discuss their high school experiences and the relationship of language, culture, and schooling. The video is organized around three themes: isolation and barriers, teachers and guidance, and strengths and resilience. The video and accompanying guide are designed to inform educators about strategies for making learning environments more welcoming and responsive to linguistically and culturally diverse groups.

Web Sites

The Chèche Konnen Center
http://chechekonnen.terc.edu/

The Chèche Konnen Center is engaged in a national reform initiative to improve elementary and middle school science teaching and learning for language minority students. The Center utilizes a research-based approach to teacher professional development that integrates inquiry and reflection in three areas: science and mathematics, teaching and learning, and culture and language. Educators interested in constructivist science teaching with ELLs can access an array of information and resources on the site.

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
http://www.nabe.org

The NABE Web site is a good source for current articles on bilingual education (e.g., in the *Bilingual Research Journal*), updates on national policy, and links to articles published elsewhere. Visitors to the site can view the table of contents of the latest version of *Language Learner*, the NABE magazine that has replaced *NABE News*.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA)
http://www.ncela.gwu.edu

NCELA disseminates information about how to teach ELLs. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, & Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) under Title III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
http://www.tesol.org

At this Web site, viewers can read TESOL's online journal, *Essential Teacher;* read updates on federal legislation; and order publications from the TESOL bookstore. Online courses are also offered through this site.

The Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA)
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html

The purpose of OELA is to help ensure that students not yet proficient in English develop such proficiency and meet state and local standards. The office administers Title III of NCLB.



PART III:

Language and Assessment

LANGUAGE AND ASSESSMENT

Language is both a target of and a tool for assessment. Language is a target of assessment when teachers evaluate students' language in terms that correspond to educational standards in language arts (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). It becomes a tool for assessment when teachers assess mastery of content-area material, a process that often uses language. Assessing academic progress through language can present validity problems for any student. For example, mathematics word problems draw upon not only mathematical skill and knowledge but also language skill. This problem of language dependence is magnified in the assessment of ELLs and quite possibly for any student whose language is different from school language. In such cases, academic assessment can become a test of an individual's language proficiency (American Educational Research Association, 1999; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003; Valdés & Figueroa, 1994).

Part III addresses both of these issues: evaluating students' language and using language to evaluate students' learning. Concerns about confounding language skill with content-area knowledge and understanding are relevant not only to ELLs but to all students. For example, it is well known that many assessments purporting to assess a student in social studies or science rely heavily on language knowledge, reading skill, and dominant-culture knowledge (Popham, 2001). This last factor, culture-based knowledge, is often an invisible source of inequity in assessment.

A. Assessing Language Proficiency

Understanding a student's language proficiency requires evaluating the student in several settings and evaluating multiple ways of using language. Formal tests administered by specialists are used for placement purposes or to assess progress in language development in English; however, other sources, such as parent interviews and teacher observations, can contribute to a more complete picture of a student's language use. A single test cannot supply a complete picture. Figure 19 lists questions that teachers can pose pertaining to three important aspects of language proficiency: communication outside the classroom, language in school, and relative proficiency in English and the home language.

Figure 20: Questions Teachers Can Pose

Language use outside the classroom

- How successful is the student in communicating with peers in a social setting (such as the playground)?
- Is he or she able to use English to accomplish intentions (such as sharing equipment, getting someone to work or play with him or her, getting an answer to a question)?
- How well does he or she communicate at home, according to family members?
- What language does the student prefer to use in these situations?
- Does he or she use both the first language and English successfully?
- Is the student able to communicate his or her needs to both children and adults?

Language use in school

- What kinds of support does the student need in order to engage in an academic discussion (bearing in mind culture-based discourse preferences)?
- How proficient is the student at academic writing tasks?
- Is there a gap between oral proficiency and reading or writing proficiency?

Relative proficiency in English and the home language

- How does the student's academic vocabulary in his or her first language compare to that in English?
- What is known about the student's literacy (reading and writing) in his or her first language?
- How does the student's grammatical proficiency in English compare with that of his or her native-English-speaking peers?
- Does the student have particular kinds of problems (e.g., with verb tenses or plurals)?
- Is the student comfortable using both the first language and English and is he or she able to select appropriate times for both (e.g., using first language in small-group discussions where others speak it and using English in the larger group or on assignments and assessments)?

The questions in Figure 19 illustrate that a classroom teacher is in an excellent position to observe a student's language proficiency and use, much more so than a specialist who may see the student only for testing (Genesee & Hamayan, 1994; Saville-Troike, 1991). The teacher also may have more access to parents and family members who can report a great deal about the

student's language outside of school. Teachers need to be aware of a student's level of academic language proficiency and, in particular, the student's vocabulary development in academic subjects—something that can affect comprehension of both oral instruction and texts. Ideally, a classroom teacher with students who are still acquiring English will have the support of bilingual or ESL staff, whose observations can contribute to a valid assessment of students' language proficiency. It is always advisable to assess the student in both the first language and in English, particularly when the student's first language development is still being supported or when a child is just entering school (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003).

Table 6 shows a checklist that a teacher can use as an aid in assessing students' language proficiency in English. It reflects current research-based views of important components of both everyday and academic language use in the classroom (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1979, 2000b; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Scarcella, 2003).

Table 6: Interpersonal and Academic Language Skills Checklist

Name: **Date:**

Directions: Please check skills that have been observed at an appropriate level in either English or the home language.

Skills	English	Home Language
Contextualized/Not Cognitively Demanding:		
1. Answers basic questions appropriately.		
2. Exchanges common greetings.		
3. Follows general classroom directions.		
4. Participates in routine school activities.		
5. Describes classroom objects or people.		
6. Gives classroom commands to peers.		
7. Participates in sharing time.		
8. Retells a familiar story.		

9. Initiates and maintains a conversation.		
10. Follows along during oral reading.		
Decontextualized/Not Cognitively Demanding:		
11. Decodes fluently.		
12. Reads noncognitively demanding information (e.g., notes, signs, directions, simple sentences, etc.).		
13. Writes words and simple sentences.		
14. Generates simple sentences.		
15. Writes from dictation.		
Contextualized/Cognitively Demanding:		
16. Follows specific directions for academic tasks.		
17. Uses terms for temporal and spatial concepts (e.g., *first, last; top, bottom; left, right;* etc.).		
18. Asks/answers questions regarding academic topics.		
19. Understands contextualized academic content.		
20. Reads stories for literal comprehension.		
Decontextualized/Cognitively Demanding:		
21. Distinguishes main ideas from details (oral).		
22. Predicts conclusions after listening to story.		
23. Understands lectures on academic content.		
24. Uses language to reason, analyze, synthesize.		
25. Participates in academic discussions.		

26. Reads content-area information for comprehension.		
27. Uses glossary, index, appendices, etc.		
28. Writes meaningful short paragraphs.		
29. Uses correct language mechanics.		
30. Writes coherent stories or reports.		

(Adapted from O'Malley, 1989)

With regard to language assessment, it is critical to evaluate how the student uses language in different situations and for specific purposes (e.g., social or academic), and this will require different methods (Bachman, 1990; Langdon, 1992). For instance, a formal test may be able to reveal the student's ability to comprehend or produce certain syntactic forms, but it cannot reveal how successful the student is in communicating in a social context, including the classroom.

Language Differences Versus Language Deficits

Because individuals have a deep-seated sense of what language ought to sound like on the basis of their own language socialization, the hardest task in distinguishing between difference and deficit is coming to accept a greater range of expression as normal. This is not to be confused with actual language disorders or simply making random errors or speaking in slang (Wolfram et al., 1999). For example, in the early 1970s, Elise Trumbull (one author of this resource) was teaching in a suburban school district in Massachusetts shortly after it had begun to collaborate with an inner-city school district to integrate racially. African American students were often referred for speech therapy. The teachers reported that they made numerous grammatical errors and couldn't pronounce many words (e.g., saying "muvver" for *mother* and "birfday" for *birthday*). With the help of the African American speech and language therapist and the African American reading specialist, the teachers came to understand that these "errors" were simply systematic differences between standard and nonstandard forms of language. The teachers in that school system had access to an informed perspective on dialects, but many do not. And the public perception persists that nonstandard languages are codes filled with errors and spoken by ignorant people.

In working with ELLs, distinguishing among normal developmental differences, cultural patterns, and actual deficits requires the assistance of professionals who have been trained in language acquisition—whether bilingual teachers or bilingual speech and language therapists. Normal patterns of development will look different depending on a learner's first language, the age at which English was acquired, the methods by which English was taught, and even the child's "linguistic personality." Some children are naturally more talkative and sociable, and they tend to take more risks quickly with a new language (Saville-Troike, 1984). Unfortunately, many problems exhibited by normally developing second language learners are also exhibited by students with learning problems. Among these are a discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal performance on tests, problems learning course content, disfluencies in communication, inappropriate classroom behavior, and attention and memory problems (Langdon, 1992).

One important strategy for sorting out differences from deficits is interviewing students' parents. Learning about a student's previous school experience, length of residence in the United States, language use at home, ability to communicate appropriately at home in the first language, behavioral concerns, health, and comparisons to the development of siblings can help to determine whether the students may need a formal language evaluation.

ELLs should be evaluated by a professional at least once a year, more often if a teacher observes that a student is not making academic progress. Understanding culture-based differences in language use will help the teacher place a student's linguistic behavior in proper perspective. For example, a taciturn student may have been socialized to be quiet and respectful. Teachers who have had some experience with students from a particular language or cultural group will have a sense of whether a student is progressing normally. The speech and language therapist can administer formal tests and bring a professional eye and ear to the observation process. The greatest risk is underestimating a student's capabilities because his or her language sounds different, but there is also a risk of overlooking a real deficit that requires special services.

B. Language Factors, Content Mastery, and Assessment

Accurate assessment of students' language proficiency is critical in order to make valid interpretations about their academic progress. Learning and demonstrating content mastery are frequently dependent upon language proficiency. Even nonverbal tests often require that a test-taker employ mental language to conceptualize the problem or hold certain ideas in memory (Oller, 1992; Roth, 1978). A student may have met requirements for English-only instruction but still take longer to process ideas in English than in his or her first language. Research has shown that when allowed enough time, bilingual readers take nearly twice as long in their second language (Carrell, 1991). For this reason, timed tests or time-limited assessments may penalize an ELL (Ascher, 1990). Both ELLs and native-English-speaking students who are poor readers have been shown to benefit from extra time on standardized assessments (Kiplinger, Haug, & Abedi, 2000).

Sometimes the directions on a test are ambiguous or require close parsing of complex syntax (Kiplinger, Haug, & Abedi, 2000; Shaw, 1997; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). If directions are unclear to a student and he or she does not frame a problem correctly from the outset, his or her solution is likely to be flawed (Durán, 1985). Modification of test language is one way to reduce threats to validity caused by unnecessarily complex wording (Abedi & Lord, 2001; Abedi, Lord, Hofstetter, & Baker, 2000).

In addition, research shows that the vocabulary of students still acquiring English is likely to be less elaborated than that of a native speaker (Beaumont, deValenzuela, & Trumbull, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 1989). Such a student may know that *buckle* means "a metal belt fastener" but not that it can mean "to cave in" (e.g., "to buckle at the knees"). And grasping common idioms such as *at a low ebb*, *music to my ears*, or *out of step* may take a long time for second language learners. When a student performs poorly on an academic assessment, it is difficult to discern the degree to which the performance is due to failure to learn versus inadequate mastery of language (García & Pearson, 1994; Hamayan & Damico, 1991).

Activity 9: Evaluating Language Demands of Assessments

Instructions to Participants

Performance assessments that require an extended response often call upon multiple, high-level language skills. We will take a look at some prototypical assessment tasks and evaluate their language demands (see Table 7).

Table 7: Language Factors in Assessment

Sample Activity*	Language Demands
Write a report to a friend who was sick today, explaining to her the science experiment you did and how you did it. (Elementary writing task following a classroom science assessment)	Recount a multi-step past event, sequencing and reinterpreting information; assume role of the teacher to a non-present audience. Requires considering what recipient already knows, level of detail he or she needs to comprehend.
Tell us anything else about your understanding of this story—what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it. (Segment of an elementary reading assessment)	Give account of own experiences, linking experiences to text, elaborating story comprehension.
Imagine that you are a staff writer for a small magazine. One day you are given your "big chance." You are asked to write a final scene of an incomplete story. (Taken from a high school writing task; a partial story is shown to the student.)	Complete an account (a story) following prescribed format; comprehend and analyze the story so that the new segment makes sense; take on the voice of another author, maintaining style.

* Tasks are adapted from examples provided by the California Department of Education (Estrin, 1993) and revised in Farr and Trumbull, 1997.

Discussion

- **What language skills are involved in each activity?**
- **How complex are the directions? Consider sentence structure and length, vocabulary, amount of text, and the importance of small relational words such as *before, after, if, then*, and *because*.**
- **What language functions does a student have to engage in to complete the task?**
- **What could the teacher do to ensure that students understand what is expected of them?**

(Adapted from Farr & Trumbull, 1997)

Achieving Valid and Ethical Assessment

Because language factors may cloud the picture of academic achievement, we must develop assessments that minimize this confusion. And we must develop a way to mediate the administration of assessments so that they elicit performances that reveal the true learning of students in subject areas (Abedi, 2004; LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994). This is both an ethical and a validity issue (Cumming, 2002). In terms of evaluating student performance, teachers also need to determine which student errors indicate learning problems and which simply indicate normal developmental stages along the way to language mastery. For example, although it is natural to notice student errors in writing, errors that do not interfere with communication should not lower a student's score unless the assessment is on writing (Beaumont, de Valenzuela, & Trumbull, 2002; Leki, 1992; Valdés, 1991).

Assessments can be unfair and invalid (and hence unethical) on many grounds: content, format (e.g., multiple choice for ELLs), administration, scoring, interpretation, and use (Messick, 1989; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). Teachers who understand how language and culture must be considered in assessments can play a strong role in ensuring that assessment practices are more fair, valid, and ethical.

Judicious Treatment of Writing Errors

Criteria need to be established for what should count as a serious error when writing itself is the object of assessment. For instance, even though omission of articles (e.g., *My family had picnic this weekend*) may grate on the ears of many English teachers, this particular error is relatively trivial. In addition, when teachers are familiar with students' first languages, they can look at student work with an understanding of first language transfer rather than focusing unduly on errors (Sweedler-Brown, 1993). Many Asian languages, for example, do not use articles at all, and even advanced English speakers and writers may continue to struggle with similar language issues. Error correction—when and how it should be done—is an ongoing topic in the literature on writing assessment. Summarizing the wisdom of several ESL writing theorists, Frodesen and Holten (2003) recommend that error correction of ELLs should be selective and strategic. This would mean focusing on errors that have widespread effect in a piece of writing (such as poor cohesion) or errors that stigmatize the learner as "uneducated." They say that time should be spent on errors that can be "explained, understood, and generalized to students' particular writing needs (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998)" (p. 152).

Using Multiple Measures

Assessment of a student's academic progress requires the use of multiple measures (Anastasi, 1990; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Hiebert & Calfee, 1992). No important educational decision should be based on the score on a single test or a single type of test (AERA, 1999). To make high-stakes decisions, such as program placement, graduation, and retention, districts typically use a combination of grades, standardized tests, and teacher recommendations; however, undue weight may be given to the test—something that can penalize ELLs and other students from nondominant groups (Paulsen, Ferrara, Birns, & Leclerc, 2002). Most teachers naturally use a variety of methods for assessing students, ranging from informal assessment of students' responses during discussions to more formal assessments such as written tests and classroom presentations. Some students may be able to demonstrate their learning more successfully when they do not have to rely totally on verbal expression (written or oral), and portfolios may be one positive and useful way to capture student learning (Farr & Trumbull, 1997; Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991).

C. Assessment as a Cultural Event

As with other areas of education, assessment is embedded in cultural contexts (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). There are accepted ways of evaluating student progress or child development in every culture, but these differ by culture. Immigrant students, in particular, may take some time to understand the norms of assessment in U.S. classrooms (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, Isaac, Daley, & Pérez, 2003); the same may be true for American Indian students growing up in communities where cultural traditions from the past have been maintained (Deyhle, 1987). Depending on their background and experience, students may be more successful with some test formats and procedures than others (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995). For this reason, it is important to use a variety of assessment techniques and formats—including informal observation as well as a range of more formal measures—with nondominant-culture students.

Explicit discussion on the purpose of standardized tests and other ways of evaluating student progress can help students understand why they are being assessed, the nature of the actual instrument or process, and what the consequences of the different assessments will be. For example, both teacher and student can discuss how an end-of-unit test can help them find out what the student has learned, that it will take the form of short answers to 10 questions, and that it will be part of the information the teacher uses to give the student a grade in social studies. Involving students in the process of identifying achievement goals—helping them see what is important and meaningful—also prepares them for understanding why assessments focus on certain content and processes (Stiggins, 1997).

Another cultural element to assessment is the content. Nondominant-culture students may have fewer conventional associations with the content in standardized test passages, leading them to make inferences that are plausible and valid but not the ones expected by the test developers (Hill & Larsen, 2000). Failure to make the expected associations and inferences can result in low scores, improper conclusions about student learning, and incorrect or unfair decisions about how to teach or where to place students.

Activity 10: Interpreting Student Behavior

Instructions to Participants

Read the account in Figure 21 and the questions that follow it. Be prepared to discuss your answers with the group.

Figure 21: A New Child

Hermana comes from Palau, an island republic in the Pacific about 700 miles east of the Philippines, to my first-grade classroom in Honolulu earlier this year. She's staying with an older sister and brother-in-law. Earlier today I read the class a story that has always captured their imagination, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. As I read, Hermana sat quietly, eyes down. I remember thinking, Is she interested? Has she put herself into the story? It was easy to tell with the others. I could almost feel Sam's interest as he wiggled, frowned, and smiled along with the story. I've been trying to get a sense of Hermana's understanding while I read. I decided to try this book because it's never failed me before. When I called on Hermana and asked her how she liked the story, she barely spoke. "Good." She said it so quietly that no one else heard. When I asked how she'd feel if she were the boy in the story, she looked confused. The more questions I asked about the story, the less she responded. I'm frustrated and worried. I have no idea what she really understands.

Discussion

- **What expectations does the teacher have regarding Hermana's participation in storytelling?**
- **Why might Hermana be responding in this way? Consider both her cultural background and her personal experience.**
- **How could her teacher find out what's going on with Hermana?**
- **What cultural differences might account for Hermana's behavior?**

Table 8 presents some of the dilemmas teachers may face in trying to make assessment appropriate for students from many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This list is not exhaustive, but it illustrates a range of concerns and possibilities.

Table 8: Solving Assessment Dilemmas

Assessment Dilemma	Possible Solutions
Students' culture does not encourage competitive responses in a group.	Allow for small groups or pair interaction with informal teacher observation. Do not confront student in large groups, but encourage volunteering answers. Allow for choral response.
Students are used to cooperating and helping each other at home. They find the competitive frame of assessment strange, and they don't understand why they can't help each other more. (In some cases, students may come from countries where individual testing is rarely done.)	Allow students to help each other (using their cultural strengths) whenever possible. Their group orientation can facilitate learning greatly. Explain that for certain assessments, students will need to work independently, and make explicit the rules about when and where not to cooperate. Even practice tests for standardized achievement tests can be done in pairs or small groups.
Students do not understand purpose and consequences of assessment.	Explain that assessments can help show what a student has learned and needs to work on. Let students know that it is important to "do your best."
You want to use performance assessments based on students' research projects, believing you can see students' progress better in a meaningful context where skills have to be integrated—but extended writing in English is difficult for ELLs.	Allow students adequate time for writing. They may need more than native-English speakers. If students are collaborating, let them use their first language (if they share a first language) to plan their project and discuss what they are learning. Consider demonstrations, dramatizations, visual models, and illustrations as alternatives to some of the writing.
On writing assessments, some students mix text patterns and conventions that they have learned in school and ones that come from their language or dialect. For example, a student may introduce dialogue where it doesn't seem appropriate according to school norms. Or he or she may not use an expected ordering of events.	Help students become aware of the patterns and conventions they are using so that they can make choices about when to use which ones. If students meet agreed-upon standards, they should not be graded down on the basis of different text patterns. If a high-stakes assessment requires adherence to school norms of writing, be sure students know that and provide adequate practice and feedback to help students reach this norm.

An assessment has been developed for native-English speakers; some of your students are still learning English, but all of your students are required to take it.	Explain to students that the assessment is really for native-English speakers and that they should do as well as they can but not feel bad if they don't understand something. Rephrase instructions as needed, so that they understand the overall task. Use results judiciously; recognize that such tests are not valid indices of the overall knowledge, skill, or ability of students who are learning English.

The more teachers understand how culture and language are involved in learning, the more informed they will be about both instruction and assessment. They will understand serious flaws in conventional assessment practices and will find themselves modifying assessments, developing new ones, or even discovering new assessment methods (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). They will also be more informed critics of the value of assessments for students for whom the assessments were not necessarily designed.

D. Authentic Assessment and Second Language Learners

In his book *Educative Assessment* (1998), Wiggins observes that in addition to evaluating students, assessment should serve the purposes of educating students and improving their performance. Wiggins is an advocate of authentic tasks for students that allow students to conduct real-world, engaging work and draw on higher order cognitive skills. In conjunction with authentic tasks, Wiggins points out the significance of ongoing neutral feedback, which will lead to student self-adjustment (alteration of performance) and improvement. Feedback can be communicated through detailed rubrics, performance checklists, written narratives, and conferences; student work can be organized into ongoing folders for works in progress and performance portfolios, in which students are asked to select work as part of a critique process for advancement.

It is important to understand that feedback is not solely derived from the teacher. Peer feedback, parent feedback, and self-assessment are crucial components along the road to self-adjustment. Students' products may include essays, research projects, scientific experiments, oral exhibitions, and visual and performing arts pieces, to name a few (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995).

Key strategies for instruction of second language learners bear a striking similarity to the kinds of authentic tasks that Wiggins proposes. For example, the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) standards and the CREDE standards emphasize the need to provide environments where ELLs can interact in meaningful ways with their peers. In a classroom where students are asked to perform authentic tasks, peer interaction becomes the norm, just as it is the norm to converse and exchange ideas with peers outside the classroom.

Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk (1995) describe collaboration among students in the Motion program at International High School in New York. International High School serves students who have been in the United States for four years or fewer. The use of assessment to drive collaborative learning has produced one of the most powerful experiences for Motion students. Students work in groups to design experiments and solve problems in mathematics and physics,

to interpret literature and write to and with one another about books and ideas, and to conquer physical challenges at Project Adventure. Throughout these activities, they must surmount language barriers to communicate with each other—thus being forced to learn and use English for complex, content-rich tasks—and they must surmount the challenges of different styles, approaches to work, and prior levels of knowledge (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, p. 134).

Ultimately, students in classrooms that provide the opportunity for authentic tasks and assessment are more invested in their work and more likely to self-adjust or alter their performance. At International High School, new students engaged in an ongoing process of writing their autobiographies. Through small-group collaboration and feedback, the writers produced works that will eventually be part of their final portfolios. As one teacher said, "No student has ever lost his or her autobiography" (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995, p. 166).

Utilizing authentic tasks and assessment requires careful planning and implementation. Wiggins has developed a checklist for teachers to apply to tasks they have designed (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Assessment Design Self-Assessment Checklist

- It is clear which desired achievements are being measured.
- Criteria and indicators are the right ones for this task and for the achievement being assessed.
- Content standards are addressed explicitly in the design; successful task performance requires mastery of the content standard.
- Genres or performance/production are important and appropriate for the achievements being assessed.
- Standards have been established that go beyond the local norms of the school to credible outside standards or have been established by internal or external oversight.
- Students will have ample and appropriate guidelines for understanding their performance obligations.
- The task will provide students and teachers with ample feedback for self-assessment and self-adjustment both during and after its completion.

(Wiggins, 1998)

These criteria can help teachers thoughtfully plan their assessment of ELLs. The first criterion invites us to consider whether our goal is to teach and assess language proficiency or content mastery. If the task is designed to teach and assess content, then lack of language proficiency must not be confused with lack of content mastery.

E. A Note on Grading

Grading presents the same dilemmas as assessment, when it comes to issues of validity, fairness, and equity (Trumbull, in press). There are no simple answers to the dilemmas that arise in grading ELLs and other students whose language and cultural backgrounds, as well as life experiences, do not match those of the dominant U.S. culture. Teachers will have to make grading decisions based on policies in their own schools and—as much as possible—on their students' particular profiles and needs. However, because grades affect students personally (in terms of motivation and self-judgment) and have consequences for students' school careers (e.g., retention and placement), they must be taken seriously (Trumbull & Farr, 2002).

In many cases, a district undertakes assessment reform without simultaneously addressing grading practices, thus jeopardizing the validity, fairness, and equity of its accountability system. At a minimum, school and district grading policies should specify that grades are standards based, that they are based on achievement alone (a separate grade for behavior or citizenship can be provided), that students know the criteria for grades, and that the system is perceived as fair by students and parents (Trumbull & Farr, 2002). General education teachers and specialists (e.g., ESL teachers) should collaborate to assign grades to students whom they share (Langdon & Trumbull, 2002). In this way, students can receive the support needed to become proficient in their languages and the content-area material, and ultimately better prepared for their future.

F. Resources

Print Materials

The Education Alliance at Brown University. *Claiming opportunities: A handbook for improving education for English language learners through comprehensive school reform.* (2003). Providence, RI: Author.
This handbook provides information, strategies, resources, and tools for using No Child Left Behind's Comprehensive School Reform program (CSR) as an opportunity to make schools more responsive to and responsible for ELLs. It presents existing research on both CSR and ELL-responsiveness and suggests how the two educational improvement efforts can be integrated.

Farr, B., & Trumbull E. (1997). *Assessment alternatives for diverse classrooms.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
This is one of the few texts devoted to a thorough exploration of the assessment of students from nondominant cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The authors are former teachers and have engaged in assessment development and research at classroom, district, and state levels. They offer recommendations for developing equitable assessment systems at the classroom level and beyond on the basis of existing research and theory. Commentaries by experts from many different cultural perspectives at the end of each chapter add to the richness of the book.

Genesee, F., & Hamayan, E. (1994). Classroom-based assessment. In F. Genesee (Ed.), *Educating second language children: The whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community* (pp. 212–239). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
This chapter is a well-developed treatment of how general education teachers and language specialists can share the responsibility for assessing the language development of ELLs. Genesee and Hamayan take the reader through the necessary steps for making decisions about what to assess and how to do it.

Hurley, S. R., & Tinajero, J. V. (Eds.). (2000). *Literacy assessment of second language learners.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
This book addresses the concerns of practitioners and scholars regarding the dearth of literacy assessments for ELLs. Many contributors provide case studies and vignettes to illustrate issues and applications of literacy assessments. The editors explore the connection between first and second language literacy and between oral language and literacy. Other authors contribute holistic writing rubrics that show how assessments conducted in both first and second languages are essential in order to gain a more accurate and overall view of a student's work. Each chapter ends with questions for discussion. The book combines theory with rubrics, graphics, and other tools intended to facilitate literacy assessment in the classroom.

Kusimo, P., Ritter, M. G., Busick, K., Ferguson, C., Trumbull, E., & Solano-Flores, G. (2000). *Making assessment work for everyone: How to build on student strengths.* San Francisco: WestEd. Available at http://www.sedl.org/pubs/tl05/
This book is a research-based practical guide for teachers to help them ensure that classroom assessment is equitable for students from all backgrounds. The book outlines the characteristics of good assessment, shows how to uncover the strengths of learners and tap these in the assessment process, and avoid bias in assessment. Dozens of examples illustrate the concepts and recommended steps for use in professional development.

Lachat, M. A. (1999). *What policymakers and school administrators need to know about assessment reform and English language learners.* Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University.
This book, directed to policymakers and administrators, explains the context of assessment use with students from diverse backgrounds. Of particular interest to teachers are the chapters on the differences between an assessment and a testing culture and on how language and culture affect how the English language is learned.

Popham, W. J. (2001). *The truth about testing.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
Popham is a well-known measurement expert and critic. Here, he advises teachers how to understand and avoid misuse of high-stakes tests and how to select and design tests that are instructionally useful. Teachers will learn useful pointers for constructing valid and useful classroom tests as well.

Web Sites

American Educational Research Association (AERA)
http://www.aera.net

AERA, along with the National Council on Measurement in Education and the American Psychological Association, have crafted a statement of standards for educational and psychological testing. This Web site publishes the standards and offers archived issues of *Educational Researcher*, which has published many articles on assessment in the past decade.

FairTest
http://www.fairtest.org

The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) works to ensure that the testing and evaluation of students, teachers, and schools is fair, valid, and useful to all concerned. The site has information about K–12 and university testing, as well as a link to an Assessment Reform Network that provides extensive resources for educators.

The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) http://www.cresst.org

CRESST researchers have conducted hundreds of studies on assessment, and reports on the findings of these studies are available at this Web site. For educators, the downloadable policy briefs and newsletters are valuable resources for understanding issues in standards-based assessment, the assessment of ELLs, the implications of No Child Left Behind for districts, and many more topics.

WestEd Regional Educational Laboratory (Assessment, Standards, and Accountability Programs)
http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/area/1

WestEd offers a range of services and products that can help educators evaluate their own assessment programs and design new practices.



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