James Cummins  The nature of Language Proficiency

Overview: Second Language Acquisition (=SLA):

Source: Basic principles for the education of Language-Minority Students: An Overview. Prepared by the Office of Bilingual Bicultural Education.

Educational Goals for Language Minority Students
Previously theoretical frameworks
Cultural deficits
Language mismatch

Contextual interaction theory
  Principle one: the linguistic threshold
  Principle two: the dimensions of language proficiency
  Principle three: the common underlying proficiency
  Principle four: second language acquisition
  Principle five: student status

Implications for instruction
  Primary language use
  Second language acquisition
  Student status
Principle one: the linguistic threshold

Figure 8:

Cognitive effects of different types of bilingualism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Bilingualism</th>
<th>Cognitive Effects</th>
<th>Threshold level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Proficient bilingualism</strong></td>
<td>Positive cognitive effects</td>
<td>Higher threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High levels in both languages</td>
<td></td>
<td>proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Partial bilingualism</strong></td>
<td>Neither positive nor negative cognitive effects</td>
<td>Lower threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-like level in one of the languages</td>
<td></td>
<td>proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Limited bilingualism</strong></td>
<td>Negative cognitive effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level in both languages (may be balanced or dominant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Tovkoma and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977, p. 29.

Principle two: the dimensions of language proficiency


Figure 2: (page 12)

1. According to Cummins, what is language proficiency? How does a misunderstanding of language proficiency lead to a failure to recognize when students are having trouble with subject matter due to language deficiencies?

2. Is the separate underlying proficiencies model of language or the common underlying proficiency model of language correct? Or are both correct? Defend your position.
Principle three: the common underlying proficiency

![Dual Iceberg Representation of Bilingual Proficiency](image)

**Figure 6**


Principle four: SLA (Second Language Acquisition)

Maturational and developmental constraints

1. developmental sequences
2. younger versus older learners
3. focus on form

Krashen's “hypotheses”:
1. the acquisition versus learning dichotomy
2. the natural order hypothesis
3. the monitor hypothesis
4. the input hypothesis
5. the affective filter hypothesis

Memory
1. focus, involvement, that is, “time on task”
2. paying attention (i.e., noticing) as the minimal requirement
3. noticing and focus on form

Motivation—different views
1. sociological views (cultural, societal, et cetera)
2. short-term versus long-term
3. a cause or an effect?

Principle five: Student status

see also “Motivation” above