

*A*cademic Language
for
English Language Learners
and Struggling Readers

Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers

**How to Help Students Succeed
Across Content Areas**

Yvonne S. Freeman & David E. Freeman

Foreword by Robert J. Marzano

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We dedicate this book to two teachers who have made a difference in their students' lives

To our daughter,
Mary Soto, a secondary teacher of English and ESL for more than ten years. In this book we used several examples from her classes because they exemplify a caring and knowledgeable teacher helping her students to develop academic language. It is a joy for us as parents to see the principles we have written about over several years demonstrated in her professional work.

To Rusty DeRuiter,
whose poem opens this book. In it, Rusty reflects the struggles of a caring, talented teacher faced with older students who lacked the academic language they needed to succeed, many of whom had given up on themselves. Rusty always looked for new ways to instill a love of reading and writing in all his students. When Rusty died unexpectedly in 2006, he left a legacy of former students who knew he cared enough to teach them the academic language they needed to succeed.

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Foreword

Middle school and high school teachers face difficult challenges on a daily basis. The amount of content in the curriculum increases yearly, as does the pressure to help students pass high-stakes tests and move on to the next grade—or to graduate. With content and testing demands, teaching would be difficult enough if every student was well prepared.

The reality, however, is that many students are not well prepared for the mounting demands of secondary education. They lack background knowledge. They struggle to read content-area textbooks. They cannot write reports, summaries, and other kinds of academic papers in a manner that meets the expectations for their age and grade levels. For most secondary content teachers, these challenges represent new territory. They are well versed in their subject areas but were not trained to teach the basic reading and writing skills many of their students need.

Further complicating the situation, many secondary students—even some born in the United States—have limited English proficiency. Some native English speakers began school speaking another language, learned to speak and understand English, but cannot read and write it well. Other struggling students entered school speaking a nonstandard variety of English; they can communicate orally with little trouble, but find academic reading and writing beyond their immediate reach.

Add to all this the fact that because the issues associated with teaching these students are relatively new to American schools, few professional books in the marketplace provide strategies for simultaneously teaching secondary-level content-area knowledge and developing the literacy skills of students who aren't well

prepared for academics. Yvonne and David Freeman's *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers: How to Help Students Succeed Across Content Areas* fills this need. Written specifically for secondary content-area teachers, it explains who these struggling students are and the specific support they need to succeed academically.

The Freemans distinguish among three types of English language learners (ELLs). Some are newly arrived in the United States but were well prepared in the schools of their homelands. They often succeed in school but face the challenge of learning English quickly enough to pass standardized exams. Others come with limited academic knowledge and limited literacy in their native language. These students must learn to read and write in English and develop content-area knowledge in it. Still others, the long-term English learners, have been in the United States for some time. Consequently, their conversational English is often quite good but they lack academic English.

In addition to the three types of ELLs, some struggling secondary students speak nonstandard English. For many of them, reading content-area textbooks and composing academic papers present big problems. Indeed, these students, referred to as standard English learners (SELs), show many of the very same characteristics as long-term English learners. With their classification system for students as a backdrop, the Freemans discuss what each type of student needs in order to read and write effectively in the different content areas.

The Freemans make an important distinction between two types of language: conversational language and academic language. A wide gulf often separates conversational and academic English. The differences, which extend well beyond mere vocabulary and into syntax, text organization, and register, help explain why an adolescent can speak English very well but might have trouble composing academic texts.

Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers breaks academic language down into smaller and more discrete levels of organization, beginning with the text level and proceeding through the paragraph, the sentence, and finally to the word. Shedding light on the structure of academic genres, the text level, the Freemans show how genres commonly required in the different content areas can be made more accessible. The genres are then examined at the paragraph and sentence levels, to see how students can be given a chance to appropriate academic language in richer and richer ways. Students often write paragraphs that are not coherent or cohesive, and their sentences are either short and simple or convoluted and tangled. This book explains how to guide students toward writing well-organized paragraphs and complex sentences.

Reading and writing for school is difficult because many students lack academic vocabulary. The Freemans provide a thorough discussion of the nature and function of academic vocabulary leading to specific suggestions for increasing it through a combination of extensive reading, learning strategies, and the direct teaching of key content-area words.

The Freemans outline specific supports that can give English learners and struggling students ways to overcome the obstacles encountered with content-area textbooks. They also provide useful suggestions for supplementing textbooks, creating new avenues for students to take toward deeper subject-area understanding. They further provide classroom examples that demonstrate the kinds of instructional activities that motivate students and engage them in content-area reading and writing.

Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers explains the particulars of an area of key importance to most every teacher: how to balance the dual objectives of content standards and academic language development. Students need to learn both, and teachers must have a well-written, differentiated plan to achieve these goals and help students learn to express content knowledge. Content and language objectives help teachers intentionally develop both content and language, and the Freemans provide specific examples of both types of objectives.

Putting all this well-researched information together into effective teaching is the crux of the matter, of course. The Freemans advocate organizing curriculum around integrated thematic units that keep the focus on teaching both language and content. All secondary students benefit from this sound approach, but the types of students on whom this book is focused should gain even more from it than their well-prepared peers. The Freemans' ideas for planning curriculum offer a highly effective framework for instructional design that allows teachers to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of ELLs and struggling students while continuing to support the other students in their classes.

Teaching secondary students in the content areas is hard enough under the best of circumstances. When students are not well prepared academically and also lack academic literacy skills, the challenge can seem overwhelming. Fortunately, *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers* can help secondary content-area teachers provide these students with the academic support they very desperately need.

Robert J. Marzano
Centennial, Colorado

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We wish to acknowledge the many people who encouraged and supported us in writing this book. Without their help, the book would never have become a reality.

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Our editor, Lisa Luedeke, read the manuscript carefully and gave us very helpful suggestions. She helped us to rethink and rewrite some sections and some whole chapters. The result is a book that more clearly expresses the ideas we wish to convey. In addition to offering her helpful comments, Lisa encouraged us to keep writing.

The final book looks both appealing and professional thanks to the skills of our production editor, Vicki Kasabian. We are especially pleased with the new look of the cover. We very much appreciate the extra care she always takes with the details of our books.

We have worked with Beth Tripp on several books. The writing in the book looks much improved thanks to her copyediting skills. Beth always catches writing errors

and makes good suggestions for improving our writing style. It is a pleasure to work with such a competent copy editor.

Leigh Peake, the former vice president and editorial director at Heinemann, supported and encouraged us in all our writing. Under her leadership, Heinemann consistently produced high-quality books for us. Thanks, too, to the rest of the team at Heinemann—Stephanie Turner, who helped prepare the manuscript, and Eric Chalek, who, among other things, helps with writing the back cover and advertising copy. The final book reflects the efforts of all the team at Heinemann.

We wish to acknowledge as well the many teachers and students who have helped shape our ideas about academic language. Francisco, whose story we tell, shows that with the right motivation from people in and outside of school, any student can succeed. William Roach shared the challenges that administrators face in trying to understand students who struggle academically. Student samples in the book illustrate important points about academic language. Our own students, including our current doctoral students, have helped us think more carefully about the different aspects of academic language. As we have discussed books and articles with them and then responded to their writing, we have gained a deeper understanding of what is involved in developing high levels of academic language proficiency. All these individuals have helped us to convey our ideas more clearly as we write about how teachers can support academic language development for English language learners and struggling readers.

Introduction

I Don't Know What to Do Rusty DeRuiter

I don't know what to do.
So many angry faces
Who have heard all the teacher
Promises before.
For too many years
They have been put down.
Too many teachers
Who have given up.
Who have not understood.
And now it is big time.
High School.
Time to show and shine,
To be cool with *compañeros*,
To be tough.

It's tough to start school,
Especially when you are
Angry with life.
Having to ask for money
From parents who don't have it,
Wanting the right shoes,
And shirts and pants.
Needing to make your mark early.

Fathers and mothers
Come home late
With peach fuzz and grape juice
Deep into their fingernails,
With the smell of sweat
And the pain of swollen
Feet and hands,
And cuts from shoulder
To fingertips.
The fields are mean.

And the parents dream
Of success for their children.
"You need to work hard, *mi'ijo*,
To get the education I never had."
It is the parents' heart cry.
But they don't understand
The classroom pain of not knowing.
Of not knowing the big words.
Of not understanding what
The teacher says in class.
And of not asking
Because you are
Expected to know.
Because this is high school.
And the look you get
When you ask for help
Just one more time.
Mom and Dad know
The pain of the fields: But
They do not know
The pain of school.

Pretty soon you don't ask.
You learn to smile.
And day by day the wall
Grows taller.
Walls of words and sentences
And paragraphs and pages.
You learn to look busy,
To be always looking for the answer.
You learn to use María's knowledge.
To sit close to her,
At the right angle,
So you can see her paper
And the teacher can't see you.
Tricks.
Tricks of being a student
Without being a student.
Shine 'em on
And yet the pain is there.
Times of embarrassment when
It doesn't work out right,
When your *compañeros*
Are reminded of what you can't do.

In the quiet wood-paneled room,
Protected by night's blackness
And the familiarity of my big chair,
The unwanted tears slowly well up
And fall gently on my bare chest.
The anger, the fear,
And the deep sorrow
Fill my mind and my heart.
I know not what to do.

This powerful poem was written by Rusty DeRuiter, an experienced intermediate school teacher who, at the time of writing this poem, had just begun teaching developmental reading to struggling high school students. He wrote this poem late one night as he tried to understand both his students and his own frustration with teaching them.

Rusty was asked to teach these students because of his success with intermediate school students in his rural, agricultural district and because district officials did not know what to do with the growing numbers of students who were dropping out of school. Most of Rusty's students were of Mexican descent. They had

started school speaking Spanish, now understood and spoke English well, but could not read or write at grade level.

At the time of the writing of this poem, Rusty already held a master of arts in reading and was working on his Bilingual Cross-Cultural Specialist Credential. He returned to graduate school because he wanted to understand his students better. Rusty was ahead of his time. Academic language was not yet being widely talked about at conferences or written about in journal articles and books. Still, Rusty's poem shows that he understood his students' need for being able to understand, read, and write the academic language of school.

Across the country, teachers are faced with classrooms filled with large numbers of students who struggle with the academic demands of school. Like Rusty, other teachers want to know how to help these students. With the current nationwide emphasis on standardized tests, exit exams, and other high-stakes assessments, attention has been given to students who lack the language of school. Many of these students are English language learners (ELLs) and struggling readers. Reports from educational agencies and literacy educators have begun to focus on the need for helping these students develop academic language, and *academic language* has become a kind of buzzword at conferences and inservice presentations. However, just what academic language is and what it entails have often been vague or limited to a discussion of vocabulary.

While many educators are concerned about their students' lack of academic language, few could define academic language, identify which students have it and which do not, or give specific ideas about how to help students develop academic language. In this book we attempt to bring together information from researchers, teacher educators, linguists, and practitioners in order to clarify some of the confusions about academic language and provide suggestions for how to help ELLs and struggling readers succeed in school. In the seven chapters of this book, we talk about the students who need academic language, what it is, when and where it is used, the problems that textbooks cause, the different aspects of academic language, how to write objectives to teach academic language, and how to engage students in effective instruction to build academic language proficiency.

We begin in Chapter 1 by describing real students and their academic struggles. We show the many challenges they face and the factors that influence their academic performance. Many of these students are English language learners, but an even larger number are no longer identified as ELLs and, in fact, have been in our schools for years. These long-term English learners (LTEs) usually speak English well but struggle with reading and writing. Other struggling students we describe are standard English learners (SELs). These students are native speakers of English who speak a variety of the language that differs from standard

spoken English. Some SELs along with some students who come to school speaking standard English are below grade level in their ability to read and write academic texts. All of these students need academic language, and it is important that educators understand these different groups, their needs, their similarities, and their differences.

In Chapter 2, we review the differences between academic and conversational language proficiency. We report the research that shows how long it takes ELLs to acquire each type of language proficiency. Many ELLs have developed conversational English. In fact, they are quite good at talking in class and at trying to distract teachers from the reading and writing assignments that they find difficult. These students are not simply lazy or unmotivated. Their evasion of work is often a cover-up for their fear of being found out: they do not understand the academic texts they are expected to read and cannot express their ideas in academic writing.

For students who enter school speaking a language other than English, providing support for the development of academic concepts in their first languages while they are learning English is the best option. This approach provides students with the common underlying proficiency (CUP) that Cummins (1981) explains gives them something to draw upon when learning English. In other words, what an ELL knows in his first language transfers to English. Unfortunately, few students come to schools with a strong base in their first languages. Students with adequate formal schooling make up the smallest portion of English learners in most schools.

It is critical, then, that educators come to understand academic language and what it involves. In Chapter 3 we explain that there are different academic registers. When teachers understand these registers, they can better plan instruction to help students develop the academic language of the different content areas. In this chapter we also discuss the differences between oral and written academic language. Students need to develop both oral and written grammatical and communicative competence in English in order to succeed in school.

Students acquire competence in English through membership in social and cultural groups. All people acquire the ability to communicate appropriately within their own cultural groups. Gee (2008) refers to the way of speaking within our own context of culture as our primary discourse. We also acquire secondary discourses, and the discourse of school is one of them. Students must learn how to think, act, believe, speak, read, and write in a way that is expected in school. Some students come to school with backgrounds that facilitate the acquisition of school discourse, but many do not. ELLs, LTELs, and SELs have not acquired this discourse for a variety of reasons. In order to help students acquire school discourse, or the academic registers of school, educators should first understand the complexity of academic language.

We discuss academic language at the text level in Chapter 4. We begin by describing the characteristics of academic texts. We discuss the problems with textbooks and the challenges they present to students. After describing the problems with textbooks, we suggest ways to help students cope with the textbooks they are assigned in their content classes.

In Chapter 4 we also discuss the importance of involving students in informational reading early and of providing them with a variety of expository texts. We explain why middle school and secondary students are not engaged readers and discuss an engagement model of instruction. Through several examples, we show how teachers have helped ELLs and LTELs become more engaged in reading and suggest ways to organize and encourage reading in school.

At the text level, it is important to help students understand that there are different genres within each subject area. They need to be able to read and write the different genres and interpret the intent of each genre.

In Chapter 5 we consider academic language at the paragraph and sentence levels. Students need to learn ways to connect sentences to create coherent and cohesive paragraphs. At the sentence level, teachers must help students understand how to construct complex and compound sentences and how to use signal words. Knowing how and when to combine sentences appropriately does not come naturally to students, and they need different supports to learn how to do it.

Because vocabulary development is so important and has received so much attention in schools, we devote Chapter 6 to a discussion of academic language at the word level. Students have to learn content-specific words in the different content areas, those key words for the content being studied. However, students also need to learn general academic words that are used across content areas. Within math, *multiply* and *fraction* are content-specific words. Words such as *analyze* and *prove* are general academic words found in science, literature, economics, and social studies. Often teachers do not emphasize the general academic words because they assume students know them.

In Chapter 6 we also discuss the importance of writing both content and language objectives. Content teachers who support students struggling with academic language realize that in order for their students to succeed, they should be able to understand and use the academic language of their subject area. Each time they teach a lesson, the teachers ask themselves, “What language do my students need to be able to understand, talk, read, and write about this concept?” In other words, students need to learn not only the content but also the language of the content. Educators can help students with the language of their content area by writing language objectives as they plan. Including content and language objectives in les-

son planning helps teachers make lessons comprehensible for students who have trouble understanding academic tasks.

We begin our final chapter by discussing the scarcity of appropriate instruction for struggling readers and writers and the need for challenging curriculum for students who do not speak English well. We list recommendations from key studies. Teachers whose curriculum encourages identity, engagement, and motivation are most likely to reach all their students, including ELLs and struggling readers. Teachers can encourage identity, engagement, and motivation by teaching both language and content, organizing around themes, and including culturally relevant books.

Our final classroom example shows how Mary, a high school teacher, engages struggling high school students in meaningful literacy activities, how she motivates them to participate actively in classroom activities, and how she encourages them to identify with what they read and write.

Academic language is a complex topic. Throughout this book, we provide specific examples from different content areas to help readers understand what it is and how to support its development. We encourage educators to get to know their students so that they will understand their students and their students' needs. When teachers organize their curriculum in ways that support the development of both content knowledge and academic language, they provide their students with what they need for academic success. We invite you to consider the ELLs, LTELs, SELs, and native English-speaking struggling readers you work with and, then, as you read this book, to carefully plan your instruction in ways that will support the development of academic language.

2

Distinguishing Between Academic and Conversational Language



Dolores came to the United States from El Salvador when she was fourteen. In El Salvador she had attended a rural school through the sixth grade. In the United States she attended classes at a newcomer center for two weeks and then, based on her age, was transferred to a large urban high school. Her schedule included two periods of ESL, a sheltered biology class, physical education, algebra, and history.

At the time we worked with Dolores, she was a seventeen-year-old senior. She had accumulated enough units to graduate. As a senior she still had two periods of ESL. Since her ESL classes counted toward English credit, Dolores never took a regular English class. Although she had passed all her classes, she had not yet passed the basic skills tests in reading, math, or writing required for graduation.

Based on the typology of students described in Chapter 1, Dolores was a newly arrived student with limited formal schooling. Her mother had come to the United

States when Dolores was quite young, leaving her in the care of relatives. In the United States her mother remarried and now had seven children by her second husband. When she first arrived, Dolores lived with this family, but she had conflicts with them. She resented her mother for leaving her behind for so long. She didn't want to be in the United States and expressed a desire to return to El Salvador. Eventually, she left her mother's home to live with other relatives in the area.

Dolores could carry on conversations in English, but she struggled with academic subjects taught in English. We worked with her to try to help her improve her English writing. The first time she took the writing test, the topic was "Why do teenagers become troublemakers?" She was marked down on her exam for going off topic. When we discussed the test with her, she commented that she didn't know much about teenagers in the United States. In spite of the conflicts with her family, she was certainly not a troublemaker. She was a quiet young woman who wanted to complete high school and find a job. Since she didn't have much to say about why teenagers become troublemakers, it was not surprising that she had gone off topic.

Dolores' Essay

To begin our discussion of the differences between academic and conversational language, we present an example of a practice essay Dolores wrote as she worked with us. This time she chose the topic. It was one she knew more about. She titled the essay "Problems with Minorities." Figure 2.1 shows Dolores' essay as she wrote it. She left this note with her essay: "Okay, here is the essay you told me to write. I don't really know how to write. But I did my best. I hope you understand it. I write about minorities because it was more easy for me to tell. . . . I hope you don't get boring about my writing."

We weren't bored (and we hope we weren't boring) as we read Dolores' writing. We first noted that she made a good choice of topic. Students generally write better when they get to choose what they write about instead of responding to prompts. Dolores had quite a bit to say about problems with minorities, and this time she stayed on topic.

It is also clear from reading the essay that Dolores was trying to follow the organizational plan her teachers had taught her in class. In the introduction she states the topic and lists what she will do in the paper: she will explain why minorities can't attend universities and what needs to be done to enable them to attend. This sets up a good problem-solution structure that is an appropriate organizational plan for this type of academic paper.

PROBLEMS WITH MINORITIES.

There is a big problem with minorities. In this essay I will discuss and explain why students Latinos, Hmong and African Americans can't attend Universities. Second I will write what I think needs to be done so that more, Hmong, Latinos and Africans can attend and graduate from Universities and college.

First reason that minorities can't attend Universities and college, is because some of them are illegal aliens. sometimes is because they don't have the much money to pay, Universities.

The second reason that Latinos, Hmong, and Africans can't attend Universities is because there is too much discrimination. People are racist, sometimes teachers. They low grades. There are many reasons that they can't attend universities. Many students said that if they give them at least one chance a

figure 2.1a Dolores' Essay

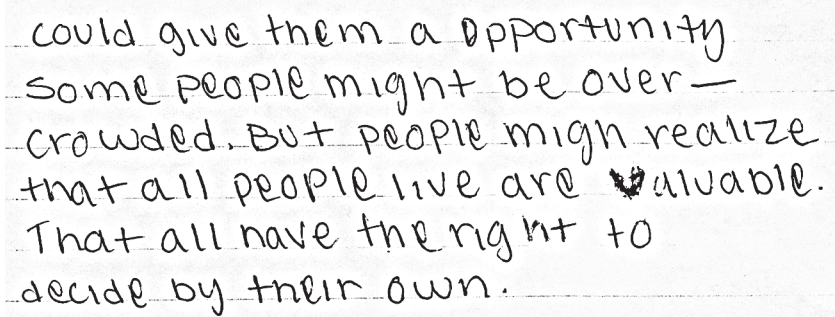
opportunity to show teachers and others, that they are good, they would taste them.

If they would taste Latinos, Hmong and Africans, they would know that they know more, than they now. Minorities would show their family that they are good and valient. There will be so many changes for them. Two mayor changes for them it would be that minorities would became intelligent. Also they would have good money and work.

A second change that I hope will occur is that people will realize that importance of every people life. They would realize that all people has the right to decide by their own future. To have a better life.

In conclusion we know that minorities dosen't attend universities for many reasons. They are 'illegal, aliens', lower grades etc. For this situation they became 'apathy'. But many of us think that it could be a solution for this. If they,

figure 2.1b

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is written in dark ink and is somewhat messy, with some corrections and a small scribble. The lines of the paper are visible, and the handwriting is slanted to the right.

could give them a opportunity
Some people might be over-
crowded But people might realize
that all people live are valuable.
That all have the right to
decide by their own.

figure 2.1c

In the second paragraph, Dolores gives two reasons minorities can't attend universities: they lack legal papers, and they lack money. Each of these reasons is simply stated in a sentence with no supporting details or examples. Thus, it appears that Dolores is following a pattern but is not fleshing out the details to support the reasons she lists.

The third paragraph begins with "The second reason." Dolores has already given two reasons, but now she turns to a third one: discrimination. She explains that teachers give minorities low grades because the teachers and others are racist. Students aren't given a chance to prove themselves. It appears that she has translated the Spanish word *probar* as *taste* rather than using a second meaning, *prove*. She could also be confusing *taste* and *test*. Although Dolores develops this third reason more fully, she does not provide any concrete examples or data to support her claims about racism.

Having explained why minorities don't attend universities, Dolores turns to her second point, what needs to be done to solve the problem. She argues that if minorities were tested, they would prove themselves. This would lead to changes. Minorities would become more intelligent, earn more money, and find work. This would cause other people to realize that everyone has the right to decide her own future and have a better life.

Dolores concludes the essay by reiterating the reasons that minorities don't attend universities and observing that this leads to apathy. She states that minorities should be given a chance to succeed, even though this might lead to overcrowding at universities. She ends by expressing the hope that people will realize that everyone is valuable and everyone has a right to make his own decisions.

In her essay, Dolores expresses her feelings clearly. She has something she wants to say, and her voice comes through. She follows an organizational plan she has been taught. The paper has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Nevertheless, this essay would not make the grade on an exit exam. The paragraphs are

not developed. Dolores makes claims without supporting them. She provides no evidence in the form of data or specific examples to back up what she says. In addition, there are serious problems with her vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Even though Dolores could communicate her ideas to a reader through writing when we began working with her, she had not yet developed academic language proficiency.

Dolores' essay is typical of the writing produced by students with limited formal schooling. Her choice of words, sentence structure, and mechanics reflect her level of language development. Her essay also has characteristics of those written by long-term English learners and SELs who are struggling readers. These students might not insert a word like *taste* when they mean *prove* or *test*, but they might base arguments on personal opinion with no supporting evidence, and their sentence structure and mechanics might be much like Dolores'.

This essay contains elements of conversational language and lacks many of the features of academic language expected from a high school senior. Throughout this book we refer to Dolores' essay to illustrate differences between conversational and academic language.

Cummins' Theoretical Framework

Ask almost any teacher who has worked with English language learners to name a researcher who has written about the difference between academic and conversational language, and the response will be "Cummins." The teacher will probably be able to go on and explain about BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency). Cummins' work has been widely disseminated. He has written and spoken a great deal on this topic. Cummins explains that he developed the distinction between BICS and CALP "in order to draw educators' attention to the timelines and challenges that second language learners encounter as they attempt to catch up with their peers in academic aspects of the school language" (2008, 71).

In making the distinction between conversational and academic language, Cummins drew on work by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976), who had studied Finnish immigrant children in Sweden. These children appeared to be fluent in both Finnish and Swedish, but their academic performance was below both grade and age expectations. Cummins hypothesized that there were two components of language proficiency, one that reflected the ability to carry on conversations on everyday topics and another that was needed to comprehend, talk, read,

and write about school subjects. This helps explain why the Finnish children could carry on conversations in Swedish but did poorly on school assignments in Swedish.

Cummins conducted research in Canada to test the hypothesis that conversational and academic language are two distinct components of language proficiency. In one key study (Cummins 1984) he examined four hundred teacher referral forms and psychological assessments of ELLs from a large school system. These forms showed that teachers and school psychologists determined that many of the students had no problems in speaking and understanding English. In other words, these students had conversational fluency in English. However, they performed poorly on academic tasks in their classes and on cognitive ability tests. These activities require students to demonstrate academic language proficiency. The Canadian immigrants showed a pattern of language development similar to that shown by the Finnish children in Sweden.

The Canadian teachers and school psychologists assumed that the students' oral language interactions in class demonstrated their English proficiency. As a result, they attributed the students' academic difficulties to cognitive rather than linguistic factors and placed many of the students in special education classes. Cummins argued that these students did not have learning problems. They had developed conversational fluency, BICS, but had not yet developed academic language proficiency, CALP. Cummins defines academic language proficiency as "the extent to which an individual has command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling" (2000, 67). In other words, academic language is the specific language needed to understand and contribute to classroom talk and to read and write texts for school.

Cummins' purpose in distinguishing between the two types of language proficiency was to account for the fact that students who could carry on conversations in English had still not developed the kind of English they needed to do well in school tasks. He does not suggest that academic language is superior in some way to conversational language, just that they are different. As Baker points out:

School-based academic/cognitive language does not represent universal higher-order cognitive skills nor all forms of literacy practice. Different sociocultural contexts have different expectations and perceived patterns of appropriateness in language and thinking such that a school is only one specific context for "higher order" language production. (2006, 176)

Students who have developed BICS but not CALP do not lack higher-order thinking ability. They simply lack the language needed to succeed in school.

Linguistic Studies That Support the BICS–CALP Distinction

Linguistic studies support the BICS–CALP distinction. Linguists have examined different corpora, very large collections of data with words from different sources. For example, one corpus could be based on recordings of conversations while another could be taken from academic textbooks. One such study was conducted by Corson (1997), who analyzed English vocabulary. He examined two different collections of words for his study. When Corson examined the Birmingham corpus, which lists words that ESL students, children and adults, need for daily communication, he found that only two of the 150 most frequent words, *very* and *because*, have Latin or Greek roots. The rest are drawn from Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. The vocabulary of everyday English comes primarily from Anglo-Saxon words. These are short words like *bread* and *house*. This is the vocabulary that makes up most of the conversational language that ELLs acquire.

In contrast, academic texts contain a high number of words with Greek and Latin roots, such as *transportation* and *sympathy*. Corson also examined the 150 most frequent words in the University Word List. This list, which includes words ESL students need to read academic texts, includes two words with Germanic roots and four others that entered English from French. The rest have Greek and Latin origins. English vocabulary, then, can be divided into two types, words with Anglo-Saxon origins used in everyday conversation and words from Latin and Greek sources that occur frequently in academic texts. (The University Word List has been refined and updated by Averil Coxhead. The result is the Academic Word List. It is available for downloading at <http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/>).

It is important to note that certain kinds of early reading for young children also contain academic language. Corson reports on a study that found that “even children’s books contained 50 percent more rare words [from Graeco-Latin sources] than either adult prime-time television or the conversations of university graduates.” In addition, Corson found that “popular magazines had three times as many rare words as television and informal conversation” (1997, 764).

Corson’s study provides support for Cummins’ claim that there is a difference between the language people use in daily conversation and the language required to read, write, and discuss academic texts. ELLs are exposed to conversational language to a much greater extent than to academic language, so it is not surprising that they acquire conversational fluency before acquiring academic language proficiency. Their access to academic language comes primarily from reading and writing academic texts, yet many ELLs and struggling readers spend very little time engaged in this kind of reading and writing.

The acquisition of academic vocabulary is complex. Looking again at Dolores' essay, we find some academic vocabulary, like *discuss*, *explain*, *attend*, and *discrimination*. She also uses the word *appathy* (as she spells it). This was a vocabulary word Dolores had recently been taught. However, like many ELLs and struggling readers, she had learned the basic meaning of the word, but not the different forms it can take. She writes in her essay, "For this situation they become appathy." She hadn't yet learned that the adjective form is *apathetic*. Dolores was beginning to acquire some of the language she needed for academic writing, but she still had much to learn. She needed to learn different forms of words like *apathy* and a larger number of academic words so that she could vary her vocabulary as she wrote. Extensive reading would help her do this.

A second study that supports the BICS–CALP distinction was conducted by Biber (1986), who also used two different corpora. The first was a collection of five hundred written text samples of about two thousand words each. These included fiction such as detective stories as well as press reports, and academic papers. Biber also added text from professional letters. To read or write these kinds of texts, students would need academic language proficiency. On the other hand, the second corpus reflecting conversational language was based on recorded conversations, broadcasts, and public speeches. The spoken language database contained eighty-seven texts of about five thousand words each.

Interactive Versus Edited Texts

Biber analyzed these two sets of data to identify how they differed from one another. He found three differences. First, the spoken texts were more interactive and showed more personal involvement. The written texts, partly because writers have more time to work on a text, used a greater variety of vocabulary and were more carefully edited. These texts showed less personal involvement. They were more detached in style. For example, when students do a biology experiment, talk about it as they work, and report back orally, the language they use is more interactive, less formal, and less precise than the language these same students use when they write up the experiment for their teacher using the specific vocabulary and structure for the report that the teacher requires. Biber refers to this difference between spoken and written language as *interactive* versus *edited* text.

Abstract Versus Situated Content

A second difference between the two types of texts was that the written texts were more abstract while the spoken texts were more concrete. Biber refers to this

difference as abstract versus situated content. Written texts achieve abstraction by the use of a number of features, such as nominalizations and passives. *Nominalization* is a process of turning a verb into a noun. For example, the verb *destroy* can be changed to the noun, *destruction*. Nominalization allows writers to pack more information into each sentence. At the same time, the sentences become more abstract because the person or thing doing the action is removed. In “The beetles destroyed the redwood trees” the actor, the beetles, is named. In “The destruction of the redwood trees is terrible” no actor is named, so the idea is conveyed in an abstract manner. In the same way, passives remove the actor. An active sentence, “The beetles destroyed the redwood trees,” becomes more abstract when it is made passive, “The redwood trees were destroyed.” The result is an abstract, or more formal style.

Spoken language, in contrast, is more concrete and situated. Speakers name the agents who carry out actions. They also indicate the time and place more specifically. Spoken language, as a result, is more situated in particular contexts. The language is also more informal. For example, when students discuss a field trip they took, they can use informal language to talk about specific events that occurred in particular places at certain times. Their language is situated and informal. If, however, they write about the field trip, they use a more abstract, formal style to report what happened and to make generalizations about what they learned.

Reported Versus Immediate Style

Biber labeled the third difference as *reported* versus *immediate* style. A reported style is characterized by language that tells about events that occurred in the past and in a different place. Writers usually use past tense and write about places that are not near a reader. In contrast, the immediate style of oral language uses present tense more often. Speakers talk about current events or events that have recently occurred and often talk about local events. When teachers read books to their students in class and students respond immediately either in groups or in the whole class, their language is less formal as they talk about their immediate response. On the other hand, when students write a report about that book, discussing plot, character, theme, and setting or comparing the book with something else they have read, this reported style is more structured and much more distant.

Thus, in his study of a large number of texts, Biber identified three differences between written and spoken language. These were not differences in vocabulary, but differences in syntactic and semantic features. The spoken texts were more interactive, situated, and immediate. The written texts were more edited, abstract, and reported. ELLs are required to read many texts with these latter characteris-

tics. They are also expected to write texts that contain these features. Since students develop conversational fluency before they acquire academic language proficiency, they often include elements common to spoken language in their academic writing.

For example, Dolores writes, “In this essay I will discuss and explain why students Latinos, Hmong and African Americans can’t attend Universities.” Here she uses some academic vocabulary including *essay*, *discuss*, *explain*, and *attend*. She also writes a complex sentence with an initial prepositional phrase and a subordinate clause. These show that she was beginning to acquire academic language proficiency. She also uses an organizational structure common to academic writing. Her introduction then shows evidence of an edited, abstract, and reported style.

However, her use of the first-person *I* is more interactive, situated, and immediate than might be expected in an academic essay, which might start with “This essay will provide discussion and explanation of. . . .” This shift would create a more formal, distanced style. In addition, near the end, Dolores inserts “I hope” into a sentence, again making the writing more personal and less objective and formal. Her last paragraph begins, “In conclusion, we know that minorities doesn’t attend Universities For many reasons.” Here she uses the first-person plural *we* rather than a more formal structure such as “There are many reasons that minorities don’t attend universities.” Even though Dolores was beginning to include some of the elements of academic language that Biber identified, when she wrote this essay, she still retained features of conversational language in her academic writing.

Cummins’ Quadrants

Cummins (1981) used quadrants formed by two intersecting continua to help educators conceptualize the distinction between BICS and CALP. This diagram is shown in Figure 2.2.

Context-Embedded and Context-Reduced Language

The horizontal line on the diagram represents a continuum that extends from *context-embedded* language to *context-reduced* language. At the left end of the continuum, the language used is contextualized by either external or internal factors or both. Cummins does not use the term *decontextualized* for the other end of the continuum since all language occurs in some context. However, there is a range of internal and external contextual support. When there is more contextual support, ELLs do not need to rely so much on language, and they can interpret a

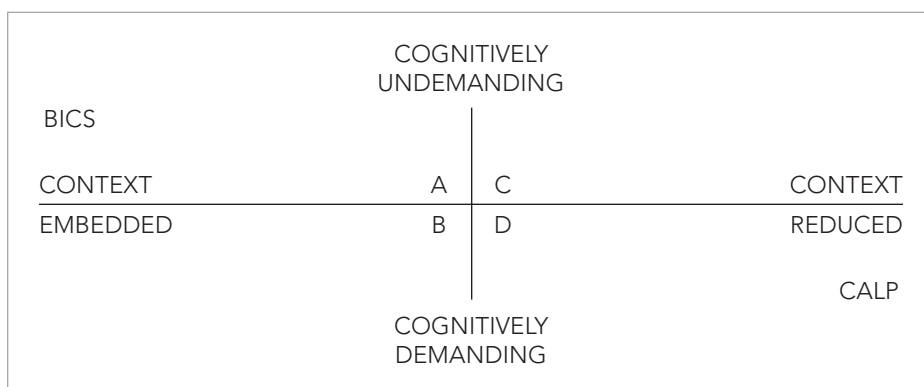


figure 2.2 Cummins' Quadrants

message with the help of nonlinguistic cues. However, when there is little contextual support, students have to rely more heavily on the language itself.

External context can take many forms. For example, the physical setting can provide clues as to the meaning of a message. If two people are standing under an awning to shelter themselves from the rain, and they are talking about the weather, the setting provides a great number of clues as to the meaning of the conversation. An ELL can pick up clues to meaning from the setting as well as the gestures and tone of voice the other person is using. A word like *umbrella* is not hard to understand if the other person opens her umbrella and says, "Open your umbrella so you won't get wet."

Early ESL instruction makes extensive use of gestures, visuals, and objects to make the English comprehensible. For example, many teachers use Total Physical Response (TPR) as an activity with beginners. In a TPR lesson the teacher gives a series of commands, such as "Stand up" or "Raise your left arm," and students follow the directions. If students are confused, they watch classmates or the teacher. After a short time they can follow most simple commands. In the process they learn some action verbs and other vocabulary, such as parts of the body. TPR is a good initial activity for ELLs because the physical actions provide an external context for the English language being used.

Internal context is provided by such things as background knowledge or previous experiences rather than things that are physical. To return to the weather example, all ELLs have had previous experience with different kinds of weather, including rain. They have background knowledge that enables them to make sense of a conversation about weather. This background knowledge provides internal context that makes it easy to understand talk about the weather.

All people bring different background knowledge to new language situations. Yvonne remembers a discussion that took place in Lithuania. She and David were to give a workshop to English teachers, and their interpreter, speaking in Lithuanian, was going over the setup for the workshop with the director of the school. There was an overhead projector, a flip chart, and a pointer in the room. Yvonne interrupted at one point and explained in English that they did not need a chart and pens, only an overhead projector. Both the interpreter and the director were surprised that Yvonne understood what was being discussed because Yvonne speaks no Lithuanian. Of course, there were some physical objects in the room that provided Yvonne with external context. But in addition, Yvonne used internal context to interpret what was being said. She had organized workshops so many times with school leaders that she had enough internal context from past experiences to understand the gist of the conversation. She had both the external and internal contexts she needed to make the language understandable.

A good way to understand the difference between context-embedded and context-reduced language is to consider the differences between face-to-face conversation and a phone conversation. Even though many contextual cues are present in a phone conversation, it is much harder to understand a phone call in a new language than to understand a face-to-face conversation. If an ELL is talking with a friend on the playground or on the phone, she has the same amount of background knowledge or internal context for the discussion. In both cases, tone of voice could help with meaning. However, many clues would be absent from the phone conversation. There would be no objects to point to. There would be no body language to indicate meaning. All a listener would have is a disembodied voice. The language of a phone conversation is not decontextualized, but it is much less context embedded than a face-to-face conversation.

Often discussions of context-embedded and context-reduced language focus on the listener or reader, the person receiving a message. Since teachers do most of the talking in a class, they are urged to use any means possible to embed their spoken language in a rich context. It is also recommended that ELLs be given materials to read that have text features such as pictures and charts to help provide a context for the language. However, the distinction between context-embedded and context-reduced language applies to speaking and writing as well as to listening and reading. It is easier for language learners to communicate in a new language if they can rely on the context to get their message across. ELLs might point to objects if they don't know the word. They can also use intonation for emphasis. These contextual supports allow them to communicate without relying too heavily on the new language. In the same way, teachers can encourage ELLs to add pictures

or diagrams to their writing to be sure they are communicating in their new language.

Cognitively Demanding and Cognitively Undemanding Language

The vertical line on the diagram represents a continuum that extends from *cognitively undemanding* language to *cognitively demanding* language. Topics a student reads, writes, or talks about can range from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding. The conversation about the weather would not be too cognitively demanding in most cases. On the other hand, a conversation about how to repair a car might be quite demanding. The amount of demand depends to a great extent on the ELL's previous experience. Something a person has done many times takes less cognitive effort than a new task. Someone who repairs cars for a living would probably find a discussion about car repair quite cognitively undemanding, but for many other people it would take a great deal of mental energy to understand directions about how to fix a car or to give directions orally or in writing to a mechanic.

One difficulty new teachers often experience is that after they have explained a task to students, the students still seem confused, even if the teacher's explanation was clear. For example, if an inexperienced geometry teacher explains how to determine the radius of a circle, her explanation may be rather brief. She doesn't elaborate because the process is so familiar to her. She takes for granted that it will be equally easy for her students to understand. But, as many of us who teach realize, what seems easy to us may be very difficult for our students. The same task may place very different amounts of cognitive demand on two people, not because of the nature of the task itself, but because of differences in the experience and knowledge that the two people bring to the task.

Anyone who has tried to learn some new technology on the computer can understand this well. Recently, our university encouraged faculty to use a new program that can video and tape-record lectures, Powerpoint presentations, and classroom demonstrations and make them available later to students for review. When we were first shown this new technology, it seemed complicated and difficult to use. We had to turn on the microphone, find our PowerPoints, start the recording, and still teach! The technology people helping us kept telling us how easy the program was to use, but their brief explanations did not help.

After using the program several times, however, both of us could see that it was not so complicated. In fact, Yvonne then enthusiastically explained the program to another faculty member, whose comment after Yvonne's explanation was "Well, I

guess I'll get it eventually. It certainly is complicated, however." At first the technology was cognitively demanding, but after experience with the program, it became cognitively undemanding to use.

Language Use and the Quadrants

Figure 2.3 illustrates the kinds of activities that fit into each of the four quadrants. Cummins defined BICS as oral or written communication that occurs when the language is context embedded and cognitively undemanding (Quadrant A). In Figure 2.3, the activities suggested for Quadrant A include interviewing a classmate and filling out a short form answering questions about the classmate's interests and hobbies. The teacher and students could also discuss the weather and read stories about the weather.

Quadrant C represents language that is not cognitively demanding but is context reduced. A telephone conversation, as we discussed earlier, is an example of this kind of language. A phone conversation about the school football game would not be cognitively demanding if speakers had knowledge of the game. However, because the conversation would not be face-to-face, the physical context, at least, would be reduced. The same would be true of an email. Listening

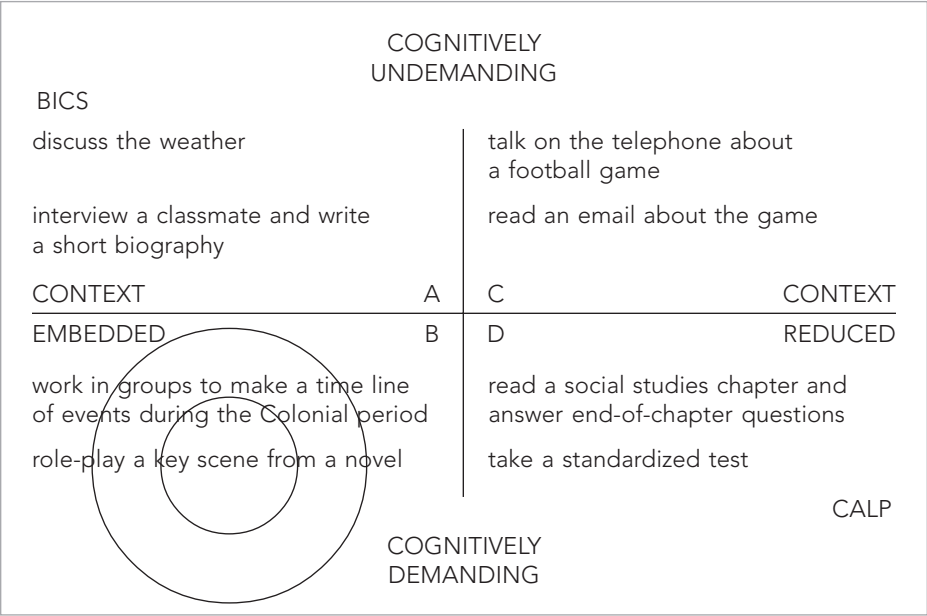


figure 2.3 Sample Activities for Cummins' Quadrants

to an ad on the radio would also be content reduced but probably not cognitively demanding.

In Quadrant D the language is both context reduced and cognitively demanding. A typical classroom example is an assignment to read a chapter in a history book and answer the questions at the end. A student would have to rely heavily on the language in the book to complete this assignment. To succeed, an ELL would need to have developed academic language proficiency; knowledge of conversational English would not be sufficient to do well on this sort of assignment.

One of the most difficult tasks for all types of students is taking standardized tests, which are both cognitively demanding and context reduced. Consider, for example, a standardized test of reading comprehension. Each reading passage is unrelated to the previous or following passage. If students do not have the background knowledge they need to understand the passage, and, in addition, do not have high enough levels of English language proficiency, they will struggle with the test. Additional activities that fall into quadrant D include listening to a lecture and writing a long essay.

Students need to be exposed to academic language in order to acquire it. Teachers should present cognitively demanding content in such a way that it is context embedded and understandable. Therefore, the target for teaching all students, and especially ELLs, should be Quadrant B. For example, rather than asking students to read a chapter and answer the questions at the end, a teacher might have students, including ELLs and struggling readers, work in small groups to create a time line of events described in a chapter and then present their time line to the class. The small-group work and the graphic representation of events on the time line would increase the contextual support so that ELLs and struggling readers could complete this cognitively demanding task.

An English teacher can make a novel more comprehensible by having students work together to identify characters, plot, and setting to prepare and present a role play of key scenes in the novel. This activity would belong in Quadrant B. Other activities that fit in quadrant B include using graphic organizers and having students make posters to show their understanding of key points in a science chapter.

Cummins emphasizes that the two dimensions that form the quadrants “cannot be specified in absolute terms because what is ‘context-embedded’ or ‘cognitively-demanding’ for one learner may not be so for another as a result of differences in internal attributes such as prior knowledge or interest” (2008, 74). Even though the distinction between conversational and academic language can not be specified in absolute terms, teachers can use the quadrants to help visualize the difference between the two components of language proficiency. The quadrants illustrate the

importance of building students' background knowledge and of contextualizing classroom talk and activities so that ELLs can better comprehend instruction. An analysis of Dolores' writing using the two dimensions from the quadrants helps us understand the demands the task placed on her and the resources she could use as she wrote the essay.

Using the Dimensions to Evaluate Task Difficulty

Earlier we discussed the essay that Dolores, a student with limited formal schooling, wrote (see Figure 2.1). Our analysis places this essay in Quadrant D despite the fact that Dolores was provided with some contextual support. Dolores had learned a structure for organizing her essays, and she used her knowledge of essay structure as internal context to make this task more context embedded.

However, Dolores had limited experience with writing academic essays. She chose a topic she had formed opinions about. She wrote in her note to us, "I write about minorities because it was more easy for me to tell." Students should learn to choose and write about topics they care about, but they should also learn to support their assertions with examples and data rather than opinions. Dolores' ESL classes had not prepared her to do this, so she lacked the internal contextual support to write a convincing essay. At the same time, since this was a first draft she had not been given any external support in the form of feedback on her writing or suggestions to improve this essay.

Writing the essay was cognitively demanding for Dolores in two ways. She needed to conduct research on the topic. She could have surveyed other students or read articles about problems minorities face in academics. Then she could have used the information to support her assertions. This research would have been cognitively demanding.

In addition, Dolores had not learned to write paragraphs or sentences with the characteristics of academic language. Her essay is not edited, abstract, and reported. Instead, it is interactive, immediate, and situated. Probably the greatest cognitive demand for Dolores comes from spelling and punctuating her writing. It was extremely cognitively demanding for Dolores to focus on both the content of the essay and the form at the same time. For Dolores, writing an academic essay was context reduced and cognitively demanding and fits in Quadrant D. Students like Dolores need considerable support to complete the cognitively demanding academic writing tasks successfully. She needed scaffolded instruction that provided contextual support. With that kind of support this task would have fallen into Quadrant B, not Quadrant D.

Time to Develop Conversational and Academic Language

Although Dolores had developed enough English to write an essay in English, she needed much more experience reading and writing English to achieve grade-level writing competence. Cummins and others have conducted studies to determine how long it takes an English learner to acquire conversational fluency and how much additional time is needed to develop academic language proficiency.

In one study, Cummins (1981) examined data from school files in Canada to determine how long it took ELLs to reach grade-appropriate conversational fluency compared with how long it took them to reach grade-level norms in academic achievement. He found that it takes a new arrival to Canada about two years to develop sufficient oral English proficiency to converse easily with classmates but five to seven years to be able to perform at grade level on tasks in different academic subject areas. Cummins (2008) lists additional studies in the United States and in other countries that have confirmed these findings, including research by Collier (1989), Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1978), and Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000).

Appropriate Program Placement

The schools Cummins studied placed ELLs in special education courses because administrators didn't recognize that it takes much longer to develop academic language proficiency than it does to develop conversational fluency. In much the same way, the failure to distinguish between the two components of language proficiency has led to the early exit of students from bilingual programs. Many early-exit programs in the United States transition ELLs into all-English instruction after about two years, at the point that the students have developed conversational fluency in English. Educators who do not understand that conversational fluency is not adequate for school success believe that students who speak and understand English should be learning in all-English settings. However, as we have explained, conversational fluency is not enough for these students to read and write English at grade level using the academic vocabulary and structures required. Since these students have not yet achieved academic language proficiency, they often struggle to pass standardized tests and do not do well in classes taught in English.

In a major study of different types of bilingual programs, Ramírez (1991) found that students in early-exit bilingual programs achieved at about the same rate as students who had not received any bilingual education. In contrast, students in late-exit programs, who continued to receive primary-language support for five or six years, achieved at higher rates when exited into all-English instruction. The explanation for these findings is that in late-exit programs, students develop academic

language and concepts in their first languages that then transfer to English. Bilingual students in late-exit programs develop academic language in both their first languages and English.

The distinction between conversational and academic language and the importance of bilingual education are not well understood by the public in general. Casual observers note that ELLs who begin school speaking little or no English seem to pick up English quickly and can carry on conversations in English in one or two years. English-only legislation passed quite easily in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts because the public believed that more instructional time in English results in higher levels of English proficiency. The legislation passed because there was no understanding of how first-language academic development supports academic language development in English through transfer.

Common Underlying Proficiency

While English-only advocates believe in the logic that more English equals more English, there is an important theoretical construct that refutes this belief. Cummins (2000) has explained how first language academic knowledge supports academic success in a second language. His Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model holds that what we know in one language is accessible in a second language once we acquire a sufficient level of the second language. This he refers to as the interdependence principle:

To the extent that instruction in L_x is effective in promoting proficiency in L_x transfer of this proficiency to L_y will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L_y (either in school or the environment) and adequate motivation to learn L_y . (29)

In other words, when students are taught in and develop academic and language proficiency in their first language, L_x , that proficiency will transfer to the second language, L_y , assuming they are given enough exposure to the second language and are motivated to learn it. Juan Carlos and Avi, the students we used in Chapter 1 as examples of students with adequate formal schooling, succeeded in school because they had developed academic competence in Spanish and Hebrew through their schooling in El Salvador and Israel. They both began school in English in their new country with grade-level skills in their first language. Students with a strong academic background can apply the knowledge they have in their first languages to what they are studying in English. These students have a huge advantage over students like Dolores, who enter school with limited formal schooling.

It is for this reason that second language acquisition experts promote bilingual education in schools. Students who begin school speaking a language other than English do better in school when some of their instruction is in their native language. If all their instruction is in English, they won't understand the teacher and will fall behind. As Krashen (1999) has pointed out, students in a bilingual class can learn academic content and develop the skills needed for problem solving and higher-order thinking in their first language while they become proficient in English.

When ELLs are faced with the task of carrying out academic tasks in English without adequate background knowledge in their first languages, their task is much more difficult. García (2002) points out that in order to acquire high levels of academic English proficiency, students need to be able to read and write academic texts. Native English speakers generally begin school with basic English proficiency. Teachers can build on this proficiency to help these students read stories and content texts. Bilingual students, in contrast, usually lack conversational English proficiency when they begin school. They can't understand or speak English if they come from a home where another language is usually spoken. By the time bilingual students develop conversational English proficiency, their native-English-speaking classmates have already begun to read and write school texts. Eventually, bilingual students learn to read and write in English, but they are behind native English speakers unless they have developed academic concepts in their first language, and as they move up the grades, the gap in achievement between bilingual students and native speakers increases.

García understands that conversational English is not enough for ELLs and that they need very deliberate instruction in English to develop academic English. He lists four ways for teachers to promote academic English development in their classrooms. These include

- providing students with ample exposure to academic English,
- being sure that students attend closely to the features of academic English,
- providing direct, explicit language instruction, and
- using multiple measures to assess the academic language development of English language learners.

These are excellent general guidelines for teachers to follow. If Dolores' teachers had provided this kind of instruction, she would have been better prepared for her writing exam. However, even with very good teaching, ELLs like Dolores and SELs who are struggling readers need time to develop the level of academic language needed to complete academic tasks and tests.

Conclusion

Cummins conducted research to show that there are two components of language proficiency. Conversational language is context embedded and cognitively undemanding. Academic language, on the other hand, is context reduced and cognitively demanding. Cummins' quadrants provide educators with a way to determine the language students must understand to succeed in school. Teachers need to ensure that language use in schools is cognitively demanding and context embedded so that students can learn both the academic language and the content they need. Teachers also need to be aware that most ELLs develop conversational proficiency in one or two years. However, it takes five to seven years for ELLs to acquire academic language proficiency.

English language learners not only need to develop conversational fluency but also need to learn the academic English that is valued in schools. As Dolores' essay demonstrates, this is a real challenge. Dolores had mastered some of the conventions of English writing. Nevertheless, she still had problems with spelling, punctuation, and grammar. She was learning to organize her writing and to present her ideas in a formal, objective, and authoritative academic style. These elements of her writing demonstrate her gradual development of academic language proficiency. However, some aspects of her writing reflect conversational language more than academic language. In the following chapters we explore academic language in more detail, and we suggest ways that teachers can help students like Dolores develop academic language proficiency.

Applications

1. We open the chapter with an essay by Dolores and discuss some of the strengths and some of the problems with the paper. Dolores' writing does not reflect academic language proficiency. Bring a piece of student writing that you think does not reflect academic language proficiency to class or to your study group. Discuss with a partner what the student does well and what concerns you have. If you could choose one area to work on with the student, what would it be?
2. Cummins distinguishes between BICS and CALP. Summarize in a couple of paragraphs what each of these acronyms refers to and be prepared to explain BICS and CALP in class or with your study group.

3. Corson (1997) explained that academic vocabulary comes from Graeco-Latin sources and that children's literature often contains those words. Pick out an illustrated children's book that you know is considered a piece of quality children's literature. Read through the book with a classmate. Pick out words in the book that have Graeco-Latin roots and are probably not words one would hear on television or read in a newspaper. Bring your list to class or your study group to share.
4. Biber (1986) explains that spoken texts contain language that is more interactive, situated, and immediate than the language of written texts, which is more edited, abstract, and reported. Listen on television to someone giving a speech. List several examples of how that speech shows evidence of being interactive, situated, and immediate. Now, look at a textbook. You may use this one. Pick out examples where the language of the book is more edited, abstract, and reported. Bring your results to share.
5. Research shows that it takes time to develop a second language. Based on Cummins' research, explain which of the following programs is most appropriate for ELLs: early exit, late exit, or English only. How would you respond to people who say that ELLs should be immersed in English early because it is the only way they are going to really learn English?
6. Using the diagram in Figure 2.4, list activities that are carried out in schools that fit each of the quadrants. Be sure you list effective instruction for ELLs in Quadrant B.
7. García (2002) proposes four ways that teachers can help students develop academic language in the classroom. Choose two of the suggestions and give specific examples of class activities that you have used or observed being used that fit those suggestions.

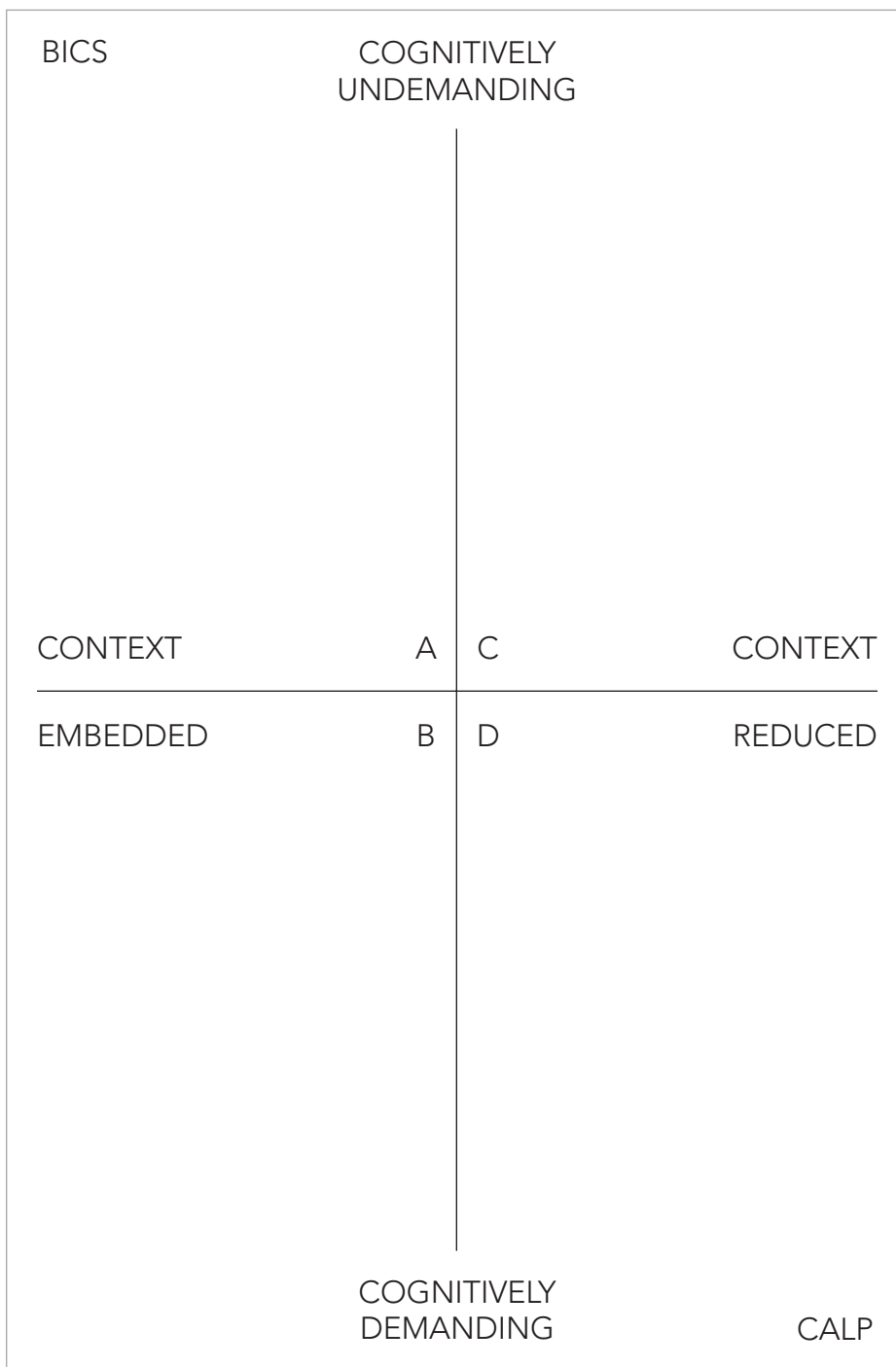


figure 2.4 Blank Cummins' Quadrants Form

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