
Language and Literacy Development among EAL Pupils

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What Is English Language Proficiency?

Conversational Fluency

- The ability to carry on a conversation in familiar face-to-face situations;
 - Developed by the vast majority of native speakers by the time they enter school at age 5;
 - Involves use of high frequency words and simple grammatical constructions;
 - ELL students typically require 1-2 years to attain peer-appropriate levels.
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What Is English Language Proficiency?

Discrete Language Skills

- Refers to the rule-governed aspects of language (phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.);
 - Can be developed in two independent ways: (a) by direct instruction, and (b) through immersion in a literacy-rich home or school environment where meanings are elaborated through language and attention is drawn to literate forms of language (e.g. letters on the pages of books);
 - ELL students can learn these specific language skills concurrently with their development of basic vocabulary and conversational fluency. However, there is little direct transference to other aspects of language proficiency (e.g. vocabulary).
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What Is English Language Proficiency?

Academic Language Proficiency

- Includes knowledge of the less frequent vocabulary of English as well as the ability to interpret and produce increasingly complex written language;
 - ELL students typically require at least 5 years to attain grade expectations in language and literacy skills;
 - In order to catch up to grade norms within 6 years, ELL students must make 15 months gain in every 10-month school year;
 - Because academic language is found primarily in books, extensive reading is crucial in enabling students to catch up;
 - Frequent writing, across genres, is also crucial in developing academic writing skills.
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Conditions for Promoting Literacy Engagement among EAL Pupils

Literacy Attainment



Literacy Engagement



Scaffold
Meaning



Activate prior
knowledge/Build
background knowledge



Affirm
identity



Extend
language

The Centrality of Literacy Engagement

- Amount and range of reading and writing;
- Use of effective strategies for deep understanding of text;
- Positive affect and identity investment in reading and writing;

Guthrie notes that in all spheres of life (e.g. driving a car, doing surgery, playing golf, gourmet cooking, etc.) participation is key to the development of proficiency. He notes that “certainly some initial lessons are valuable for driving a car or typing on a keyboard, but expertise spirals upward mainly with engaged participation” (2004, p. 8).

PISA: Reading Engagement

Data on the reading achievement of 15-year olds in almost 30 countries showed that:

“the level of a student’s reading engagement is a better predictor of literacy performance than his or her socioeconomic background, indicating that cultivating a student’s interest in reading can help overcome home disadvantages” (OECD, 2004, p. 8)

Empirical Support for the Role of Engaged Reading

Drawing on both the 1998 NAEP data from the United States and the results of the PISA study of reading achievement in international contexts, Guthrie (2004, p. 5) notes that students

“...whose family background was characterized by low income and low education, but who were highly engaged readers, substantially outscored students who came from backgrounds with higher education and higher income, but who themselves were less engaged readers. Based on a massive sample, this finding suggests the stunning conclusion that engaged reading can overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement, including gender, parental education, and income.”

Scaffold Language

- Graphic organizers
- Visuals in texts
- Demonstrations
- Hands-on experiences
- Collaborative group work
- Learning strategies (planning tasks, visualisation, grouping/classifying, note-taking/summarising, questioning for clarification, making use of multiple resources for task completion)
- Language clarification (explanation, dictionary use, etc.)

What Do We Know about Learning?

Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (2000) *How People Learn*

- Engaging prior understandings

“new understandings are constructed on a foundation of existing understandings and experiences” (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, p. 4).

- Integrating factual knowledge with conceptual frameworks

“deep understanding of subject matter transforms factual information into usable knowledge” (Bransford et al. p. 16).

- Using metacognitive strategies to take active control over the learning process

“a ‘metacognitive’ or self-monitoring approach can help students develop the ability to take control of their own learning, consciously define learning goals, and monitor their progress in achieving them” (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, p. 10)

Figure 6.2

THE SEPARATE UNDERLYING PROFICIENCY (SUP) MODEL OF BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY

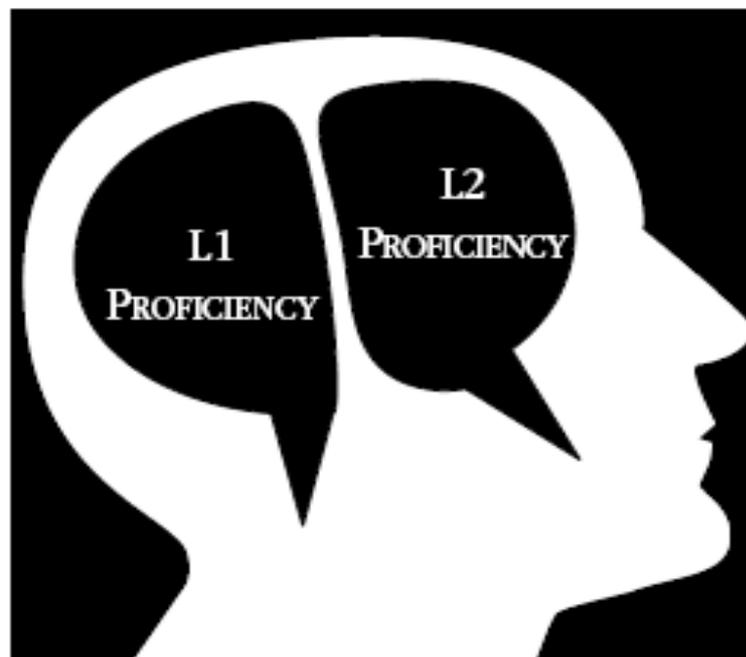
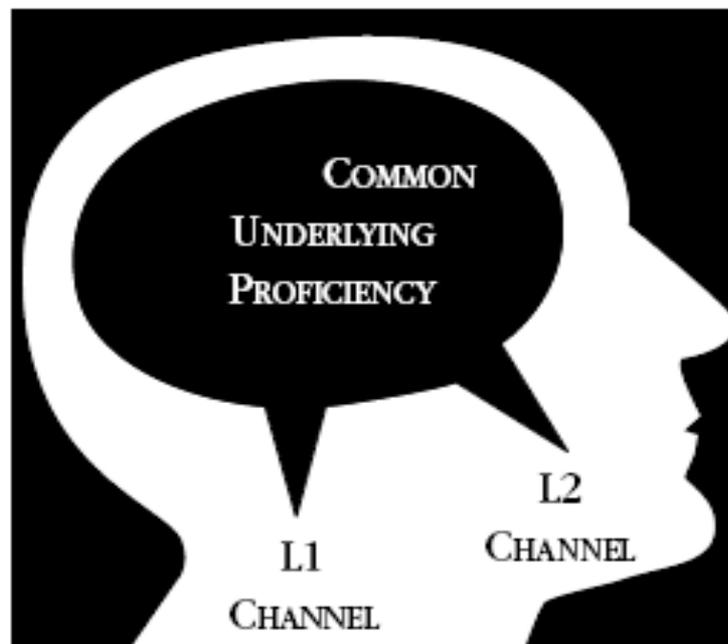
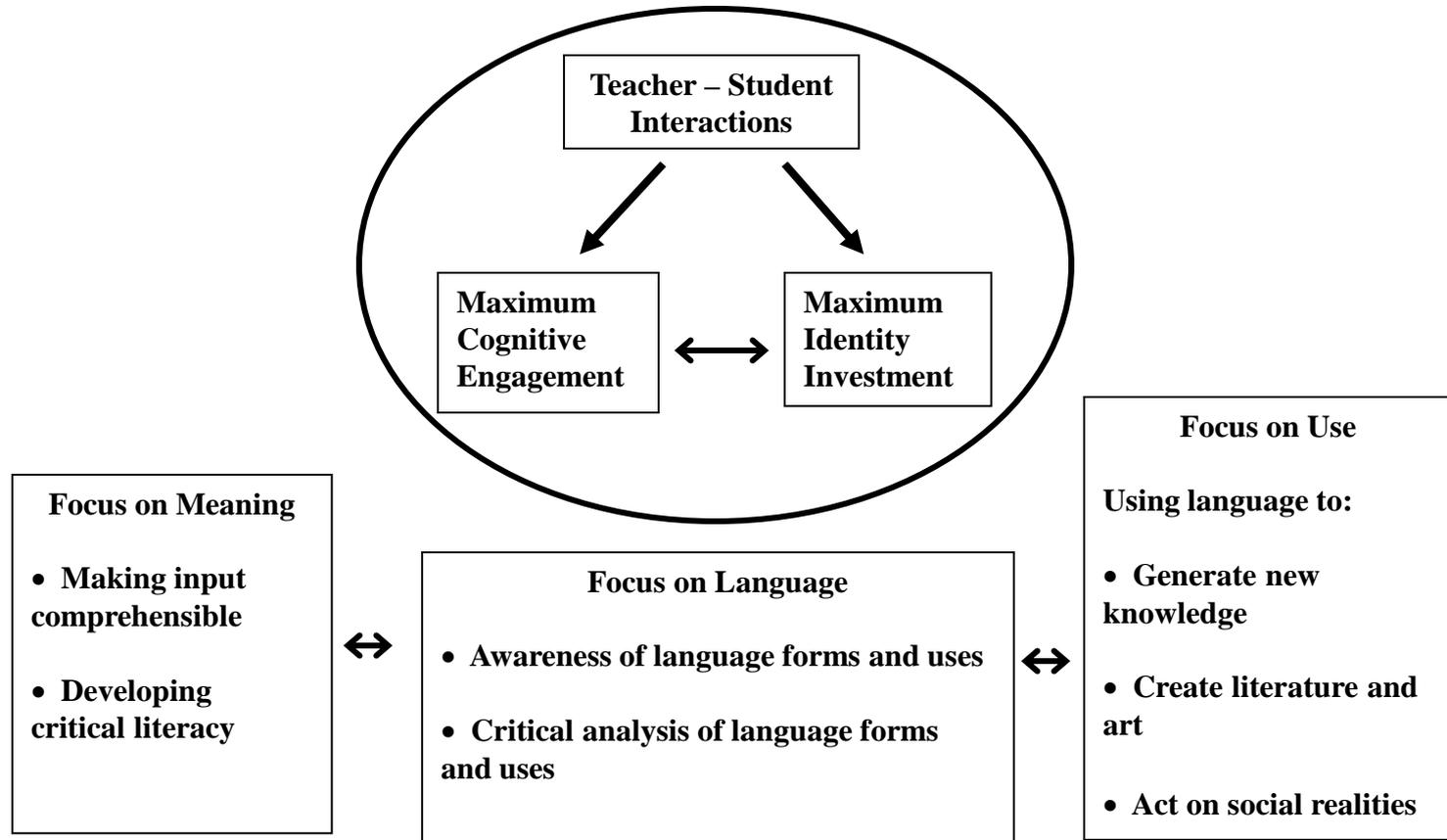


Figure 6.3

THE COMMON UNDERLYING PROFICIENCY (CUP) MODEL OF BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY



THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC EXPERTISE



A School-Based Choice Template for Planning Literacy Instruction

| Instructional Options | Current Realities Where Are We? | Vision for the Future Where Do We Want To Be? | Getting it Done How Do We Get There? |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Content</i> How do we adapt curriculum materials to link with students' prior knowledge and cultural background (e.g. purchase dual language books) and also to promote critical thinking about texts and issues (e.g. whose perspectives are represented in a text)?</p> | | | |
| <p><i>Cognition</i> How can we modify instruction to evoke higher levels of literacy engagement and critical thinking?</p> | | | |
| <p><i>Tools</i> How can we use tools such as computers, digital cameras, camcorders, web pages, etc?</p> | | | |
| <p><i>Assessment</i> How can we complement mandated standardized assessments in order to present to students, parents, and administrators a more valid account of student progress? (e.g. a role for portfolio assessment?)</p> | | | |
| <p><i>Language/Culture</i> What messages are we giving students and parents about home language and culture? How can we enable students to use their L1 as a powerful tool for learning? Can we increase students' identity investment by means of bilingual instructional strategies (teaching for transfer)?</p> | | | |
| <p><i>Parental Involvement</i> How can we engage parents as co-educators in such a way that their linguistic and cultural expertise is harnessed as fuel for their children's academic progress?</p> | | | |

Resources

- www.multiliteracies.ca (Multiliteracies project)
 - <http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual> (Dual Language Showcase)
 - <http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/archive.html> (webcast on *Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Ontario*)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/> (Many Roots, Many Voices)
 - <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/> (Extensive set of strategies for vocabulary expansion)
 - Literacy, Technology and Diversity: Teaching for Success in Changing Times (Jim Cummins, Kristin Brown, and Dennis Sayers; Allyn & Bacon, 2007) (<http://www.allynbaconmerrill.com/bookstore/product.asp?isbn=020538935X&rl=1>)
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