Programming Information

Understanding the
Acquisition of English as an Additional Language

LearnAlberta.ca

This resource can be accessed online at:
http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/ understanding_the_acquisition.html

About this Resource

When students learn English as a second or additional language, they use existing language skills, language-learning strategies, and knowledge from their first language to understand, communicate, and become proficient in English.

It is different from the process of learning English as the first language because students build on an existing language base.

Various factors can influence the acquisition of English as an additional language, such as:

- social environment
- learning environment
- personal characteristics and traits
- skills, strategies, and abilities
- previous experiences

Understanding the process of learning an additional language and the factors that can affect language acquisition helps teachers provide a supportive learning environment for English language learners. It also helps teachers select and use instructional strategies appropriate to the needs of individual students.

While the information presented in this section focuses specifically on how English language learners acquire English as an additional language, this information also applies to the way students learn any second or additional language.

Factors that Influence How English Language Learners Learn

Various personal and environmental factors can influence English language proficiency and the rate of language development.

What Are Social Environment Factors That Affect Language Acquisition?

Social Setting
Community attitudes towards gender roles, class structure, cultural identity, ways to show respect to elders (including teachers), and attitudes towards language learning can all influence how a student approaches learning English.

Situational Factors
Situational factors include circumstances related to the student's family or living situation. If the student is a newcomer to Canada, situational factors could include circumstances surrounding the student's move to the community.

Understanding an English language learner's individual situation can help teachers identify possible challenges (e.g., stress, emotional trauma) and opportunities (e.g., family and community supports).

What Are Learning Environment Factors That Affect Language Acquisition?

Positive Learning Environment
Creating a learning environment in which the student feels comfortable taking risks is critical in promoting English language development. As well, support in learning grade-level content helps ensure the student experiences academic success and develops a positive self-identity.

Promotion and Support of the Home Language
The **home language** is the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members, but it is not a language that the student routinely uses at school.

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Viewing the student's home language as an asset rather than a deficit, and encouraging the student to maintain and further develop home language proficiency can help the student in many ways—personally, socially, and academically.

The level of proficiency in the home language can influence a student's success in learning English. Generally, the greater the proficiency in the home language, the stronger the language base the student has to draw upon to learn English.

Incorporating the home language in the student's learning can support the development of English language proficiency. It can also promote the student's confidence and self-identity and the valuing of their home culture and language.

For more information on the importance of the home language in English language acquisition, see [Encouraging the Use of Home Languages](#).

Instructional Strategies

The instructional strategies that teachers use can greatly influence the student's English language development. Instructional strategies should be selected to suit the needs of the individual English language learner.

For instructional strategies that are effective with English language learners, refer to *[Making a Difference: Meeting diverse learning needs with differentiated instruction](#)* (Chapter 9); *[Supporting English as a Second Language Students: Promising ESL strategies in Alberta](#)*; and *[Working with Young Children who are Learning English as a New Language](#)*.

Examples of strategies that are effective for use with English language learners include

- providing learning resources that have a reading level or listening-comprehension level that matches or is slightly more advanced than the student's current English language proficiency level
- using [dual-language books](#)
- providing explicit language instruction that takes into account the student's
  - proficiency in other languages
  - current English language proficiency level, which helps teachers plan language instruction to ensure the student continues to learn in incremental steps. (The [Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks](#) can help teachers identify specific language-learning goals.)
- providing feedback and modelling correct English language use
- focusing on vocabulary development, especially academic vocabulary. Academic vocabulary includes words required for explaining abstract ideas, analyzing, evaluating, debating, and understanding figurative language and humour.
- encouraging peer interaction and support
- encouraging student use of [learning strategies](#), including [language-learning strategies](#)
- recognizing and building on the student's knowledge of other language(s)

For more teaching and learning strategies that are effective with English language learners, refer to the *[English as a Second Language (ESL) Guide to Implementation, Kindergarten to Grade 9](#)* and the [English as a Second Language Senior High School Guide to Implementation](#).

What Are Student Characteristics and Traits That Affect Language Acquisition?

Age

The age at which a student is exposed to an additional language impacts the acquisition of that language.

Children who are exposed to another language by 12 years of age are more likely to achieve native-like fluency in the new language. That is, they sound like a native speaker and pick up the grammatical patterns of the target language through immersion.

However, older students generally have a greater knowledge base of vocabulary, ideas, and concepts on which to build new understandings. Therefore, they may be able to acquire an additional language more rapidly than some younger students (see What Is Common Underlying Language Proficiency (CULP)?).

Students who have literacy skills developed in one language can transfer this learning when acquiring an additional language (see Using Iceberg Models to Explain English Language Learner Profiles).

Attitude
A student's attitude towards the English language and Canadian culture influences his or her development as a language learner.

Parents/caregivers and community members can play a role in encouraging students to have a positive attitude about learning English.

Motivation
A student's motivation to learn and use a new language can also influence the rate and level of language development. Fortunately, students learning English in an English majority context, like in Alberta, are generally highly motivated to learn English.

Providing encouragement, tools, and resources will help English language learners feel competent and will accelerate their progress in acquiring English.

Personality and Cultural Factors
A student's personality and cultural factors may also influence the development of language proficiency. For example:

- A student's cultural background may influence the student's preferred process for learning and how the student interacts with the teacher and peers in a classroom setting.
- Some English language learners may be more comfortable taking risks when communicating in their new language when they are
  - in a large group
  - in a small group
  - communicating one-on-one
- Some students feel more confident about speaking or sharing their writing when given an opportunity to rehearse or to check the grammatical accuracy of their oral or written text.
- Some students focus less on grammatical accuracy and focus more on being understood.

Learning Disabilities
A student who experiences challenges acquiring English or appears to have greater challenges progressing in a language domain (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) may need to be assessed for underlying factors that may impact English language acquisition.

Explicit instruction, scaffolding, targeted language support, and the appropriate use of technology can directly support the learning of students with diverse learning needs.

How Do Skills and Experiences Affect Learning?

Existing Skills
The skills, including language skills, that students possess can influence the acquisition of English as an additional language.

Teachers should be aware of the skills that students have in a variety of contexts and seek to integrate these skills into their learning (e.g., the ability to draw, type, navigate the Internet, play a sport or an instrument, or solve problems).

Students will also have language skills that they developed in their **home language**, such as:

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

- predicting the content of an oral or written text depending on context
- focusing on key words (like nouns, adjectives, and verbs) and phrases to help get the gist of the communication
- paying attention to details (like names, numbers, dates, descriptive words)
- inferring meaning
- testing assumptions and getting clarification and confirmation of meaning
- interpreting the audience's reaction to determine success in communicating ideas and thoughts to others

Students learning English as an additional language will have numerous strategies for using these kinds of language skills.

Student Use of Learning Strategies
Language-learning strategies are thoughts, actions, behaviours, and techniques that students use consciously, and sometimes subconsciously, to help them learn, use, and understand an additional language.

Students who develop and use a repertoire of language-learning and language-use strategies are often more successful language learners.

English language learners may not have been taught language-learning strategies in their previous academic experiences and may require support in acquiring and using language-learning strategies.

For example, one very useful language-learning strategy is using circumlocution, which means overcoming vocabulary gaps by describing something when the word for it is not known. Another important strategy is using and interpreting nonverbal gestures, such as facial expressions, shoulder shrugging, and pointing to support communication.

Language-learning strategies, like the ones in *Sample Language-learning Strategies for English Language Learners*, are important tools for English language learners and should be explicitly taught and encouraged.

Prior Knowledge

English language learners bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experiences, which may be related to such things as languages, culture, storytelling, life in other parts of Canada or other parts of the world, technology, prior schooling, and personal interests.

Teachers should encourage English language learners to relate their new learning to their prior knowledge, including their knowledge of other languages, to help build understanding and value what they already know.

Limited Formal Schooling

English language learners who are refugees may not have had a formal education or they may have had breaks in their schooling due to war, trauma, or natural disasters. As a result, they may not have the foundational skills (e.g., literacy and concepts) for successful learning in either their **home language** or in English.

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Because students with limited formal schooling need time to develop foundational literacy skills, it will likely take more time for them to learn English than other newcomer students who are English language learners.

As well, students with limited formal schooling have to develop an understanding of foundational and pre-requisite concepts in order to engage successfully with Alberta's curriculum—and this conceptual knowledge needs to be developed in English, their new language.

Explicit language instruction, literacy development, and high-interest/low-vocabulary resources are required to support these students at school.

Acquiring an Additional Language in Stages

Students who acquire an additional language progress through a series of stages as their language proficiency develops. The student characteristics outlined in the following stages may vary from student to student, but they can generally be described in the following way (based on the five stages described by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell[1]).

These stages describe general abilities and behaviours of students at each stage of acquiring an additional language as well as an approximate timeframe for language development within each stage. These stages are not the same as benchmarks or English language proficiency levels.

Stage I: Observing, Listening, and Gesturing

English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 10 hours to 6 months.

Students may

- have minimal or very limited comprehension
- understand vocabulary related to routines and social exchanges
- understand some key subject-specific words
- understand common phrases and expressions in context but may have limited understanding of individual words or sentence structures
- be in "the silent period," preferring to observe and listen rather than produce language
- repeat what they heard, but with little or no comprehension
- copy written words
- be able to respond to prompts, such as visuals
- understand better when visual supports are used (e.g., gestures, images)
- use some nonverbal communication to support attempts at oral communication

Teachers can

- encourage students to use actions or body motions to respond to spoken language using **total physical response (TPR)** activities
- provide visual and written support to oral communication
- provide resources and materials

> **total physical response (TPR):** a learning strategy that allows language learners to develop their listening and comprehension skills in preparation for speaking and promotes the use of body movement to support language learning
>
> Students' physical responses demonstrate whether or not, or to what extent, they understand the instructions. Students with no understanding of the instructions or commands can do the action that the teacher models, or they can mimic the movement of their peers and learn the meaning of the instructions through doing the action.
>
> TPR can give beginner language learners some important survivor language and acquaint them with some basic commands, instructions, and classroom-management language.

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[1] Krashen, S.D. & Terrell, T.D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom.* London: Prentice Hall Europe.

at a modified language level to support grade-level content

- encourage the student to respond with single words
- provide sentence frames to support speaking and writing
- provide engaging opportunities for students to practise and repeat common phrases or patterned sentences
- have students demonstrate listening comprehension by rephrasing or retelling
- pair the student with another student who speaks the same **home language**
- be sensitive to the demands of learning a new language, such as fatigue
- provide positive reinforcement, a low-risk learning environment, and opportunities for review and practice
- provide age-appropriate strategies to help students understand and use English words and phrases
- encourage students to use home language knowledge as a tool for English language development and understanding of concepts

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Stage II: Simple Comprehension and Production

English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 6 months to 1 year.

Students may

- have limited oral or written comprehension, especially when topics are unfamiliar
- use key words and familiar phrases
- speak and write one- or two-word responses; short, memorized phrases; and/or short, simple sentences in the present tense
- memorize language chunks, with usage errors
- use present-tense verbs
- may overgeneralize "s" and "ed" endings
- have receptive understanding (listening and reading), which is often more advanced than expressive language use (speaking and writing)
- understand texts with visual support

Teachers can

- provide visual cues and written text to support understanding
- encourage interaction with peers in both the **home language** and English
- design learning that maximizes opportunities for practice and encourages risk-taking within a positive learning environment
- focus on vocabulary development in context
- provide age-appropriate strategies to help students continue building vocabulary on their own (e.g., word families)
- provide sentence frames and models to support productive language use (speaking and writing)
- encourage students to create their own reference tools, such as personal dictionaries

Stage III: Expanding Language Proficiency

English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 1 to 3 years.

Students may
- have good comprehension, especially in social interactions and when topics are familiar
- communicate using simple sentences and may begin to add detail
- ask and answer questions to clarify and confirm understanding
- make frequent grammar, word-use, and pronunciation errors
- not understand wordplay or humour that is implied or requires cultural knowledge
- initiate and engage in brief conversations with peers
- understand complex texts with visual support

Teachers can
- provide age-appropriate strategies to help students continue building vocabulary on their own (e.g., word families)
- offer resources that address grade-level concepts using simplified language
- use dialogue journals to communicate with students on topics of interest to students
- provide explicit language instruction (vocabulary, grammar, and syntax) in context to support students' understanding of concepts
- model and **recast** using more complex sentences and vocabulary
- make the meaning of figurative language and cultural references explicit
- provide templates to support written tasks
- model and provide support for cooperative learning tasks
- encourage students to express their ideas and feelings with peers in conversations or journals
- provide support for students to answer questions in the form of a complete response

> **recast:** a language modelling and error-correction technique in which the teacher either corrects errors while repeating what the student has said or adds words or phrases to what the student has said to demonstrate alternate or more eloquent ways to express the thought

Stage IV: Functional Academic Language Proficiency

English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 3 to 5 years.

Students may
- have excellent comprehension, especially when topics are familiar
- begin to demonstrate good comprehension when topics and contexts are new or unfamiliar
- make few grammatical errors
- begin to use more complex sentence structures in speaking and writing
- ask questions to clarify and confirm understanding

- understand common metaphors and idiomatic expressions
- create oral and written texts, with few usage and word-form errors
- continue to translate between English and their **home language**

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Teachers can
- provide age-appropriate strategies to help students continue building vocabulary on their own (e.g., affixes, etymology)
- use models and templates to support construction of more complex sentence structures
- introduce more sophisticated cohesive devices to connect ideas in and between sentences
- encourage cooperative group work and peer tutoring

Stage V: Native-like Proficiency

English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 5 to 7 years.

(Some English language learners may require additional years.)

Students may
- effectively understand and use a broad range of vocabulary in a variety of contexts
- understand a range of idiomatic expressions and cultural references
- understand implied humour and use figurative language appropriately in context
- have a similar level of language proficiency and academic achievement as peers whose first language is English
- speak English with an accent if they began learning English during their adolescent years or as adults

Teachers can
- provide English language support in all content areas, focusing on word analysis and understanding implicit meaning and the nuances of the English language
- enhance students' written and oral communication skills by focusing on transition words and specific vocabulary to impart precise meaning
- help English language learners pay attention to the different ways in which language is used and concepts are expressed and discussed within different disciplines or fields of study
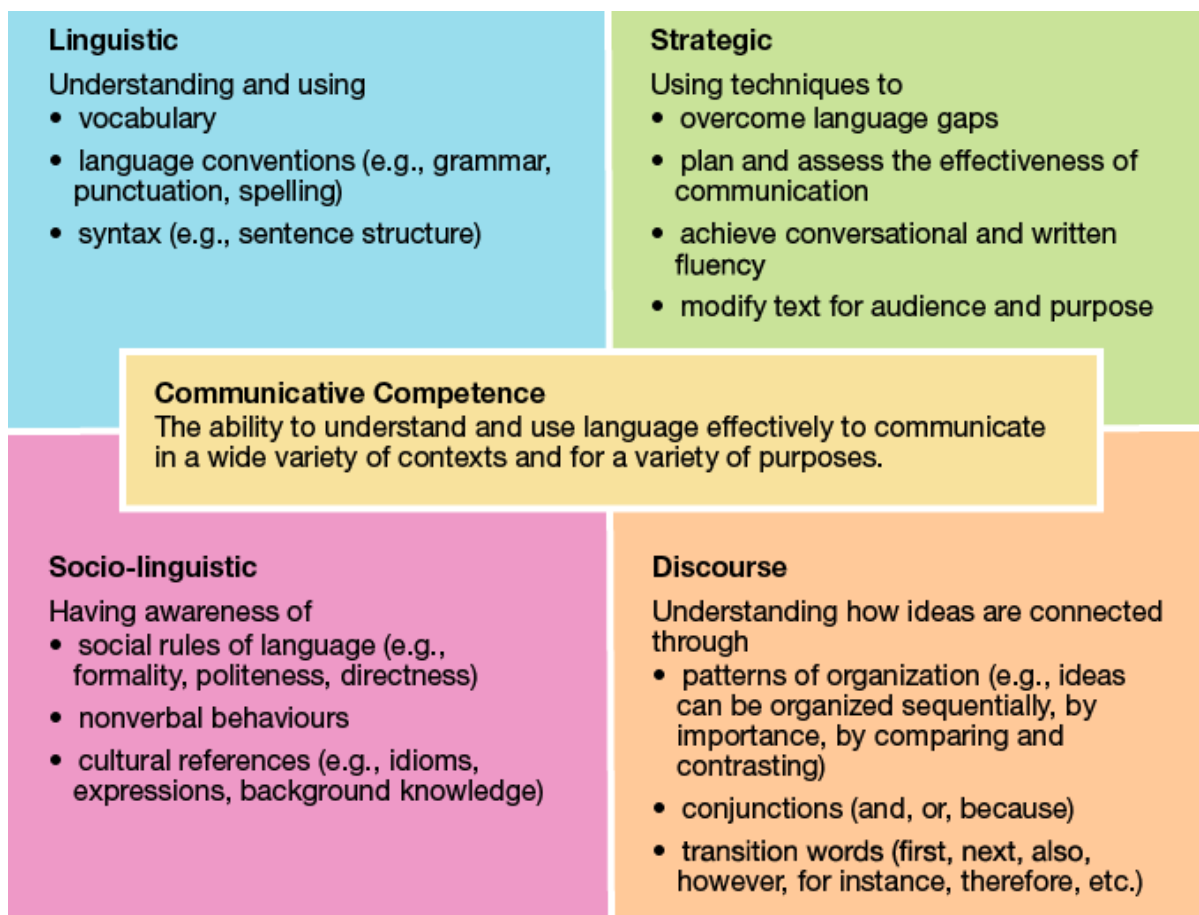- promote self-directed use of learning strategies to support continued language acquisition

Working Towards Communicative Competence

One goal of English language learners and their teachers is for students to develop communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Students who have developed communicative competence can understand and use language effectively to communicate in a wide variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. They demonstrate control over grammar, vocabulary (conversational and academic), turn-taking skills, timing and directness, and the ability to use one's voice and body language in culturally and socially acceptable ways.

Communicative competence also involves taking the context of a situation into consideration when communicating. Behaviours and strategies that are appropriate in one context might not be appropriate in another context, and communicative competence entails knowing the difference and applying that knowledge.

A student's communicative competence can be divided into the following four areas.

Linguistic
Understanding and using
- vocabulary
- language conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling)
- syntax (e.g., sentence structure)

Strategic
Using techniques to
- overcome language gaps
- plan and assess the effectiveness of communication
- achieve conversational and written fluency
- modify text for audience and purpose

Communicative Competence
The ability to understand and use language effectively to communicate in a wide variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes.

Socio-linguistic
Having awareness of
- social rules of language (e.g., formality, politeness, directness)
- nonverbal behaviours
- cultural references (e.g., idioms, expressions, background knowledge)

Discourse
Understanding how ideas are connected through
- patterns of organization (e.g., ideas can be organized sequentially, by importance, by comparing and contrasting)
- conjunctions (and, or, because)
- transition words (first, next, also, however, for instance, therefore, etc.)

For more information, see Communicative Competence by Language Strand.

See also the Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks, which can be used to determine an English language learner's level of language proficiency, using communicative competence as a framework.

Understanding How Social and Academic Language Develops

An English language learner develops both social language and academic language. Jim Cummins [2] described these two types of language skills as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

What Are Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS)?

English language learners typically develop the functional language skills for carrying on everyday, basic conversations called **BICS** within two years. These language skills are used in informal social situations with peers, such as when chatting with friends about the events of the weekend (e.g., soccer match, family outing, celebrations).

> **BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills):** simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations

These language skills are acquired in the community, on the playground, and in inclusive learning settings (e.g., around the school) where English language learners share a cooperative learning environment with English-speaking peers.

Along with the basic skills of oral communication, English language learners acquire social language, as well as social language practices and strategies, such as how to greet and take leave; use appropriate speech and tone with different audiences; and open, close, and sustain conversations.

These skills make English language learners appear to have mastered many aspects of English. However, when dealing with more demanding and complex content-area material, informal social language and skills alone are insufficient.

What Is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)?

Academic language is used to build and communicate abstract concepts, theories, and ideas. It may also involve the use of metaphors and analogies. It is also used to communicate technical information. The academic language used in a learning context is generally more complex than the social language used in everyday communications.

> **CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency):** language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

Research indicates that it takes five or more years for most English language learners to acquire the academic language skills called **CALP**. These skills are required to understand abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic and career-related tasks.

Some English language learners need more time to develop CALP and may require English language-learning supports throughout their education. See Factors that Influence How English Language Learners Learn.

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[2] Cummins 1982: Cummins, James. "Tests, Achievement, and Bilingual Students." *Focus, 9* (1982): 1-5.

Academic language is necessary in order to engage in cognitively demanding learning tasks required by programs of study and in the workforce, such as the language used to explain concepts, participate in debate, summarize text, or write a report or a research paper.

These academic language skills are acquired through explicit language instruction in the content areas. Specific vocabulary, grammar, and language functions are best taught in the context of the subject areas.

What Are the Differences Between BICS and CALP?

Social Language (BICS)	Academic Language (CALP)
• generally takes one to two years to develop	• generally takes five or more years to develop
• is used to communicate basic needs, opinions, thoughts, and ideas	• is used to communicate and understand abstract concepts, theories, and ideas; specific and technical information; and metaphors, analogies, humour, innuendo, and sarcasm
• is used in social environments	• is used in academic classrooms and/or work environments
• uses high-frequency vocabulary	• uses low-frequency vocabulary
• uses simple language structures	• uses complex language structures, such as passive voice
• is context embedded (i.e., meanings are concrete and supported by cues, such as gestures, objects, and actions)	• is context reduced (i.e., meanings are abstract and cues are not readily available)
• is used to communicate about concrete objects, actions, and topics	• is used to communicate about abstract concepts, ideas, opinions, and theories
• is often (but not always) used in low-pressure environments	• is used in environments where stakes are higher and where students may experience more pressure to perform or achieve

Developing a Common Language Base

According to language experts, the thousands of different languages in the world share certain fundamental rules and principles.

Many experts also believe that people are born with an innate predisposition for understanding language structures, regardless of the specific languages that they are learning.

This explains why, when first acquiring an additional language, children tend to recognize language structures as correct or incorrect without being taught each specific word or grammatical structure and its meaning.

What Is Common Underlying Language Proficiency (CULP)?

Linguists have proposed that the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language can be used to help them learn other languages. This common underlying language proficiency (**CULP**) provides a base for the development of both the first language and any additional language(s).

> **CULP (common underlying language proficiency):** the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language that they can then use to help them learn other languages

As students expand their understanding of one language, their understanding of all the languages they are learning expands. CULP expands as students understand more about their languages; and as CULP expands, it becomes easier to learn additional languages.

The following illustration of a dual-peaked iceberg shows how a student's CULP is the foundation for the development of both the first language and the second or additional language, in this case English.
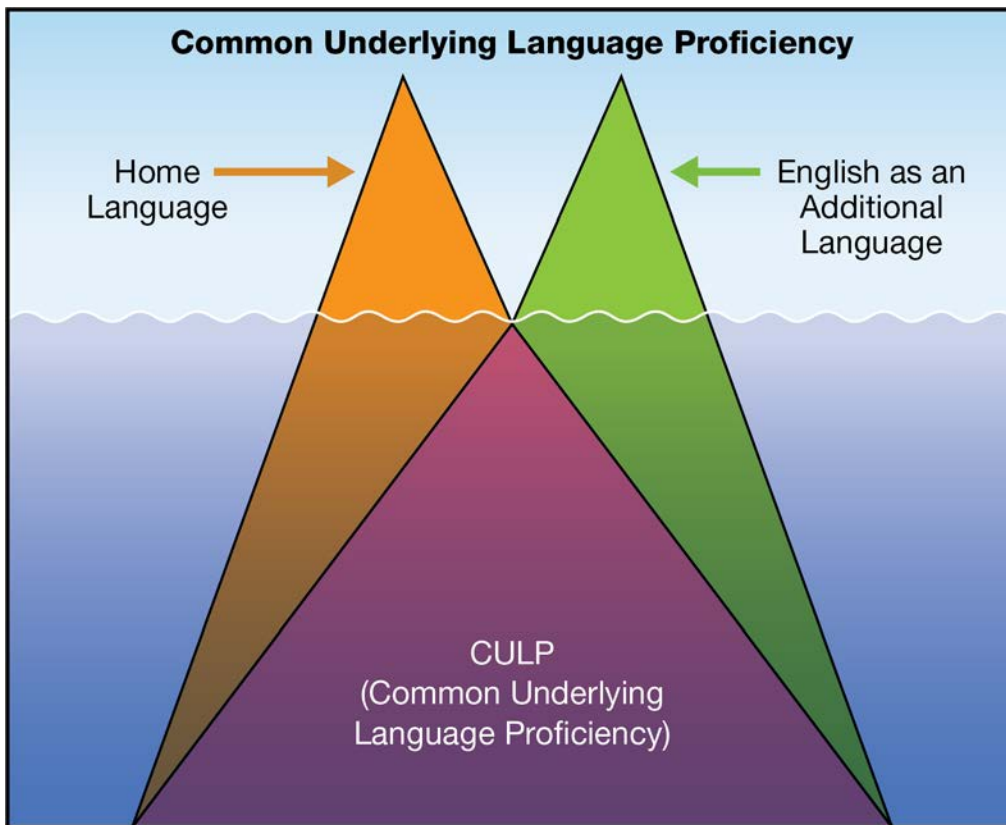
Common Underlying Language Proficiency

Home Language →   ← English as an Additional Language

CULP
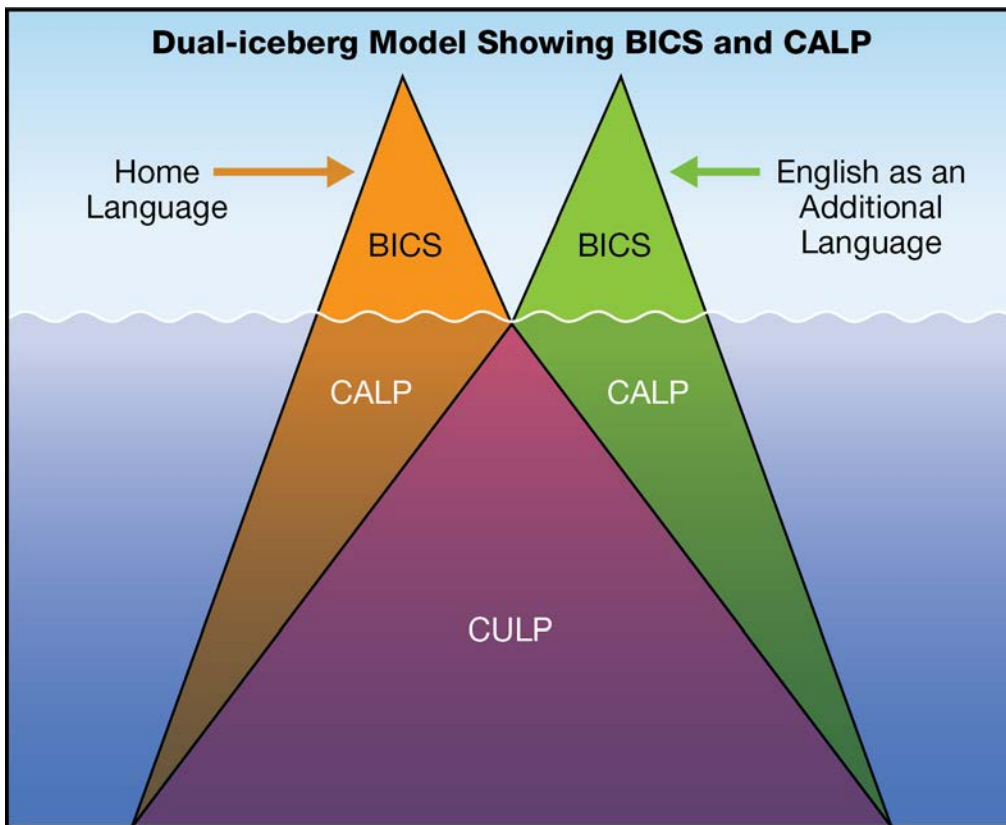(Common Underlying Language Proficiency)

© Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.). *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework*. (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles: National Dissemination and Assessment Center.

Kover, Pat and Hetty Roessingh. 2003. "Variability of ESL learners' acquisition of cognitive academic language proficiency: What can we learn from achievement measures?" *TESL Canada Journal 21*, no. 1: 1-21. Adapted with permission.

The metaphor of a dual-peaked iceberg illustrates another aspect of language acquisition. The illustration that follows shows the relationship between the development of a student's social language (**BICS**) and the development of academic language (**CALP**).

BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills): simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations

CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency): language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

Dual-iceberg Model Showing BICS and CALP

Home Language →

← English as an Additional Language

BICS

BICS

CALP

CALP

CULP

© Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.). *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework*. (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles: National Dissemination and Assessment Center.

Kover, Pat and Hetty Roessingh. 2003. "Variability of ESL learners' acquisition of cognitive academic language proficiency: What can we learn from achievement measures?" *TESL Canada Journal 21*, no. 1: 1-21. Adapted with permission.

Each side of this dual-peaked iceberg is divided between **BICS** and **CALP**. Language categorized as BICS is easily observed because it shows above the water's surface, while language categorized as CALP tends to be less obvious and easily overlooked because it resides beneath the water's surface.

Yet, it is essential for students to develop CALP to achieve higher levels of language proficiency. It is also essential for English language learners to develop CALP as rapidly as possible to achieve academic success.

What Is Positive and Negative Language Transfer?

English language learners use what they know from their **home language** and apply it to their developing understanding of English. Sometimes this language transfer can be positive and sometimes it can be negative.

home language: the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Positive Language Transfer
Positive language transfer occurs most often when the

- home language is well developed and continues to be supported and valued
- home language and English have many similarities
- student is made aware of these similarities

An example of positive transfer is when students apply knowledge about **cognates** (words in different languages that evolved from the same source) to expand their understanding and use of English. For example, *night* (English), *Nacht* (German), and *nuit* (French) are similar words that have the same meaning.

Negative Language Transfer

Negative language transfer, or linguistic interference, occurs when students incorrectly transfer their knowledge of vocabulary, structures, and rules from their **home language** to their understanding and use of English.

While **cognates** can be a part of positive language transfer, false cognates can be a part of negative language transfer. False cognates are words that may look and sound similar in two languages but have different meanings; e.g., *calve* means "to give birth to a calf" in English, and *calvo* means "to be bald" in Spanish.

> **cognates:** words in different languages sharing a common origin
>
> A cognate may look similar to a word in another language and it may have a similar meaning; e.g., *night* (English), *Nacht* (German), *nuit* (French); or *name* (English), *Name* (German), *namn* (Swedish), *nome* (Italian).

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Noun gender is another area where negative language transfer can occur. For example, the English nouns for men, boys, and male animals are masculine nouns, and these nouns can be replaced by the pronoun *he*. Similarly, the English nouns for women, girls, and female animals are feminine nouns, and these nouns can be replaced by the pronoun *she*. Other English nouns are gender neutral (neuter) and can be replaced by the pronoun it.

However, noun gender may be quite different in English compared to some other languages that have noun gender. Here's an example of negative language transfer based on incorrectly transferring knowledge of German noun gender to English.

Consider the following English sentences:

> **The girl** is sick. **She** has a fever.
> **The bus** is coming. **It** is punctual.

Now look at the German equivalents:

Das Mädchen (neuter) ist krank. **Es** (it) hat Fieber.
Der Bus (masculine) kommt. **Er** (he) ist pünktlich.

An English language learner who speaks German may say:

The girl is sick. **It** has fever.
The bus is coming. **He** is punctual.

As well, some languages have grammar rules that are significantly different from those in English. For instance, some languages have no tense markers or gender pronouns, or they may have different placement of adjectives.

Although linguistic interference can occur, English language learners should be encouraged to use and continue to develop proficiency in their first or home language(s). The languages they already know will help them learn English—and any additional languages.

See Encouraging the Use of Home Languages and Developing a Common Language Base.

Using Iceberg Models to Explain English Language Learner Profiles

English language learners should be encouraged to maintain and develop their **home language** as their English proficiency develops. This helps to build and cultivate a strong common language base, boosting the development of both languages.

When conditions are optimal, it is possible for a student to become fully proficient in both languages (bilingual), as represented by the following model.
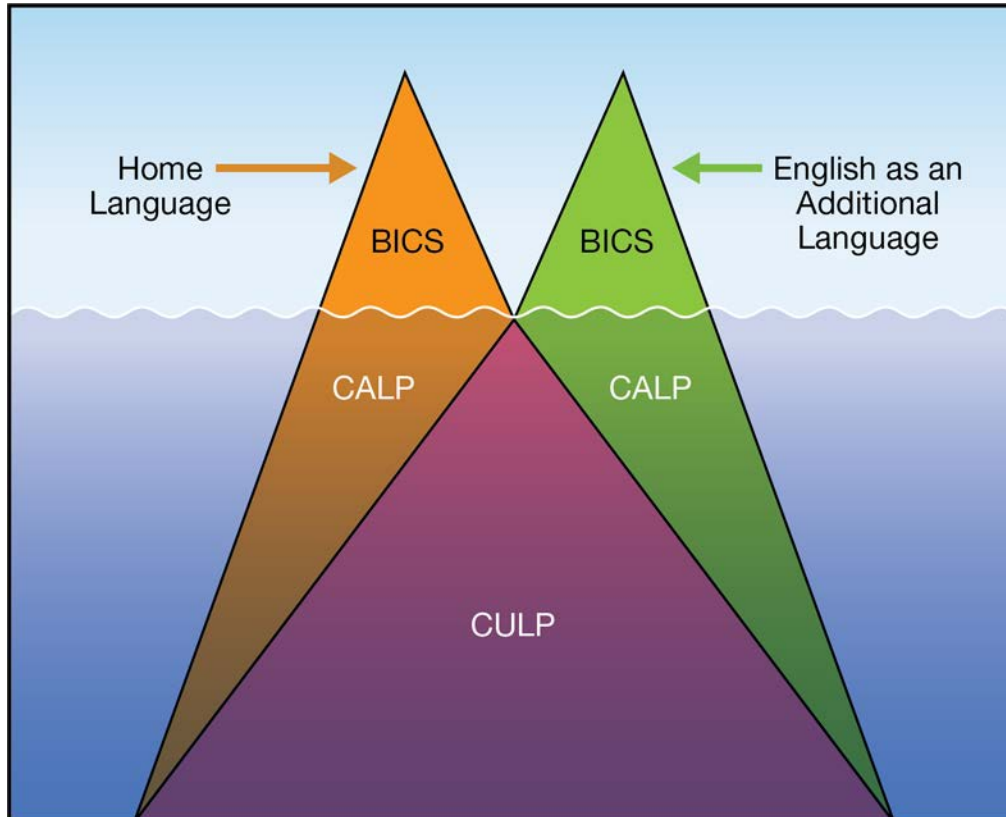
© Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.). *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework.* (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles: National Dissemination and Assessment Center.

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In this model, both sides of the iceberg are roughly equal and fully developed. **CULP** is fully developed and balanced, supporting both languages more or less equally.

CULP (common underlying language proficiency): the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language that they can then use to help them learn other languages

On each side of this iceberg model, **CALP** exceeds **BICS** in size, which is typical of a student who has acquired academic language proficiency in both languages.

This model describes an adult individual who is bilingual (i.e., proficient in two languages).

Individuals with less proficiency in a language would tend to have less well-developed CALP. For students beginning to learn a language, BICS would exceed CALP in size.

> **BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills):** simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations
>
> **CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency):** language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

The size and shape of each side of the iceberg would look different for different language learners, depending on their circumstances and level of proficiency in each language.

The iceberg models for the following four scenarios are examples of common student profiles that illustrate the relationship between the student's home language and English. The models also illustrate the development of social (BICS) and academic (CALP) language and the role of CULP in supporting the language development of English language learners.

- [Scenario 1: Young Learners Adding English](#)
- [Scenario 2: Young Learners Losing Their Home Language](#)
- [Scenario 3: Teenage English Language Learners](#)
- [Scenario 4: High School and Adult English Language Learners](#)

Scenario 1: Young Learners Adding English

Shreya immigrated to Canada from India with her parents when she was three years old. Shreya is now nine years old. She has made many English-speaking friends at school and in her neighborhood. Shreya and her parents speak Hindi at home. They have Hindi-speaking relatives, friends, and community members that they socialize with.

Shreya's family also has Hindi magazines, newspapers, and books at home as well as access to some Hindi films and TV shows on DVD. They also watch Canadian TV shows and listen to local English-language radio stations in the car. They use some popular computer and phone apps to stay in touch with relatives in India. Shreya recently started visiting the local public library and borrows books on a regular basis, including some in Hindi at her reading level.

Shreya's proficiency in Hindi continued to grow while she was developing English proficiency. Now, Shreya's English proficiency is about the same as her Canadian-born English-speaking peers. She developed her social and academic language (**BICS** and **CALP**) in both languages to about the same degree in both Hindi and English. She can express herself equally well in both languages about many topics.

Shreya's profile is commonly described as *Young Developing Bilingual—Additive Bilingualism* because she has added a language (English) without losing a language (Hindi).

> **BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills):** simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations
>
> **CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency):** language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research
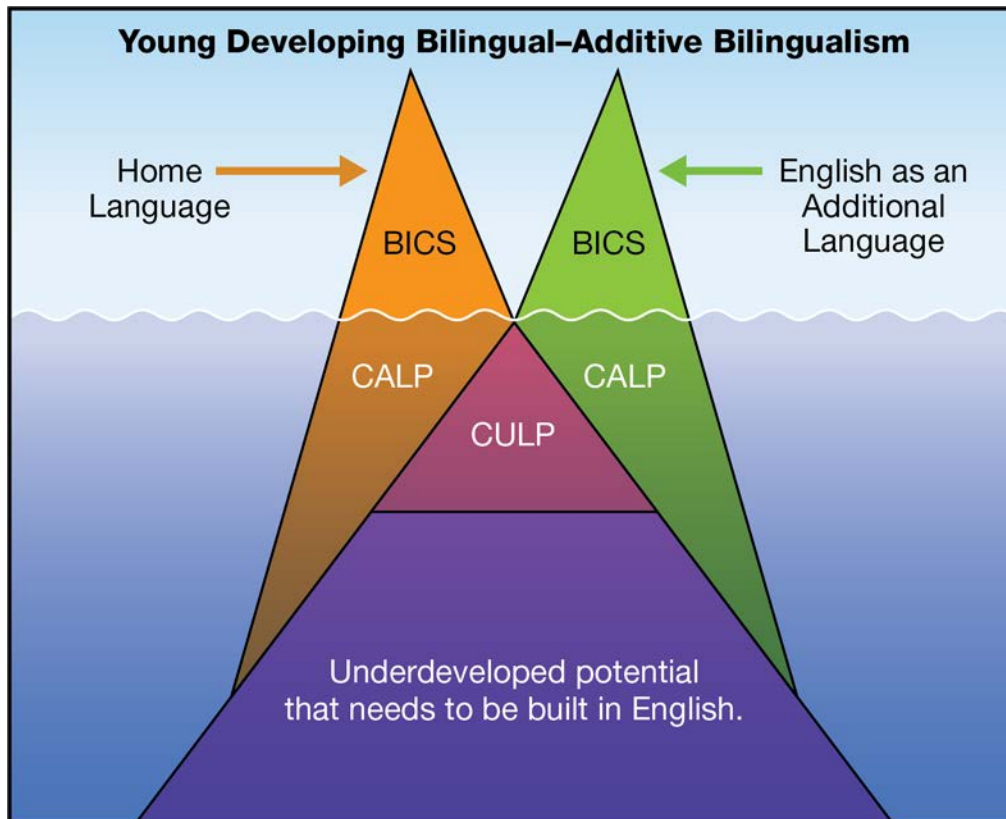
© *Cohort A. Young arrivals: Low levels of L1 and L2 (balanced but inadequate bilingualism)*. Cummins, J. (1984). Bilingualism and special education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy. London: *Multilingual Matters*, p. 143. Adapted with permission.

Additive bilingualism describes a student who learns (or adds) a new language while maintaining the first or **home language**.

This diagram illustrates both languages developing at the same time in a young child who is born into a bilingual home or is exposed to two languages simultaneously.

Both languages are developing in the social and academic areas. **CULP** is accessed simultaneously, and these children can often go back and forth between the two languages easily.

As these students get older, and if their proficiency in both languages continues to develop, **CALP** will grow significantly larger on both sides of the diagram. As well, underdeveloped potential will gradually shrink while CULP expands.

Both languages would need to be developed continuously throughout the child's education for the child to maintain bilingualism.

Implications for the Instruction of English Language Learners
These English language learners tend to sound relatively proficient in English based on their social language (BICS).

They will, however, need to be supported in building their CALP to develop the level of language proficiency necessary for academic success. These students need explicit language instruction and language-learning strategies to develop their relatively shallow common underlying language proficiency.

home language: the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

CULP (common underlying language proficiency): the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language that they can then use to help them learn other languages

CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency): language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

Scenario 2: Young Learners Losing Their Home Language

Carlos immigrated to Canada from Central America with his sister and mother when he was six years old. The family has Spanish-speaking relatives and friends, and Spanish is spoken at home all the time. Carlos spoke only Spanish when he started school in Alberta. He is friendly and outgoing and has made many English-speaking friends at school, on his community soccer team, and in his neighborhood.

Carlos is now 12 years old. His English proficiency now is about the same as his Canadian-born English-speaking peers. He has well-developed social (**BICS**) and academic (**CALP**) language. Although his mother continues to speak to him and his sister in Spanish at home, Carlos now mostly answers in English. As well, he and his sister speak only in English to each other.

The only books written in Spanish that Carlos was exposed to are children's books that he has now outgrown. Carlos never learned to read Spanish, but he does recognize many written words. Over the past six years, Carlos has gradually lost much of his ability to converse in Spanish and prefers not to speak Spanish at all.

At this point, if he had to, he would probably still be able to talk about a limited range of everyday topics using simple Spanish. Carlos's mother worries that he will not be able to communicate with many of his relatives in the future and that he will not pass his **home language** on to his children.

> **CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency):** language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

> **BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills):** simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Carlos's profile is commonly described as *Young Developing Bilingual—Subtractive Bilingualism* because he is losing the ability to use one language (Spanish) while acquiring another language (English). In Carlos's case, instead of adding proficiency in English to his proficiency in Spanish, English is replacing Spanish.
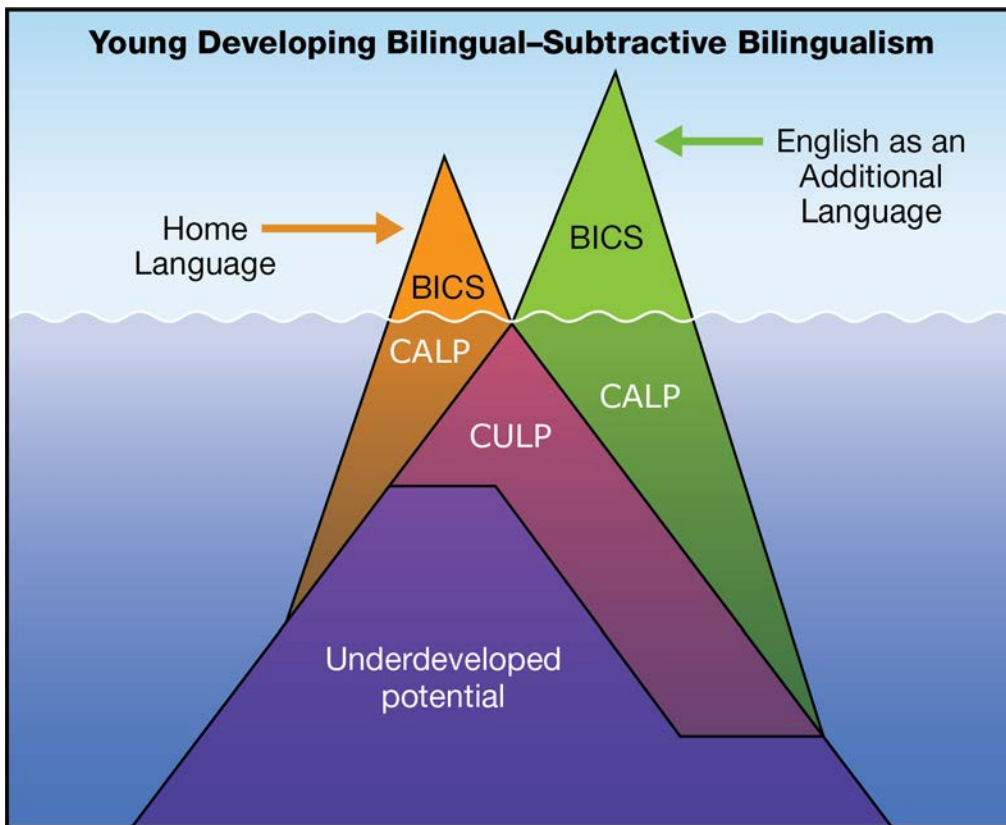
Young Developing Bilingual–Subtractive Bilingualism

English as an Additional Language

Home Language

BICS

BICS

CALP

CALP

CULP

Underdeveloped potential

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Subtractive bilingualism describes a student who learns a new language but gradually loses the ability to communicate in the first or **home language**.

This diagram illustrates a young child first exposed to one language and then exposed socially and academically to English.

BICS and/or **CALP** in the home language were not maintained or developed further, and most of the time the child uses English.

Initially, the child relied upon his or her home language to learn English. After a time, however, the child may have used **CULP** developed through the learning of English to support the home language.

> **CULP (common underlying language proficiency):** the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language that they can then use to help them learn other languages

The child may grow being unable to read or write in the home language. He or she may still be able to understand the home language when spoken to but then respond in English.

Implications for the Instruction of English Language Learners

English language learners who are at risk of becoming subtractive bilinguals are difficult to identify in a classroom setting. Their teachers readily see the progress they make in developing their English language proficiency but may not see the gradual erosion of the **home language**.

Subtractive bilingualism has a profound and overwhelmingly negative impact on students and their families. The loss of the home language may prevent generations within the same family from communicating with each other, and it may negatively impact a student's sense of cultural and personal identity. As well, the erosion of the home language makes the learning of English as an additional language more challenging than it would be if the student could draw upon a well-developed home language to learn English.

Many factors beyond the influence of the school contribute to subtractive bilingualism, but schools can support the home languages and cultures of their students. See Encouraging the Use of Home Languages.

Scenario 3: Teenage English Language Learners

Viktoriya and her brother Nikolay immigrated to Canada from Russia with their parents when they were 12 and 14 years old, respectively. Both had limited knowledge of English when they arrived, but they leveraged their well-developed proficiency in Russian to acquire English rapidly.

Now in high school, they both have made good progress in acquiring both social and academic English (**BICS** and **CALP**). Their proficiency in English is still not as well developed as in Russian, but they continue to make steady progress in English.

At this point, it's the occasional errors that Viktoriya makes when speaking that remind people that English is not her first language because by now she has almost no accent. Because he was older when he began learning English, Nikolay has an accent. However, he is just as easy to understand as Viktoriya when he speaks English.

There is another noticeable difference between Viktoriya and Nikolay related to language acquisition. Their parents have observed that Nikolay's Russian vocabulary and language base has grown since they moved to Canada while Viktoriya speaks Russian the way she did when she came to Canada. Her Russian language proficiency largely ceased to develop when she began to learn English, whereas Nikolay's language proficiency grew along side English.

In Viktoriya's case, Russian supported her acquisition of English. In Nikolay's case, the two languages supported each other's development. To become fully bilingual in English and Russian, Viktoriya and Nikolay need to continue to develop their proficiency in English as well as Russian.

> **CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency):** language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

> **BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills):** simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations

> **home language:** the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members
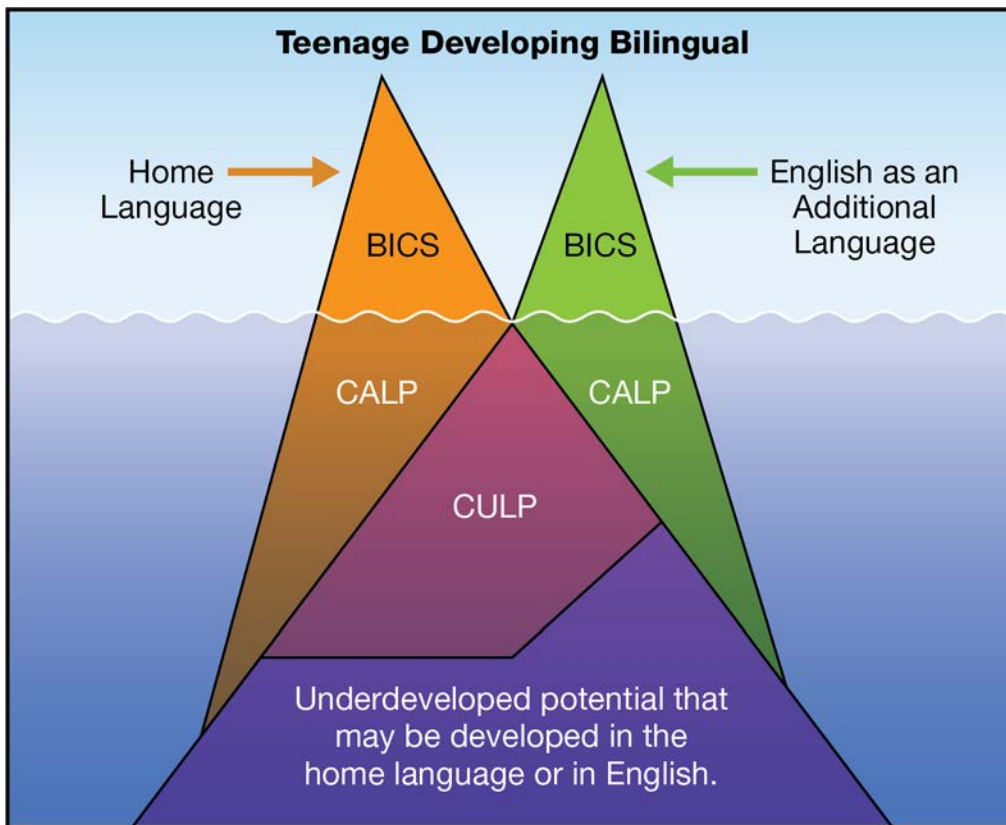
Viktoriya's and Nikolay's profile is commonly described as teenage developing bilingual, meaning they began developing proficiency in an additional language as young teenagers while maintaining or further developing proficiency in their **home language**.

Although Viktoriya's and Nikolay's language acquisition profiles differ somewhat, they both fit the teenage developing bilingual model, which illustrates how teenagers learn an additional language with help from their home language.

Teenage Developing Bilingual

Home Language → BICS

BICS ← English as an Additional Language

CALP   CALP

CULP

Underdeveloped potential that may be developed in the home language or in English.

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This diagram illustrates a teenager who has primarily developed **BICS** and **CALP** skills in his or her first or **home language**. This is typical of a student who has been exposed to an additional language after 12 years of age.

In the student's home language, BICS is almost fully developed by this age, whereas the CALP shows development through education and there is still room to develop further. BICS is not fully developed in English, and it will take time to acquire common social conventions, expressions, and idioms.

While these students can often achieve native-like fluency in English, many show some signs of first language interference or transfer. Academically, these students acquire English as an additional language more easily than students matching most other profiles described by the iceberg drawings: They use their **CULP** to transfer known language and concepts from their home language to English.

CULP (common underlying language proficiency): the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language that they can then use to help them learn other languages

These students often have the literacy skills in their home language that assist them in developing their literacy skills in English. Both languages will have to continue to develop if the student is to become bilingual.

There is a risk that English will take over from the home language; thus, there is the risk that the home language will cease to develop. The student may maintain basic social and academic language in the home language, but there would be no further development in the home language.

Implications for the Instruction of English Language Learners

English language learners belonging to this profile are challenged in that they have not fully developed their **home language** before having to tackle demanding academic content in English, which they are still in the process of acquiring.

As they arrive at school in the later grades, these students may find themselves under time pressure to acquire the English language skills and the academic knowledge required for graduation.

These students benefit from sustained and targeted English language supports—in particular, assistance in building their academic vocabulary as rapidly as possible.

## Scenario 4: High School and Adult English Language Learners

Andreas is a German-speaking international student enrolled in an Alberta high school. He is highly motivated to learn English and actively uses his extensive knowledge of German and a range of language-learning strategies to make connections between German and English that help him communicate in English and help accelerate his acquisition of English. He also appreciates the language-learning strategies that his teachers show him and encourage him to use.

Andreas finds that even when his use of English is accurate, misunderstandings occur because of cultural differences between the way Canadians communicate in various contexts and how many German speakers communicate in those contexts.

He really appreciates the explanations and advice he gets from friends that he made at school that help him understand, plan for, and navigate certain communication situations. As well, his teachers make a point of overtly explaining aspects of interpersonal communication in a Canadian context that he might not be aware of.

Andreas' German proficiency is nearly as fully developed as that of an adult native speaker of German, so English language development is not contributing substantially to German language development.

Andreas' profile is commonly referred to as adult developing bilingual because he is leveraging a fully developed first language to acquire another language.
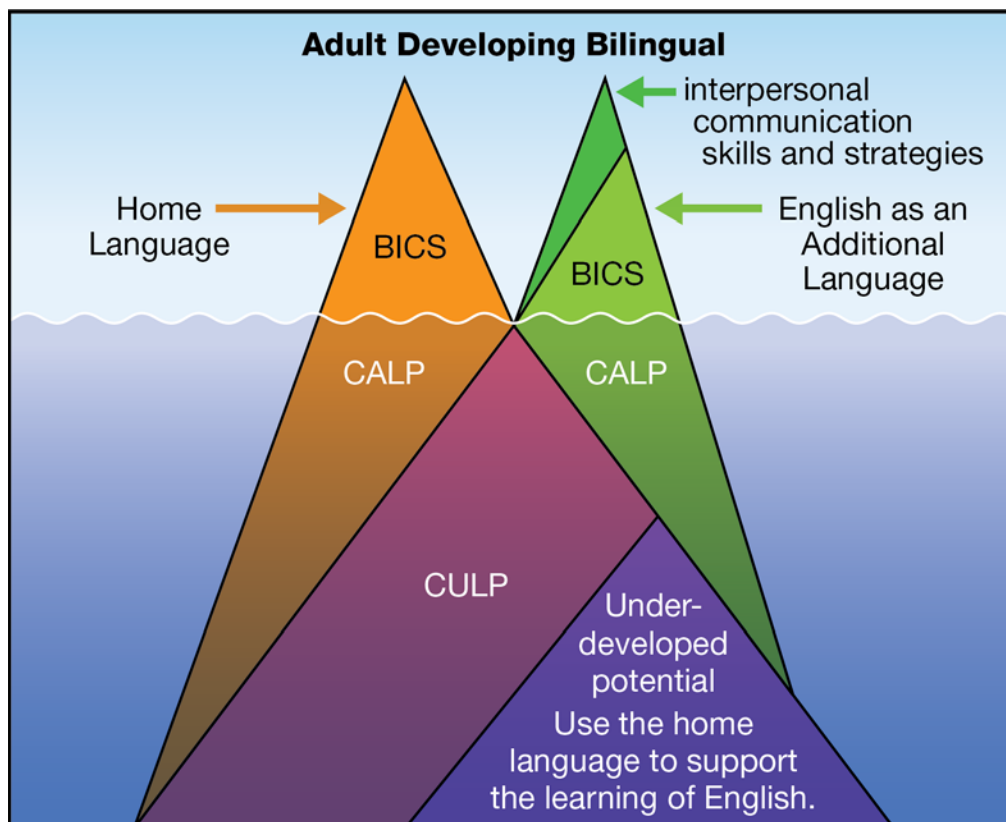
© Kover, Pat and Hetty Roessingh. 2003. "Variability of ESL learners' acquisition of cognitive academic language proficiency: What can we learn from achievement measures?" *TESL Canada Journal 21*, no. 1: 1-21. Adapted with permission.

While this model is labelled Adult Developing Bilingual, it also applies to English language learners in their late teens who are learning English in high school.

This diagram illustrates how an adult uses his or her fully developed **BICS** and **CALP** in the first language to assist with acquiring English as an additional new language. **CULP** plays a significant role in language

acquisition for adult developing bilingual learners. Adults often have an extensive vocabulary, as well as conceptual and abstract understanding in their home language, that can be transferred as they learn English as an additional language.

Adults and high school-age students with fully developed academic language in their first language can often rapidly acquire an additional language, as they have many transferable skills, broad background knowledge, and prior experiences to draw upon to make meaning of a new language. However, adults often have highly accented speech with more first-language interference with English grammatical patterns.

Implications for the Instruction of English Language Learners
The adult developing bilingual profile is typical of English language learners who begin academic study in English at the high school level. Whether they have had some prior exposure to English or not, they generally have a significant linguistic and academic gap to close between the time they enter high school and when they hope to graduate.

These students often do not have enough time to fully develop their academic language (CALP) while completing high school level courses and will continue to develop CALP later if they continue to be in an English immersive environment—especially if they continue academic studies in English.

English language learners in high school benefit from strategies that help them make use of their **home language** to support their acquisition of English and their learning of academic concepts in English. They require assistance in building their academic vocabulary as rapidly as possible.

Some students fitting this profile may also benefit from assistance in developing skills and strategies for effective interpersonal communications in English in a variety of contexts (e.g., small talk, turn-taking, interruptions during a conversation, personal space, body language, gestures, eye contact, and touch).

BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills): simple, functional language for communicating basic needs, ideas, and opinions and engaging in everyday conversations in informal social situations

CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency): language required to understand and communicate about abstract concepts and accomplish a wide-range of cognitively demanding academic tasks, including reading textbooks, writing essays, and doing research

CULP (common underlying language proficiency): the language knowledge and skills that students develop as they learn one language that they can then use to help them learn other languages

home language: the dominant language that a student uses at home to communicate with family members

Reflecting on Your Understanding of English Language Acquisition

Use the following checklist titled *Self-reflection: Understanding the Acquisition of English as an Additional Language* to gauge your knowledge of how students learn an additional language and also to determine areas in which you would like to develop your knowledge further.

Self-reflection: Understanding the Acquisition of English as an Additional Language

	Yes	No	Not Sure
I have had professional development in language acquisition.			
I can distinguish between social language (i.e., BICS) and academic language (i.e., CALP).			
I recognize communicative competence.			
I understand that language is acquired in a predictable sequence of stages.			
I can identify individual stages of English language acquisition.			
I understand key concepts of acquiring an additional language, including that • people are born with innate language processing abilities			
• knowledge, skills, and understandings from the home language can transfer to the new language in positive and negative ways			
• people learning additional languages draw from and build upon a common base of language understanding that can be used for learning any additional language			
• academic language (CALP) is required when learning more complex subject-matter			
• academic language (CALP) takes longer to acquire than social language (BICS)			
I understand factors that influence how English language learners learn is related to • social environment (e.g., social setting, situational factors)			
• learning environment (e.g., teacher's promotion and support of the home language, provision of explicit language instruction, use of appropriate instructional and assessment strategies, provision of child/student-centred learning supports)			
• characteristics and traits (e.g., age, attitude, motivation, personality)			
• skills and experiences (e.g., knowledge and use of other languages, use of learning strategies, prior knowledge, limited formal schooling)			
Notes:			

Sample Language-learning Strategies for English Language Learners

Language-learning Strategies

Cognitive Language-learning Strategies
- Listen attentively.
- Perform actions to match the words of a song, story, or rhyme.
- Learn short rhymes or songs, incorporating new vocabulary or sentence patterns.
- Imitate sounds and intonation patterns.
- Memorize new words by repeating them silently or aloud.
- Seek the precise term to express meaning.
- Repeat words or phrases in the course of performing a language task.
- Make personal dictionaries.
- Experiment with various elements of English.
- Use mental images to remember new information.
- Group together sets of things—for example, vocabulary and structures—with similar characteristics.
- Identify similarities and differences between aspects of English and your home language.
- Look for patterns and relationships.
- Use previously acquired knowledge to facilitate a learning task.
- Associate new English words or expressions with familiar ones in your home language.
- Find information, using reference materials such as dictionaries, textbooks, grammars, and technological aids.
- Use available technology to support English language learning; e.g., audio recorders, online bilingual dictionaries, translation apps, text-to-speech apps.
- Use word maps, mind maps, diagrams, charts, or other graphic representations to make information easier to understand and remember.
- Place new words or expressions in a context to make them easier to remember.
- Use induction to generate rules governing language use.
- Seek opportunities outside of class to practise and observe.
- Perceive and note unknown words and expressions, noting also their context and function.

Metacognitive Language-learning Strategies
- Check copied writing for accuracy.
- Make choices about how you learn.
- Rehearse or role-play language.
- Decide in advance to attend to the learning task.
- Reflect on learning tasks with the guidance of the teacher.
- Make a plan in advance about how to approach a language-learning task.
- Reflect on the listening, speaking, reading, and writing process.
- Decide in advance to attend to specific aspects of input.
- Listen or read for key words.
- Evaluate your performance or comprehension at the end of a task.
- Keep a learning log.
- Experience various methods of language acquisition, and identify one that is particularly useful to you.

- Be aware of the potential of learning through frequent and direct exposure to English in a variety of places and situations in school and outside of school.
- Know how strategies may enable coping with texts containing unknown elements.
- Identify factors that might hinder successful completion of a task and seek solutions.
- Monitor your speech and writing to check for persistent errors.
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses, identify your needs and goals, and organize strategies and procedures accordingly.

Social/Affective Language-learning Strategies
- Initiate or maintain interaction with others.
- Participate in shared reading experiences.
- Seek the assistance of a friend to interpret a text.
- Reread familiar self-chosen texts to enhance understanding and enjoyment.
- Work cooperatively with peers in small groups.
- Understand that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning.
- Experiment with various forms of expression and note their acceptance or non-acceptance by more experienced speakers.
- Participate actively in brainstorming and conferencing as prewriting and post-writing exercises.
- Use self-talk to feel competent to do the task.
- Be willing to take risks and to try unfamiliar tasks and approaches.
- Repeat new words and expressions occurring in your conversations, and make use of these new words and expressions as soon as appropriate.
- Reduce anxiety by using mental techniques such as positive self-talk or humour.
- Work with others to solve problems and get feedback on tasks.
- Provide personal motivation by arranging your own rewards when successful.

Language-use Strategies

Interactive Language-use Strategies
- Ask for clarification or repetition when you do not understand; e.g., *What was that? What do you mean? Could you repeat that? Could you say that again using other words?*
- Use words from your home language to get meaning across; e.g., use a literal translation of a phrase in the home language, use a home language word but pronounce it as in English.
- Acknowledge being spoken to.
- Interpret and use a variety of nonverbal cues to communicate; e.g., mime, pointing, gestures, pictures.
- Indicate lack of understanding verbally or nonverbally; e.g., *I'm sorry*, *I don't understand*. *Sorry, I'm not following*. *How was that again?* (verbal) or raised eyebrows, blank look (nonverbal).
- Use other speakers' words in subsequent conversations.
- Assess feedback from a conversation partner to recognize when a message has not been understood; e.g., raised eyebrows, blank look.
- Start again, using a different tactic, when communication breaks down; e.g., *What I wanted to say was …*, *Let me start/try again …*
- Use a simple word similar to the concept to convey and invite correction; e.g., *fish* for *salmon*.
- Invite others into the discussion; e.g., *Come and join our conversation*. *We would like to know your thoughts*. *Would you share your ideas?*
- Ask for confirmation that a form used is correct; e.g., *Did I say that correctly? Is that how you would say …? Is there a better way to say that?*
- Use a range of fillers, hesitation devices, and gambits to sustain conversations; e.g., *Um …, Uh …, Like …, Well …, It's like this …, The thing is …, Now let me see …*

- Use circumlocution (describing something when the word for it is not known) to compensate for lack of vocabulary; e.g., *The thing you drink water from for glass*.
- Repeat part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding; e.g., *So, what you are saying is that …*
- Summarize the point reached in a discussion to help focus the talk; e.g., *So, to summarize what we've talked about/agreed on …*, *So, what we're saying is …*, *Correct me if I'm wrong, but the point we are making is …*
- Ask follow-up questions to check for understanding; e.g., *Do you know what I mean?*
- Use suitable phrases to intervene in a discussion; e.g., *Since you mentioned …*, *While we're on the topic of …*, *Now that you mentioned it …*
- Self-correct if errors lead to misunderstandings; e.g., *What I actually wanted to say was …*, *What I meant to say is …*
- Express approval or positive feedback; e.g., *I think that's a great idea. You make a good point. I see/get what you're saying.*

Interpretive Language-use Strategies
- Use gestures, intonation, and visual supports to aid comprehension.
- Make connections between texts on the one hand and prior knowledge and personal experience on the other.
- Use illustrations to aid reading comprehension.
- Determine the purpose of listening; e.g., to be entertained, to learn something, to glean specific details or pieces of information.
- Listen or look for key words.
- Listen selectively based on purpose.
- Make predictions about what you expect to hear or read based on prior knowledge and personal experience.
- Use knowledge of the sound–symbol system to aid reading comprehension.
- Infer probable meanings of unknown words or expressions from contextual clues.
- Prepare questions or a guide to note information found in a text.
- Use key content words or discourse markers to follow an extended text.
- Reread several times to understand complex ideas.
- Summarize information gathered.
- Assess your information needs before listening, viewing, or reading.
- Use skimming and scanning to locate key information in texts.

Productive Language-use Strategies
- Mimic what the teacher says.
- Use nonverbal means to communicate.
- Copy what others say or write.
- Use words that are visible in the immediate environment.
- Use resources to increase vocabulary; e.g., bilingual dictionary; picture dictionary; thesaurus; dual-language books; language-learning apps, software, or websites with English
- vocabulary-building activities.
- Use familiar repetitive patterns from stories, songs, rhymes, or media.
- Use illustrations to provide detail when producing your own texts.
- Use various techniques to explore ideas at the planning stage, such as brainstorming or keeping a notebook or log of ideas.
- Use knowledge of sentence patterns to form new sentences.

- Be aware of and use the steps of the writing process: prewriting (gathering ideas, planning the text, research, organizing the text), writing, revision (rereading, moving pieces of text, rewriting pieces of text), correction (grammar, spelling, punctuation), publication (reprinting, adding illustrations, binding, posting on a blog or web page).
- Use a variety of resources to correct texts; e.g., personal and commercial dictionaries, checklists, grammars.
- Take notes when reading or listening to assist in producing your own text.
- Revise and correct final versions of texts.
- Use circumlocution (describing something when the word for it is not known) and definition to compensate for gaps in vocabulary.
- Apply grammar rules to improve accuracy at the correction stage.
- Compensate for avoiding difficult structures by rephrasing.

General Learning Strategies

Cognitive General Learning Strategies
- Use models, patterns, and templates.
- Connect what is already known with what is being learned.
- Experiment with, and concentrate on, one thing at a time.
- Focus on and complete learning tasks.
- Use mental images to remember new information.
- Formulate key questions to guide research.
- Make inferences, and identify and justify the evidence on which these inferences are based.
- Use word maps, mind maps, diagrams, charts, or other graphic representations to make information easier to understand and remember.
- Seek information through a network of sources, including libraries, the Internet, individuals, and agencies.
- Use previously acquired knowledge or skills to assist with a new learning task.

Metacognitive General Learning Strategies
- Reflect on learning tasks with the guidance of the teacher.
- Choose from among learning options.
- Discover how your efforts can affect learning.
- Reflect upon your thinking processes and how you learn.
- Decide in advance to attend to the learning task.