LANGUAGE LEARNING IN K-12 SCHOOLS

THEORIES, METHODOLOGIES, AND BEST PRACTICES

Nadia Prokopchuk

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LANGUAGE LEARNING IN K-12 SCHOOLS: THEORIES, METHODOLOGIES, AND BEST PRACTICES

Language Learning in K-12 Schools: Theories, Methodologies, and Best Practices

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BACKGROUND

This language education text is the convergence of two professional development courses written for language teachers on two different continents. Between 2012 and 2015, I was invited to deliver several short courses on language methodology, instruction, and assessment to elementary teachers of English at Ternopil National Pedagogical University in Ternopil, Ukraine. Then in spring of 2022, at the request of the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU) at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, I agreed to create a language methodology course for a group of K-12 teachers of English from the Maule region, Talca province of Chile.

My experience with each group of international teachers was professionally enriching and personally rewarding. I was very impressed by the level of interest and dedication to learning among the language teachers. They were particularly interested in knowing more about research-based strategies and approaches to language teaching currently used in Canadian schools.

During the first 15 years of my teaching career, I had the privilege of being a K-12 bilingual (Ukrainian-English) classroom teacher and curriculum writer in Saskatchewan. These grassroots teaching experiences laid the groundwork for later roles as a ministry-based second and heritage language consultant, English as an Additional Language (EAL) program manager, and university-based EAL teaching specialist. In each educational role, one request remained constant: teachers, administrators, and specialists wanted more professional support for their work with a very diverse population of students, particularly language learners.

Given increasing global migration and significant numbers of local students with multilingual backgrounds, I believe that teachers will continue to search for opportunities to educate themselves about language learners in mainstream school settings. Appropriate classroom support – the kind that is backed by research and delivered by informed teaching professionals – can make all the difference. By shoring up pedagogical knowledge about language learners, K-12 educators, administrators, and specialists can build the capacity needed to help language students meet curricular goals while building language proficiency.

It is my sincere hope that this online support text will benefit K-12 educators who are searching for ways to increase their professional knowledge and effectiveness as teachers of language learners in K-12 settings.

Nadia Prokopchuk, B. Ed., M. Ed., Language Teaching Specialist. Department of Curriculum Studies, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan

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Andrew Philominraj, PhD, Director. School of English Pedagogy, Department of Languages, Faculty of Education, Universidad Católica del Maule, Chile

Vicki Squires, PhD, Associate Dean. Research, Graduate Support and International Initiatives. College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. Canada.

The following academic departments, units, and institutions facilitated development of this OER resource text:

Department of Curriculum Studies, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

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Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit (SELU), College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

School of English Pedagogy, Department of Languages, Faculty of Education, Universidad Católica del Maule, Chile

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Errors or Omissions

Users of this OER resource text are encouraged to contact the author if any errors or omissions are noted. All efforts have been made to credit sources and reference material appropriately. *Contact: nadia.prokopchuk@usask.ca*

ENDORSEMENTS

In this immensely useful book, Nadia Prokopchuk has drawn on her many years of experience as a bilingual teacher, curriculum writer, English-as-an-Additional Language program manager, and university teacher educator, to distill the essential knowledge base required for teachers to support second language learners across the curriculum. The content of the eight modules is presented concisely, using engaging visuals and links to relevant video resources. The major focus of the modules is on the instructional initiatives that teachers can implement in their classrooms, but the rationale for these initiatives is consistently and lucidly rooted in the theory and research that form the knowledge base for effective second language instruction.

What struck me in particular as I read the book is the respect for the reader that is shown throughout. Readers are given many options to engage with the ideas presented in ways that reflect their learning preferences. The modules and supporting multimedia resources also lend themselves to discussion among teachers across a wide range of second language teaching contexts. This book represents an invaluable resource for the development of school-based language policies that respond to expanding diversity of student populations across Canada and internationally.

Dr. Jim Cummins, Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and Canada Research Chair (Tier 1), University of Toronto, Canada

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My professional collaboration with Nadia Prokopchuk began with the delivery of short courses for language teachers at the V. Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University in Ternopil, Ukraine. The goal of the short courses was twofold. Firstly, we wanted pre-service teachers to increase their knowledge of language teaching methodologies used in Canada. Secondly, we wanted professors to observe and incorporate the innovative teaching strategies modeled by Nadia Prokopchuk into their academic teaching practices. The short courses achieved both goals. Faculty and students were particularly struck by the consistent use of visuals, technology, demonstrations, and varied strategies as tools to motivate learning.

Given the success of Nadia Prokopchuk's short courses, our university has eagerly awaited the release of the online text 'Language learning in K-12 schools: Theories, methodologies and best practices'. Introductory modules offer a concise overview of second language pedagogy, highlighting the contributions of key researchers Vygotsky, Krashen, and Cummins. The modules that follow provide information about instructional strategies in the four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These strategies are closely aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), an internationally recognized scale that has gained momentum in Ukraine's language programs. The CEFR chart of 'can-do' language descriptors in Appendix B will be helpful for monitoring student progress at all levels of language learning. Finally, the concluding pages of the text draw attention to culturally responsive teaching and a shift from superficial cultural celebrations to a deeper understanding of student identity.

I have no doubt this text will become a primary source of information for language teachers in Ukraine. I am very proud to be associated with the inception of this valuable online resource.

Dr. Olena Huzar, Director, Centre for Teaching Excellence, V.Hnatiuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University, Ukraine

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Language teachers in general, around the globe, are somewhat familiar with the concept of method, which traditionally has directed the form and function of language teaching, curriculum design, syllabus structure, materials preparation,

instructional strategies, and assessment techniques. A term, which is heard and used very often but hardly time is given to think about its meaning. Method refers to the theoretical principles and classroom practices and also means what practicing teachers currently do in their classrooms.

'Language learning in K-12 schools: Theories, methodologies, and best practices', a resource text authored by Nadia Prokopchuk precisely answers this understanding of the method. This online text is a response to the methodological dilemma of a group of teachers from the region of Maule during their stay at the University of Saskatchewan in the spring of 2022, who found themselves struggling between what was imposed on them and the other that is improvised by them. The online material is a collection of first-hand information on topics of language teaching methodologies, instructional planning, efficient teaching strategies, and culturally responsive teaching. These topics are highly relevant to the teaching of the English language and are based on research that reflects the dedicated academic life of Nadia Prokopchuk as a bilingual classroom teacher, curriculum writer, and language teaching specialist.

Resource materials that do not include teaching and learning elements of local, individual, institutional, social, and cultural contexts become irrelevant and are finally destined for failure. In this sense, this book is just not a repetition of what has been said all through the ages in the teaching of the English language but critically examines methods and strategies, providing elements crucial for teachers to pause, think, and finally find meaning in their teaching. Hence this text is not only a needed resource material but also very beneficial for all the teachers of English as a foreign or second language around the globe.

Dr. Andrew Philominraj, Director, Doctorate in Education in Consortium, Universidad Católica de Maule, Chile

INTRODUCTION

This Open Educational Resource (OER) text is intended for both pre-service and practicing teachers who are interested in gaining professional knowledge about language teaching methodologies, strategies, and program options in K-12 settings. The OER text may be used as an ***academic resource text*** for language education courses and academic programs, or as a ***self-study text*** for educators who want to become more informed about language teaching methods and practices.

Each learning module is user-friendly and engaging. Modules contain bright visuals and charts, as well as links to video clips and resource sites that will help teachers to extend knowledge about language learning beyond the pages of this OER text.

A brief overview of past methodologies sets the foundation for further exploration of teaching methods and strategies used in language programs today. Links to video resources and references to additional sources of information offer opportunities for teachers to explore other aspects of language education.

Key terms introduced in each module appear in **bold dark red font.** Definitions of the terms are available in a glossary at the end of each module and in a cumulative glossary at the end of the online text.

Modules One and Two present an overview of approaches and methodologies from past decades that have influenced present day approaches to language education. The modules highlight the work of three notable researchers: *Lev Vygotsky, Stephen Krashen, and Jim Cummins*. Each researcher has influenced language learning by challenging myths and transforming views about the cognitive processes involved in learning a new language.

Module Three examines the relationship of program models, proficiency levels, and factors such as place, purpose, and time on language learning success in K-12 settings. Three Canadian program models are presented to illustrate the impact of these factors. The benefits of using an international language reference scale are explained. The *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)* for languages allows for objective assessment of language progress regardless of country, culture, or language, using descriptors that are learner-centred and purposeful.

Module Four describes an approach to program planning known as 'backward design'. To support the planning process, the module outlines steps for initial assessment, followed by an in-depth look at instruction and assessment that integrates language learning with subject area learning. The success of this approach, known as *Integrated Language and Content Instruction (ILCI),* is dependent on the development of language objectives that correspond with content objectives drawn from the K-12 school curriculum.

Modules Five and Six focus on the four skill areas of **L**istening, **S**peaking (combined with **I**nteraction),

Reading and **W**riting, sometimes identified as SWRL or SWIRL. The modules explain each skill using illustrative examples and descriptors linked to the CEFR framework provided in Appendix B of the document. These modules also present language learning strategies that are considered 'best practices' for vocabulary-building within the four skill areas.

Module Seven outlines practical ways to differentiate instruction for language learners. For differentiation to be effective, teachers are encouraged to asssemble learner profiles (or portfolios) at the start of the year. The profile contains a snapshot of each student's initial language skills, as well as samples of ongoing language tasks gathered throughout the year to illustrate progress. Factors that can affect language progress, such as individual learning styles, language delays and learning challenges, are discussed briefly.

Module Eight, the final module in the text, promotes an inclusive approach to classroom instruction known as *Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)*. Students in language learning programs often have diverse first languages, cultural identities, and background experiences. CRT promotes the notion that all students should have an equal voice in the classroom; their cultural identities, languages, and lived experiences can enrich the school curriculum.

An **Appendix** at the end of the online text contains two PDF charts created by the author of this resource to promote understanding of the stages of the language learning process. These charts are adaptations of the *Cummins' Quadrants Model* and the *CEFR scale of language levels ('can-do' skill descriptors).*

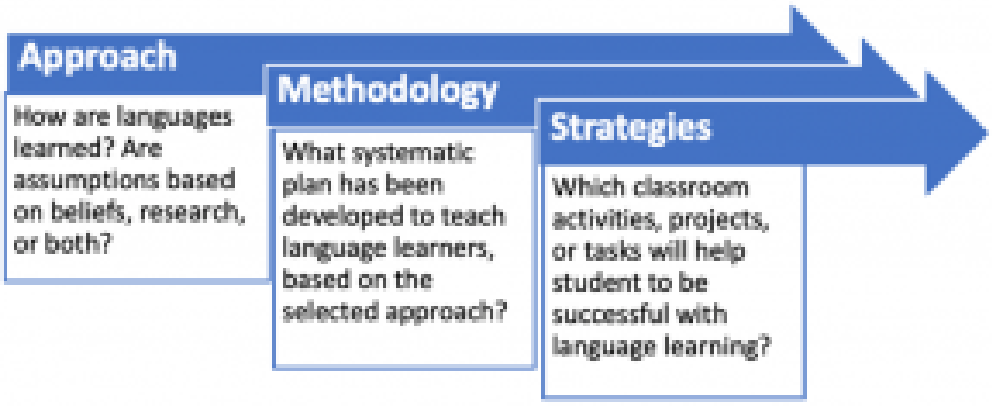
MAIN BODY

LEARNING MODULE ONE: OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

INTRODUCTION

Five approaches and/or methods are presented in this module as a foundational backdrop to current language teaching methodologies. This module answers the question "What approaches or methods used in the past have influenced current language teaching methodologies?

The terms 'approach' and 'method' are often used synonymously, but a distinction should be made. An **approach** is a broad term used to describe a set of beliefs or assumptions about the nature of language learning. A **method** (also called **methodology**) describes a systematic plan for language teaching that follows a selected approach. **Strategies** (sometimes called techniques) are actions, tasks, or activities that support a language teaching methodology. Strategies bring a selected methodology to life in the classroom.



Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan.

Brief video explanations are available here:

1. International TEFL & TESOL Training (2017). Theories, Methods, and Techniques of

Teaching. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbVib986kwejHLSDSDglLNPaZtt2uizzc

(1) GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD

This is by far the oldest method of language teaching, dating back several centuries. The original purpose was to translate classic literature from Ancient Latin and Greek into modern languages.

Key Features

In this method, students learn grammatical features of the target language. They are given practice exercises such as grammar drills and sentence translations. The aim is for students to be able to translate with ease between two languages, usually their first or native language (L1) and the target language (L2) being learned. Students begin with basic sentence translations and progress to paragraphs and longer texts. Translation demands high levels of proficiency with written text. Students must understand both the *context* and *meaning* in order to translate messages accurately from one language to the other.

Weaknesses

- A major weakness is the intense focus on reading, writing, and grammar without equal attention to oral communication skills. The ability to communicate with others orally is not the focus of this method. Note: **Translation** should not be confused with **interpretation**, which is oral.
- Another weakness is the lack of interaction for real-life, authentic communication. The grammar-translation method is static, requiring interaction between the reader and text. Authentic communication is active and engaging, comprised of listening, speaking, reading, and writing for various purposes with different target audiences.
- A third weakness is an overemphasis on grammatical accuracy and the memorization of grammatical rules, making language learning a rules-driven rather than communication-driven academic pursuit.

Try It!

Translate the following English paragraph to another language that you know.

'Anne of Green Gables' by Canadian author L. M. Montgomery offers hours of enjoyable reading for pre-teens. This book recounts the life of an 11-year old red-headed orphan girl named Anne Shirley. Anne is adopted by an elderly brother and sister, Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert, who live on a farm called Green Gables. The farm is near the town of Avonlea on Prince Edward Island. Matthew and Marilla had hoped to adopt a boy to help on the farm. Instead, they receive a very curious, outspoken, and imaginative girl. Anne brings many unexpected adventures to Matthew, Marilla, and the residents of Avonlea.

Credit: Nadia Prokopchuk

(2) THE NATURAL APPROACH

In the mid-20th century, linguists recognized that the grammar-translation method had many shortcomings. Krashen and Terrell (1983) proposed a new methodology stemming from Terrell's belief in the Natural Approach (1977). The approach described the process of learning a new language as being similar to the acquisition of a first language in childhood. Krashen further explained that language acquisition involves spontaneous, experiential learning, and language *input* from many sources. Krashen added five hypotheses to Terrell's theory.

a) Acquisition-learning hypothesis – L2 is acquired in a manner parallel to L1. Acquisition, or absorbing the language naturally, is not the same as learning in a classroom (studying the language and its rules).

b) Natural order hypothesis – The brain retains grammatical rules subconsciously in a natural order. Teachers should expect errors during language acquisition, knowing that rules are being absorbed naturally.

c) Monitor hypothesis – Self-correction, a kind of internal monitor, helps students to gain control of the grammatical features of language over time.

d) Input hypothesis – Students acquire new vocabulary through input that is slightly beyond their current level of language comprehension ("i +1"), guided by mentors or language speakers.

e) Affective filter hypothesis – Pressure, fear, and anxiety have a negative effect on language learning (lowered self-confidence, motivation, worry).

Key Features

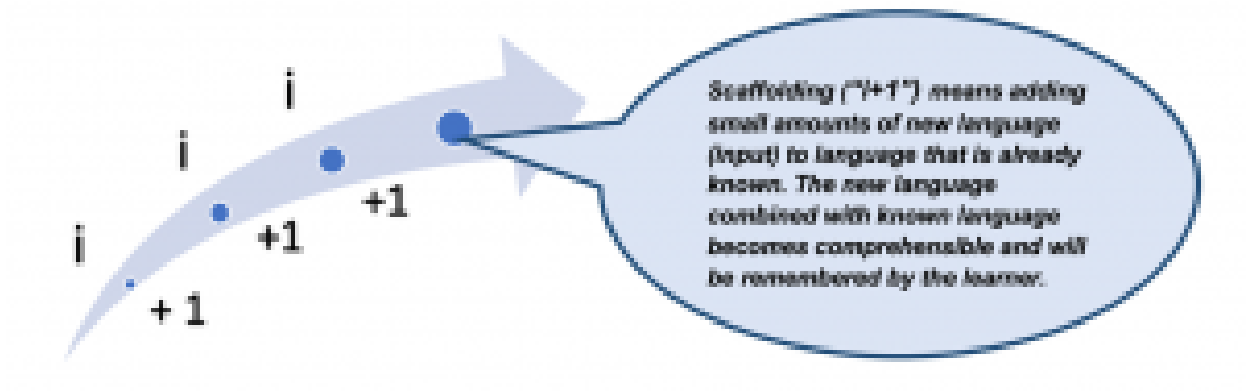
The methodology requires that teachers use only the target language, or L2, in the classroom, without references to or support from L1. The goal is to create an atmosphere of immersion, in an effort to simulate language learning in the home environment. No grammatical instruction is provided in the Natural Approach. Students model and repeat language until grammatical patterns are absorbed over time.

As students grow in their ability to communicate using oral language, they are introduced to reading and writing in L2.

The Natural Approach is dependent on **comprehensible input,** a term introduced by Krashen as part of the Input Hypothesis and symbolized as '***i + 1***' (information that is known by the learner 'i', plus a new piece of information, or '1'). Comprehensible input is comparable to **scaffolding** as described by Vygotsky (1978). In Krashen's view, language acquisition takes place when *known language* is blended with small amounts of *new language*. A language speaker (such as a teacher, guide, or mentor) helps the language learner to add the new language to their existing 'language storehouse' in the brain. Vygotsky used the phrase More Knowledgeable Other, or MKO, to describe the person providing guidance.

Krashen further asserted that high levels of comprehensible input build **receptive language**, which is the language received and stored by the brain through *listening & reading*. This storehouse of

vocabulary is the foundation for **productive language**, which is the language needed for *speaking & writing.*



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In 1983, Krashen and Terrell identified four stages of language learning: pre-production (listening, gestures); early production (short phrases); speech emergence (sentences); intermediate fluency (conversation). These stages have influenced approaches to language teaching across North American for several decades.

Weaknesses

- The distinction between acquisition and learning is not firmly supported by research. Terms such as *acquiring, learning,* and *studying* language are used interchangeably.
- Assumptions about a natural cognitive order for acquiring grammar are not supported in research. There is little evidence that an immersive approach in the classroom results in learners acquiring grammar naturally and in a logical order.
- The natural immersive environment of the home, where a first language surround infants and young children in the context of daily living, cannot be replicated in an artificial classroom environment.
- The hypothesis builds on a faulty assumption that a new language has no connection to knowledge already available in a first language. This premise discounts conceptual knowledge and literacy skills gained in a student's first language and stored in the brain.

(3) AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD

This method aligns well with Krashen's hypothesis about the need for comprehensible input in language learning. The audio-lingual method promotes the notion that learning language can be simulated inside the classroom by using prescribed dialogues and texts which are comprehensible to the learners. When students are able to repeat dialogues easily, they are asked to transfer ('transpose') the memorized language to other situations they may encounter outside the classroom.

The audio-lingual method promotes accuracy over fluency, meaning that vocabulary is limited, but grammatically accurate. The method relies on memorization of set phrases for prescribed contexts or situations. Vocabulary-building does not extend beyond the prescribed dialogues and texts.

Key Features

As with the Natural Approach, the Audio-Lingual Method proposes that students hear and use only the target language in the classroom, with no disruptions from their L1. Students are presented with a series of prepared drills and conversational sequences. They rehearse the sequences in pairs or small groups (e.g., role play, dialogues, class skits) until sentence patterns and grammatical sequences are memorized. In the initial stages, language is presented orally using audio-visual supports (e.g., audio recordings, film/video clips, pictures, props, gestures). Written language is introduced when basic oral skills have been mastered from the prepared dialogues and texts.

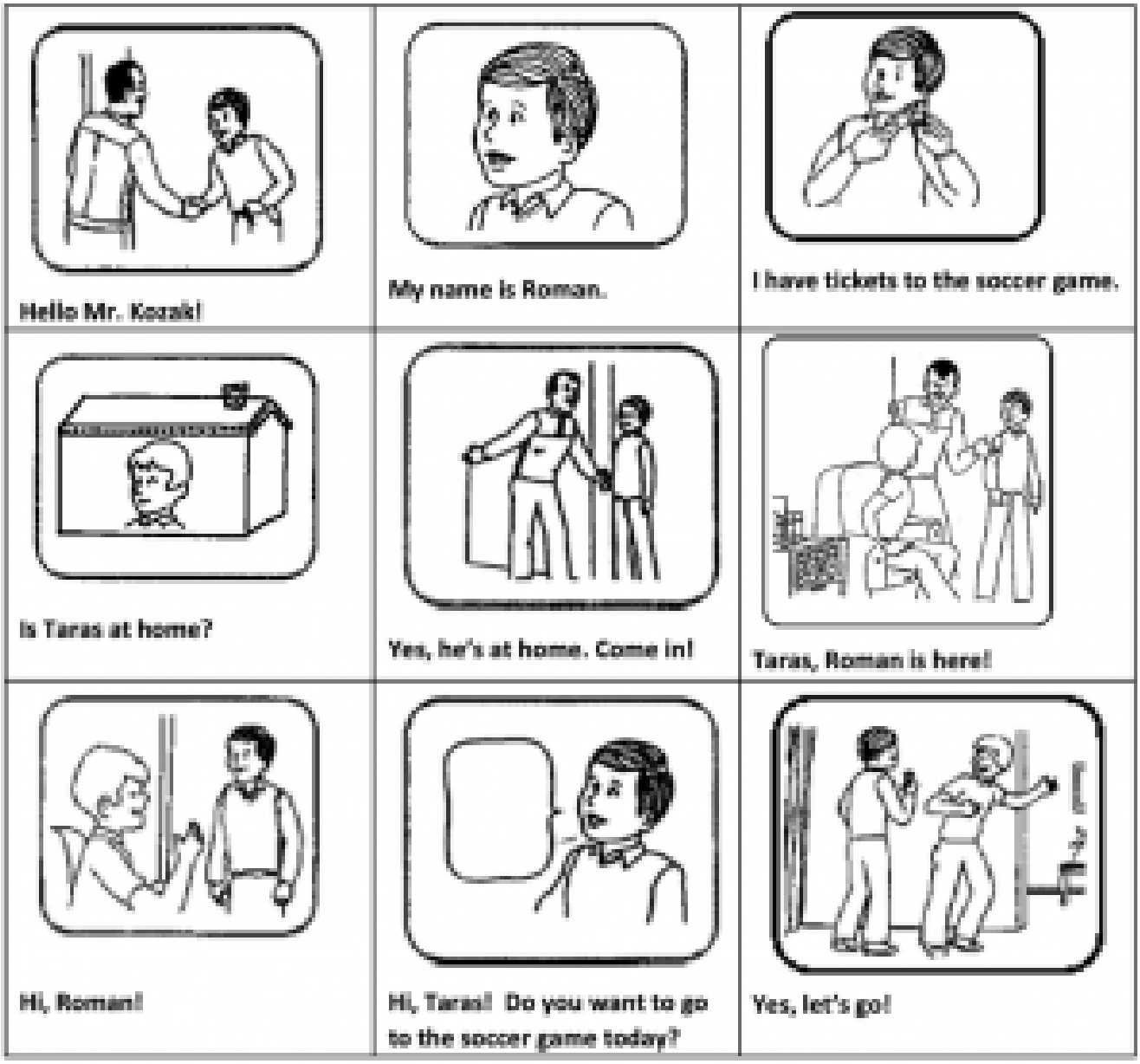
Weaknesses

- Language forms are practiced in static drills without explicit instruction to highlight grammatical features of the new language.
- The method limits language learning to well-rehearsed sequences rather than allowing for expanded language learning beyond these sequences.
- Memorized language sequences learned in the classroom are often inadequate for real-life purposes or difficult to transfer to authentic situations encountered outside the classroom.

Try It!

Memorize the text that matches each illustration, then role play with classmates using only the visuals. Three participants are required for the role play: Mr. Kozak, Roman, Taras.

Audio Visual Dialogue – Example for Role-Play (with text)



Source: Ukrainian Canadian Congress (1981). Mova I Rozmova (Language and Conversation). Winnipeg. https://www.spiritsd.ca/ukrainian/eng_high_mova.htm Permission: Courtesy of the Government of Saskatchewan Non-Commercial Reproduction.

Audio Visual Dialogue – Example for Role-Play (text removed)

Source: Ukrainian Canadian Congress (1981). Mova I Rozmova (Language and Conversation). Winnipeg. https://www.spiritsd.ca/ukrainian/eng_high_mova.htm Permission: Courtesy of the Government of Saskatchewan Non-Commercial Reproduction.

(4) TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

Total Physical Response, or TPR, was created by Dr. James Asher (1965). As with the theories of Terrell and Krashen, Asher believed that children learn a new language the way they learn their mother tongue. Children interact with their parents and the environment, combining actions and words for meaningful learning experiences. For example, a parent may say, "Look at me. Give me the toy." The child will respond physically by looking and then handing the toy to the parent. These listening-responding actions continue for months until the child begins to mimic language by repeating one or two words, followed by phrases, and eventually full sentences.

TPR can be compared to games such as 'Simon Says' or 'Follow the Leader', in which participants listen for instructions and then perform the actions.

Key Features

The teacher demonstrates a command-action sequence. Students are asked to listen to the command and perform the action several times. Then, together with the teacher, students repeat both the command and the action. After several choral repetitions, the teacher pulls away support (scaffolding) to allow student-led commands and actions.

TPR works particularly well with young children using learning activities such as fingerplays, action stories, and action songs. The combination of language and movement makes learning enjoyable. An extension of TPR with older learners is commonly called 'role play'. For example, students can act out a cooking lesson, play charades, or participate in a 'Who Am I' game. TPR works with large or small classes and requires few props or materials. Teachers need to plan language-movement sequences carefully for best results.

Weaknesses

- Younger children are often very open to movement and actions in the classroom, while older learners may find action sequences uncomfortable or embarrassing (unless the sequences are part of demonstrations, such as cooking or science experiments).
- TPR is highly dependent on brief statements and the use of imperative form of verbs, limiting language learning to commands with action verbs.
- Vocabulary grows at a slow pace, confined to directive statements and commands. Varied sentence patterns, questioning strategies, descriptive language, and interaction sequences for real-world communication are not part of TPR.

Try it!

Follow the TPR sequence below.

Step 1: Students perform the actions following the teacher's example.

Step 2: Students combine the action and statements as a choral exercise led by the teacher.

Step 3: Students repeat the actions and phrases in pairs or small groups on their own.

ACTIONS	STATEMENTS
Take out a pen.	This is my pen.
Take out a piece of paper.	This is my paper.
Pretend to write.	I am writing.
Show the pen and the paper.	I am writing with my pen.
Write your name on the paper.	I am writing on the paper.
Show the paper.	This is my name.
Put the paper on your desk.	This is my desk.
Point to the paper on the desk.	My name is on my desk.

ACTIONS	STATEMENTS
Point to yourself.	I like to walk.
Point to your feet.	I use my feet to walk.
Walk on the spot.	I can walk on the spot.
Walk forward.	I can walk forward.
Walk backward.	I can walk backward.
Point to yourself.	I like to run.
Point to your feet.	I use my feet to run.
Run on the spot.	I can run on the spot.
Run forward.	I can run forward.
Run backward.	I can run backward.

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

(5) THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

This approach grew in popularity in the late 1970s. It blended Krashen's theory of natural language acquisition with the realization that students learn language more effectively *in the classroom* when communication is meaningful, purposeful, and applicable to their lives. The Communicative Approach, also known as Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT, does not adhere to one prescribed methodology. Several methodologies have been integrated into CLT, including task-based learning, immersion/partial immersion education, and integrated language and content instruction (ILCI). Other terms for ILCI are content-based instruction (CBI) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

Key Features

Three distinguishing features of the Communicative Approach are:

- learner-centered instruction;

- language learning for real-life purposes; and,
- emphasis on fluency over accuracy.

In this approach, the teacher is the guide or facilitator of language learning in the classroom and students are active participants. Students gain confidence in their ability to communicate freely on various topics without feeling pressure to be grammatically accurate. Although grammar is not the central focus of the approach, it is still an important component of classroom instruction. Teachers draw attention to forms and functions of the language in the context of classroom language learning activities. Three methodologies that grew from the Communicative Approach are described below.

Task-Based Learning: This methodology centers on a problem to be solved or a task to be completed using the target language. Students begin with *pedagogical tasks* that are completed within the classroom, followed by *target tasks* to be completed outside the classroom. The tasks completed in the classroom allow the students to gain the language skills required to work on tasks outside the classroom, creating a 'language bridge' between the classroom and the real world. Tasks are carefully selected and sequenced to build functional language.

Full Immersion/Partial Immersion: Immersion education, in general, reflects the basic principles of communicative language teaching within the context of mainstream K-12 education. Immersion education has several delivery formats, such as partial, early, middle, and late immersion, bilingual education, and dual language education. Lyster and Genesee (2012) describe immersion education as "…a form of bilingual education that provides students with a sheltered classroom environment in which they receive at least half of their subject-matter instruction through the medium of a language that they are learning as a second, foreign, heritage, or indigenous language (L2). In addition, immersion students receive some instruction through the medium of a shared primary language, which normally has majority status in the community. (p.1) The curriculum for immersion education is cumulative in nature, with new language sequenced grade-by-grade into each subject area taught in the target language.

Integrated Language and Content Learning (ILCI). As with immersion, ILCI methodology reflects the belief that language is best learned through active use in authentic contexts. In the case of K-12 education, the context is the school classroom. Students learn to communication in the new language while also learning content in the subject areas. In other words, the classroom is used for *learning language* and *learning content through language*. The methodology promotes a combination of language objectives and content area objectives. Teachers create language objectives that target key terms and phrases needed to learn content successfully. The focus on language and content allows students to reach curriculum objectives in the subject areas.

Weaknesses

- As with the Natural Approach, the primary goal of Communicative Language Teaching is fluency rather than accuracy. Attention to grammatical features is left to the discretion of the teacher.
- Programs that are built on topics that reflect student interests may result in weak or unbalanced communication skills.
- Teachers continue to have difficulty recreating real-life communication in the artificial environment of the classroom.

- Assessment of progress can be challenging, given the focus on fluency for authentic purposes. Markers of language success must be clearly defined at the outset.

Try It!

To encourage communication in the target language, create a **Word Wall** using a strategy called Brainstorming. Ask students to generate words and phrases based on a *picture prompt* that is relevant to a topic/theme being studied in class.

Step 1: Students share words and phrases that come to mind when looking at the selected picture. The teacher writes everything down on a whiteboard, poster, or flip chart.

Step 2: Ask students to organize the words/phrases into categories. Create lists that can be displayed in the classroom (shown below). Students can refer to the Word Wall when talking, singing, dramatizing, or writing on the topic.

Step 3: Students may transfer vocabulary from the Word Wall to a personal language notebook. Remind students that they may use their L1 as a tool to help them understand and remember the meaning of new vocabulary.

Picture Prompt: Autumn

Source: Permission: CC0 1.0 Public Domain. Courtesy of Michael Morse

Students might contribute some/all of the words below. These words can be categorized (e.g., colours, nature, clothing, action words) and used to create a Word Wall.

Word Bank

leaf, leaves, children, boy, girl, fall, fun, many, cool, jacket, sweater, trees, red, yellow, brown, gold, crimson, copper, play, throw, catch, run, jump, laugh, chilly, rustle, falling, autumn, forest, crunch, crackle, crisp, jumping, throwing, catching, rustling, colourful, happy, smiling, playing, laughing, sunshine, chilly, playtime, recess.

Use any format to create the Word Wall. Brief video explanations are available here:

1. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The Balanced Literacy Diet. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Q_Ek_ZD7hY
2. Hampton, L. (2019). Learning Focused. Ideas for Creating Word Walls. https://learningfocused.com/word-wall-ideas-interactive-classroom-word-wall-makeover/

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Describe five language teaching methodologies/approaches that have been used in past decades to promote language study.
2. Identify key features and weaknesses of each methodology/approach.
3. Recall personal language learning experiences from past years. Which approach or methodology was commonly used by your language teacher(s)?
4. Think about your current teaching practices. Which approach or methodology do you frequently use for language instruction? Why?

MODULE 1 GLOSSARY

Approach: A broad term used to describe a set of beliefs or assumptions about the nature of language learning.

Comprehensible input: A strategy for language learning that involves the use of language that is slightly above the level of language that is understood by learners. Krashen described this small margin between the known and the new as ***i +1.***

Interpretation: Involves oral transfer of information from one language to another, ensuring that the intended meaning is conveyed to the listener.

Method (methodology): Describes a systematic plan for language teaching that reflects a selected approach.

Productive language: The language produced (output) through speaking and writing.

Receptive language: The language received and stored in the brain (input) through listening and reading.

Scaffolding: Process of adding small bits of new information (input) to existing knowledge, guided by an individual who is a 'More Knowledgeable Other' (Vygotsky = MKO).

Strategies: Actions, tasks, or activities that support language instruction in the classroom as part of a teaching methodology.

Translation: Involves written transfer of information from one language to another.

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LEARNING MODULE TWO: THEORIES THAT HAVE TRANSFORMED LANGUAGE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The names *Lev Vygotsky*, *Stephen Krashen*, and *Jim Cummins* may already be familiar to you. These distinguished authors and researchers have put forth several theories that transformed language education. Their work continues to influence current approaches to language teaching, learning, and assessment. It is difficult to find an educational text about language learning that *does not* include one of these names in the list of references!

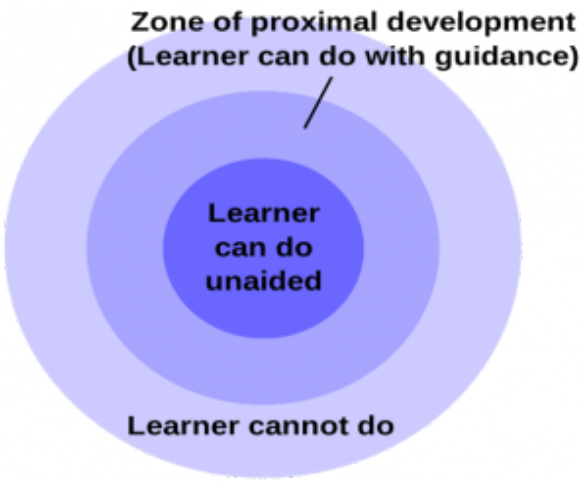
The theories of Vygotsky and Krashen were introduced briefly in the previous module. Their work is examined in greater detail in Module 2. The theories of Jim Cummins, a noted Canadian author and language specialist, are also presented in this module. Cummins' research, and in particular, the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory and his distinction between conversational and academic language (known by the acronyms BICS & CALP), caused language specialists to rethink approaches to language learning in the 21st century.

LEV VYGOTSKY (1896-1934)

Born in Belarus in 1896, Vygotsky believed that students learn best when interacting with others who can be mentors or guides. As a cognitive psychologist, he stressed that students bring with them funds of prior knowledge that are a foundational base for new learning. Vygotsky believed that new knowledge needed to be linked to existing knowledge in order for students to grow in their knowledge. The process of linking prior learning to new learning was described as **scaffolding** in a previous module.

Scaffolding involves the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). This is someone with a better understanding or a higher ability than the student who is learning how to perform a specific task. When grandparents pass along traditions or cultural practices in the home, this is a form of cultural scaffolding. Other examples are: a) learning how to drive mentored by a driving instructor, b) learning how to play the piano guided by a piano teacher, or c) learning to bake cookies alongside a parent or older sibling.

Scaffolding is built on Vygotsky's theory of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).** The 'zone' is the space between what a student *can do now* and what a student is *not yet able to do*. The space is just beyond what a student can do independently (this is why it is 'proximal'). In order to move out of the zone, the student requires help from a more capable peer, a parent, or a teacher.



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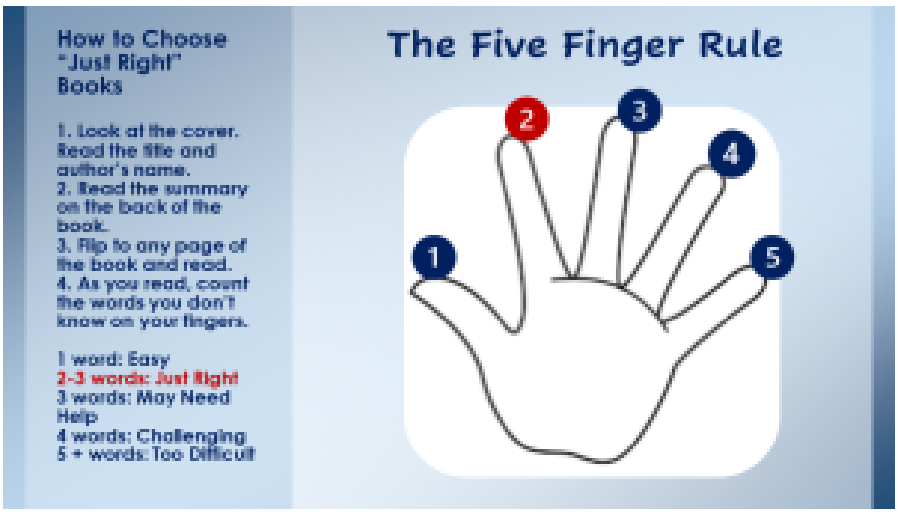
In language classrooms, the teacher, a teaching assistant, parents, older students, or peer mentors can all be excellent MKOs for language learning. The right resources, such as dictionaries, bilingual books, or simplified texts, can assist with the process of scaffolding. Access to technology and online resources such as messaging systems, translation sites, language apps, audio or video clips, and authentic broadcasts, also play an important role in moving students beyond their current level of language ability.

A scaffolded approach to choosing 'Just Right' reading material for language learners is shown in the infographic below.



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The process of scaffolding is at the heart of the 'five finger rule' (also known as the 'Goldilocks rule') for selecting reading material in the primary grades. The goal is for students to select a book that has enough familiar vocabulary to make reading enjoyable and to make the content understood. *The meaning of two or three new words on a page can be gained from the broader context*. These new words will expand the student's vocabulary and learning will take place (students move up and out of the zone). However, if there are too many new words on the page, the student will not comprehend the text and learning will be hampered (students become stuck in the zone).

The term scaffolding is also called the**'gradual release of responsibility'** or the **'I do – we do – you do' strategy,** which means that support is gradually removed as students demonstrate the skills or knowledge to proceed independently. Some examples of classroom strategies that scaffold learning include close activities, sentence frames, writing templates, performance samples, pre-tests, peer tutoring and small group instruction.

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan based on Coelho, E., (2012). Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms. p. 264.

Brief video explanations are available here:

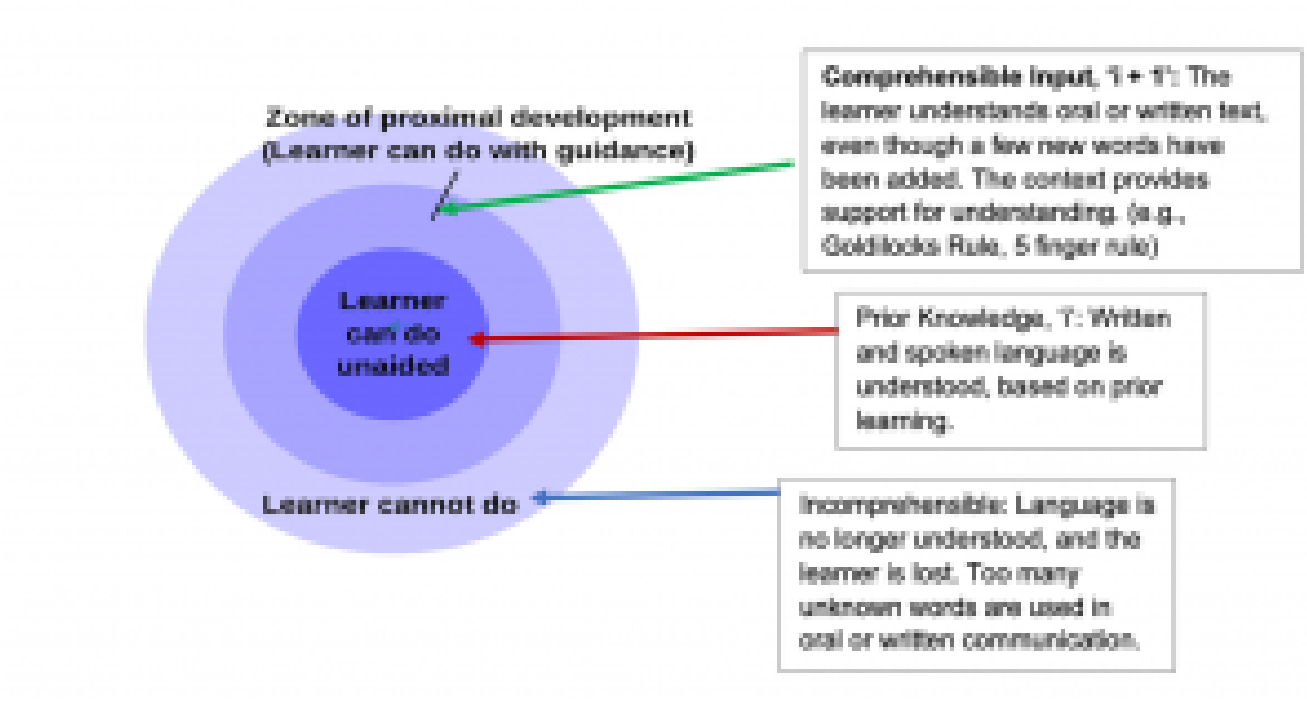
1. Pennsylvania (USA) Dept.of Education. Teaching Matters – Scaffolding. 5:12 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gNjGD_W3dM
2. Edutopia (USA). 5 Scaffolding Strategies. 3 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axelin36pmM

STEPHEN KRASHEN (1941 –)

Krashen's Natural Approach stresses that students must have **comprehensible input** (Module 1 Glossary) to comprehend the language around them. Krashen introduced the term as part of the Input Hypothesis, represented as '***i + 1***' (information that is known by the learner 'i', plus a new piece of information, or '+1'). In Krashen's view, language acquisition takes place when *known language* is blended with a small amount of *new language*. A fluent language speaker such as a teacher, guide, or mentor helps the language learner to add the new language to their existing language storehouse in the brain. The fluent language speaker is the 'More Knowledgeable Other' or MKO, as described by Vygotsky (1978).

Vygotsky's explanation of the ZPD and scaffolding can be applied to the process of learning a new language. Comprehensible input, or language that is known to the learner is based on prior knowledge. When just a few new words are added and support is available, the student makes progress with language learning. In other words, students move through the 'zone', the space between what a

student knows and what is new. If too many new words are added, students become stuck in the zone because they no longer understand the message. Language input is no longer comprehensible.



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Another language researcher, Merrill Swain (1993) added the **Output Hypothesis** to Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Swain believed that comprehensible input is only the first half of the process for successful language learning. Learners must also *produce language* in order to demonstrate their language abilities. When students produce language, they draw on their personal language storehouse in the brain. According to Swain, when students must produce language (output), they learn about their own language abilities, where language gaps exist, meaning that further learning must take place. These gaps can be linked to Vygotsky's description of the 'zone'. Students need to seek support for language gaps so that they can communicate with greater fluency and accuracy. When they move out of the 'zone', language progress takes place. From this description, it is clear that the input hypothesis and the output hypothesis are interrelated; one cannot be successful without the other.

One of Krashen's most interesting contributions to language learning is the **Affective Filter Hypothesis,** which refers to student anxiety levels. When a student feels overwhelmed by the language (feeling lost), uncomfortable, or ill-prepared to communicate, the affective filter is raised. In simplest terms, as a student's anxiety level increases, language learning is hampered.

When a student is too anxious or worried in class, negative emotions override the learning process and become a barrier to performance. Consider the case of students with 'test anxiety'. When faced with a major exam or pressure to perform, the brain can shut down. Students may feel physically ill with stomach pains or a headache, or they may stare blankly at the questions on an exam page. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains this type of anxiety.

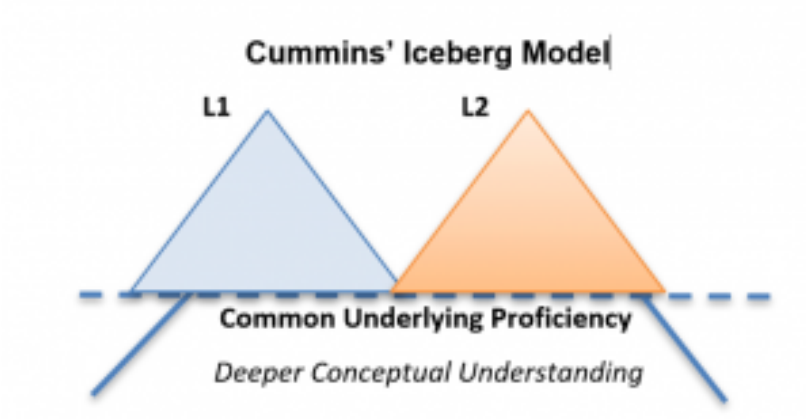
The affective filter may also affect a student's motivation to learn. Classroom indicators may be

boredom, inability to focus, or detachment. Other factors are the student age, personality features, identity issues, or language distance.

JIM CUMMINS (1949 –)

Born in Ireland, Dr. Jim Cummins completed his doctoral studies at the University of Alberta and embarked on a long and distinguished career as a professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. To date, he has authored 18 books, edited 11 books, written 165 book chapters and 114 journal articles. Cummins has originated several ground-breaking theories which are described in this module. His work is quoted and referenced by many language education specialists.

Cummins (1981) earliest work on the **Common Underlying Proficiency**, or CUP Theory refuted earlier beliefs about languages as separate cognitive pillars in the brain. Using the image of an iceberg, Cummins proposed that the brain has a central operating system which processes information (much like today's computer hard drive). Languages interact with one another, drawing on prior learning and concepts already established within the central operating system. At the time, Cummins' theory was considered to be an oversimplification of the complex functions of the brain. However, his theory about the interaction of languages within the brain has proven to be true, given research studies in psychology (Bialystok, E. & Craik, F., 2010).



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Cummins' distinction between **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)** and **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** has had the greatest impact on language learning around the world. His research began with a look at the challenges faced by English language learners in schools as students tried to catch up to grade-level peers who were native speakers of English. Cummins noticed that students picked up **conversational language** (BICS) within one to two years, but students were still not performing well on academic tasks. Students had difficulty understanding subject area texts and completing assignments. The input was no longer comprehensible; in other words, the vocabulary was beyond the students' level of understanding in a new language. Cummins realized that language used for everyday communication was different than the **academic language** (CALP) required for learning subject area content at school.

BICS – Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills	CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
• Basic conversations • Language used to carry out everyday tasks • High frequency words; recurring language • Vocabulary base does not include subject specific or 'school' language • Cognitively undemanding • Context-embedded	• Language specific to learning at school • Involves subject-specific terms • Low frequency vocabulary; language not used in everyday conversations • Cognitively demanding • Context-reduced

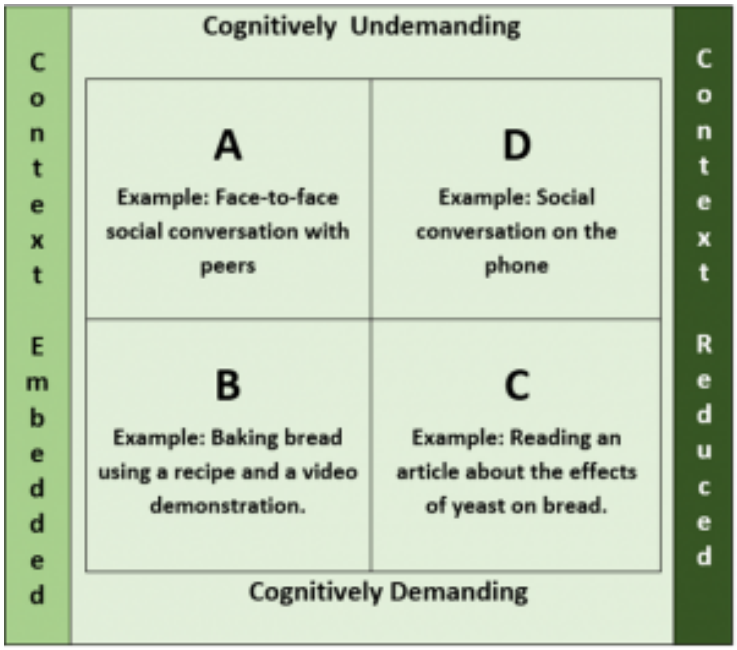
Chart Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Brief video explanations are available here:

1. From Conversations to the Classroom: Dr. Jim Cummins on teaching low frequency words. From The Balanced Literacy Diet (2016). 1:99 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qy4vSK4_n6c
2. BICS vs CALP – Examples of language proficiency of an English Learner. (No date). 2:29 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_3AQ2FmLUY
3. Webcast (No date). Dr. Jim Cummins. EduGains: Ontario Ministry of Education. 8:41 min. http://edugains.ca/newsite/ell/index.html

In subsequent years, Cummins developed the **Quadrants Model** to illustrate how classroom learning can be scaffolded to make transitions from conversational to academic language (Reiss, pp 12-15).

After studying the chart of quadrants shown below, you will notice that beginner language learners and those with basic conversational skills are situated on the left-hand side of the chart, where language is very basic (*cognitively undemanding)* and texts contain illustrations, graphs, charts, photos or other visual cues (*context-embedded).* Language students working in Quadrants A and B rely heavily on the support of contextual cues to build vocabulary and to comprehend meaning. As students graduate to Quadrant C, they have a very broad repertoire of academic language and can comprehend more complex texts without relying on contextual cues. Quadrant D does not add value to language learning, but it does serve a purpose for repetitive or recurring tasks.



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A more detailed chart of Cummins' Quadrants and the terms used to identify the quadrants is given in **Appendix A.**

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Describe the contributions of Vygotsky, Krashen, and Cummins to the field of language learning.
2. Explain the relationship between the terms scaffolding and comprehensible input (i + 1).
3. Illustrate the interdependence hypothesis using the visual image of an iceberg.
4. Describe the distinction between communicative language (BICS) and academic language (CALP).
5. Create a chart to contrast context-embedded and context-reduced strategies for language learning.

MODULE 2 GLOSSARY

Academic language: Describes language that is specific to schooling, including classroom terminology, subject specific vocabulary, and language used in course materials, texts, assignments, and exams.

Affective Filter Hypothesis: Refers to the effects of anxiety on learning due to increased emotion, which becomes a barrier to learning when students feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or fearful.

BICS: An acronym for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, the term used to describe conversational language, or the language used to carry out everyday tasks and routines.

CALP: An acronym for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, a term that encompasses academic language, or the language specific to schooling and subject-area learning.

Common underlying proficiency (CUP): A theory that illustrates how cognitive and literacy skills established in a first language (or mother tongue) are transferred to a new language or languages. Using the image of an iceberg, the invisible part of the iceberg represents the area of the brain that stores concepts, while the visible peaks represent two or more languages that share the same conceptual base.

Conversational language: The kind of informal, everyday language used to accomplish daily tasks and routines, and to chat with family and friends.

Gradual release of responsibility: Another term for scaffolding, meaning that support is gradually removed as students demonstrate the skills or knowledge to proceed independently. It is also called the "I do – We do – You do" instructional strategy.

Output Hypothesis: Based on language intake (as proposed in the Input Hypothesis), students must produce language (output) in order to demonstrate their full range of language abilities.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): The space between what a student can do independently and what the student is not yet able to do independently, requiring help from a more knowledgeable other (MKO) to guide learning.

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LEARNING MODULE THREE: PROGRAM MODELS AND PROFICIENCY LEVELS

INTRODUCTION

There are varying opinions about the 'best' program model for language learning. In recent decades, the immersion model has been a popular choice for school-aged children in Canada. Yet we know that the immersion model is not possible in many settings, particularly rural settings, due to demographics and limited resources. What other program models and options should be considered for language learning?

Learning Module 3 describes three models commonly used for delivering language instruction in *school settings*: (a) language as a school subject (b) bilingual education, and (c) immersion education. Of course, languages are also learned *outside of school hours* (*e.g.,* after-school programs, Saturday schools, summer camps), but the focus of this module is on language delivery during school hours as part of the regular curriculum.

When parents are questioned about their reasons for enrolling children in a language program, one common response is "We want our children to be fluent in another language". However, the word 'fluent' is elusive, meaning different things to different people. What is fluency? Is fluency the same as proficiency? This module examines the meaning of the terms *fluency, accuracy,* and *proficiency* and the impact of factors such as *place, purpose,* and *time* on language learning.

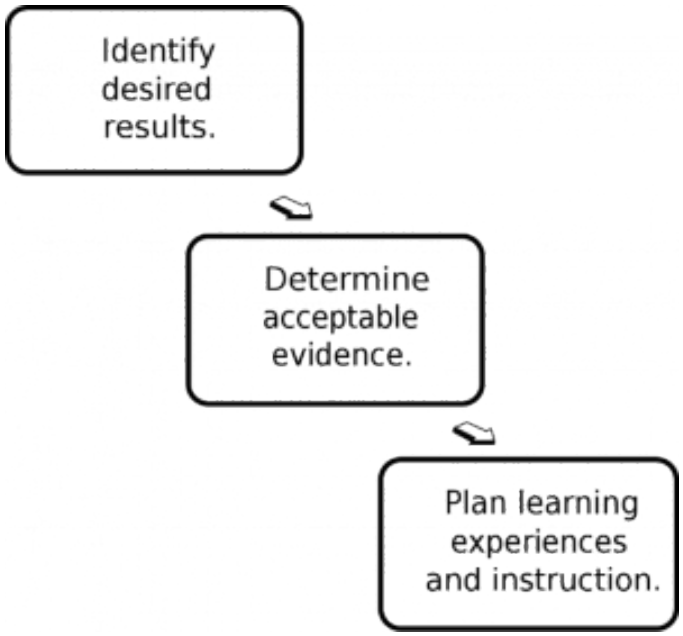
PROGRAM MODELS: BEGIN WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF PROFICIENCY LEVELS

It may seem strange to begin with proficiency levels rather than moving directly into a description of program models. However, an understanding of proficiency levels *informs* the selection of a program model in a particular school and location. Consider these questions:

- Is the goal of a language program to provide basic conversational language (BICS) or is the goal to study academic content (subject areas) in the target language (CALP)?
- What is the language background of the learners? Do they have prior experience with the language? (If *yes*, this may influence the selection of a program model).

- Is there a clear understanding of the stages of language proficiency for assessment of progress?

The process of beginning with the end goals in mind (in this case, proficiency levels), is called **backward design**. Introduced for curriculum development by authors Wiggins and McTighe (Understanding by Design, 2005), the process guides decision-making about program design, delivery, and resources for learning.



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DETERMINING PROFICIENCY USING A LANGUAGE REFERENCE SCALE

To understanding the meaning of fluency, accuracy, and proficiency, educators must focus on language progression over time, which is comparable to grade-by-grade cumulative progress in one subject area at school. Using language *fluently* is only one part of the language equation. Using language *accurately* is the other important indicator of progress. The long-term goal is proficiency, which is a combination of fluency and accuracy.

FLUENCY + ACCURACY = LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Fluency describes the spontaneous flow of language without specific attention to language forms, while **accuracy** focuses on the correct use of a language system, with attention to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Sometimes a student will speak freely and confidently on many topics, but their speech has many grammatical errors (for example, incorrect case endings, lack of subject-verb agreement, incomplete sentences). This means that the student is speaking fluently but needs support with accuracy. To reach **language proficiency,** language learners must exhibit both fluency and accuracy in the target language.

As with the term fluency, there is often some confusion with labels such as *beginner, intermediate* and

advanced when referring to language skills. Such terms are subjective and open to interpretation by teachers or administrators. For example, a language beginner may be a student who has:

- no prior experience with the language being learned;
- some knowledge of simple words, phrases, and greetings;
- basic conversational skills in the target language (BICS); or,
- knowledge of the alphabet for reading purposes, without full comprehension.

A **language reference scale** charts language progress in a cumulative manner, using descriptors of language skills at various stages of learning from *absolute beginner* to *near-native proficiency*. A well-constructed, valid and reliable scale illustrates how language students are progressing along a **language continuum.** The continuum marks stages of language learning that are common across all languages and cultures.

A reference scale can assist language educators to:

- assess the starting point of each student enrolled in a language program;
- create realistic connections between curricular goals and student proficiency levels;
- guide resource selection based on learner skills, comprehension levels, and curricular goals;
- select instructional strategies that build the 4 skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- select assessment strategies that are appropriate for learner language levels
- collaborate with colleagues to improve the progress of language learners at each level of the reference scale;
- create professional networks of language educators across schools, districts, and ministries to support instruction, assessment, and resource development.

Most importantly, a language reference scale provides ***clear starting points*** and ***continual check points*** for monitoring progress. As students reach higher levels of proficiency in the target language, they transition from conversational language to academic language. The phrase 'slow but steady wins the race' aptly describes the language learning process.

A language reference scale confirms that ***language learning takes time*** and ***moves in stages*** along the language continuum.

THE COMMON (EUROPEAN) FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES

For more than a decade, Saskatchewan K-12 schools have used the **CFR,** or Common Framework of Reference to chart the progress of English language learners in schools. The reference scale is a school-based adaptation of the **CEFR**, or Common European Framework of Reference (2001) developed by the European Union's Language Policy Division. The CEFR is a valid, reliable, and research-based reference tool for language learning used in several Canadian provinces and in many countries within and outside of Europe.

The six levels in the CEFR scale, **A1 to C2**, describe what language learners are able to do in the

language(s) they know at each stage of the language learning process. The six levels are divided into four skill strands: **l*istening, speaking (production and interaction), reading, and writing*.** Language educators can be assured of ***consistency*** and ***objectivity*** when using the scale to monitor and assess language progress. Global descriptors of all levels are shown below.

Proficient User	**C2** **C1**		C2 - Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express himself/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. C1 - Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	**B2** **B1**	 **B1.2** **B1.1**	B2 - Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. B1 - Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	**A2** **A1**	**A2.2** **A2.1** **A1.2** **A1.1**	A2 - Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. A1 - Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

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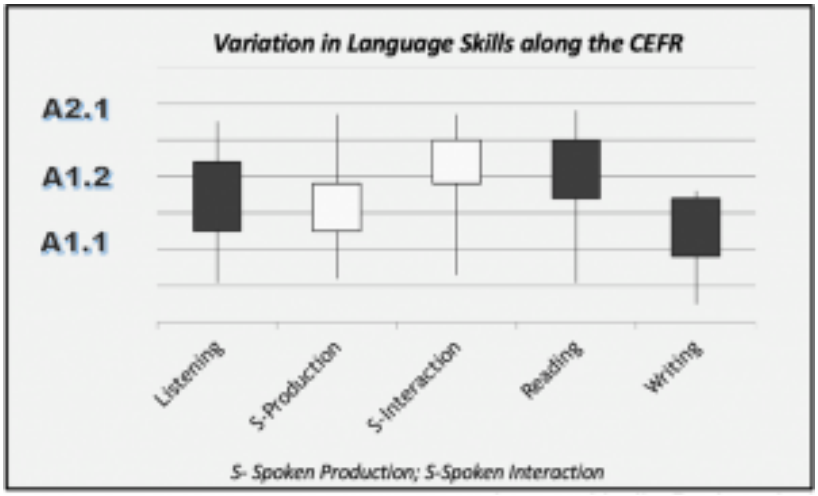
The adapted CFR document used in Saskatchewan schools has been further sub-divided to create detailed progress descriptors for K-12 language learners at the A1 (A1.1, A1.2), A2 (B1.1, B1.2) and B1 (B1.1, B1.2) levels.

An easy-to-use CEFR/CFR chart with descriptors of what school-aged children *know and can do* at

each stage of language learning is provided in **Appendix B** of this text. **The CEFR/CFR Reference Scale: A Practical Tool for Assessing Language Skills in an Additional Language** (Prokopchuk, 2021) can help teachers to monitor learner progress and assign a language level at the end of a term or year of study. Checked descriptors illustrate areas of language progress, while those that remain unchecked will require additional support in the classroom.

It is rare for students to have equal strength in each of the skill areas of the CEFR/CFR as they learn a language. Given the variability of factors that impact language learning, there is no clear division between levels. Student progress is often jagged or uneven, as shown in the illustration below. An average level can be assigned to indicate each student's general skill level at the end of the term or course.



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SELECTING A PROGRAM MODEL: KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

After a brief examination of the CEFR language reference scale in the previous section, one fact is clear: Students learn language(s) in a cumulative manner over time. There is no 'quick and easy' pathway. Students cannot skip stages in the language learning process.

Being aware of the stages of language learning along a reference scale such as the CEFR can help school officials and the school community make decisions about the type of language program that can be offered and maintained in a school district. A few key questions, such as those listed below, can help to inform the decision-making process.

Place (or Location): How does your location impact the choice of language(s) being studied?

- Is there a cultural connection between the target language and the people within a community?
- Are there local resources (e.g., language speakers) to support the language?
- Are there cultural or historic ties to the language in the broader area?
- Is there significant distance between local languages and the language being studied (e.g.,

different country or continent)? If the answer is ***yes,*** why is the language being considered for study at school? Will there be local support for enrolment?

- How does the location impact student motivation, access to learning resources, and the desire to continue language study in the future?

Purpose: Is the purpose (goal) for studying a language *communication* OR *academic study*?

- Why is the target language being offered in schools?
- Is the target language being promoted for specific purposes (future job, travel, study, work)?
- Is the goal to promote bilingualism (with students having no choice as to the language of study)?
- Is the purpose linked to a parental request or a government mandate?
- How do students feel about language learning? Will students enrol?

Time: How much time is available for instruction within the school setting?

- How often can the learning take place?
- How large are the blocks of time devoted to language learning?
- Can the learning continue grade by grade, or will there be barriers to continuation (e.g., student enrolment, teacher availability, funding shortages, limited resources)?

In terms of instructional time, three important factors – ***amount, frequency,*** **and** ***intensity**** – influence and often determine the ability of students to reach higher levels of proficiency.

The chart below illustrates the vast difference in instructional hours available for language learning based on the program model selected in a school or district. Calculations are based on 190 school days and 5 instructional hours per day. This reflects a total of 950 instructional hours per year and 7,600 hours over 8 years (Grades 1-8).

**Intensity – language study compressed into a specific time frame (e.g. bilingual education for one full semester, 6-week immersion block, one full day of language study per week).*

Type of Program	Instructional Hours Per Day	Instructional Hours Per Week	Instructional Hours Per Year	Instructional Hours: 8 Years
Language as a Subject	40 minutes 3 days per week	2 hours	76 hours	608 hours
Bilingual Education Program (50% of each day)	2.5 hours per day 5 days per week	12.5 hours	475 hours	3,800 hours
Immersion Education Program (80% of each day)	4 hours per day 5 days per week	20 hours	760 hours	6,080 hours

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Given the significant difference in the hours of language instruction, **language expectations** in

each type of program must be realistic and proportional to the amount, frequency, and intensity of instruction in the target language. The three models identified in the chart are described in the segment that follows.

THREE PROGRAM MODELS

Language as a Subject: When language is studied as a school subject, students attend language class during designated time periods each week. The amount of time available for language as a subject is determined by local school authorities. This model resembles the study of any other subject being learned at school. The language curriculum per grade level is supplied by the ministry or local education authority. It is common for students to achieve conversational language skills (Cummins: BICS) in this type of program.

The Bilingual Program Model: This model, also called dual language education or partial immersion, is defined as "schooling at the elementary and/or secondary levels in which English along with another language are used for at least 50% of academic instruction during at least one school year." (Genesee, F. & Lindholm-Leary, K., 2008). In this model, students learn the new language while learning content from selected subject areas. Instruction in bilingual education integrates language outcomes with content outcomes in an approach called **integrated language and content instruction (ILCI).** More information about ILCI appears in an upcoming module.

Immersion Education (Canadian model): As with the bilingual model, students learn a new language through content area study. Canadian French immersion programs are structured to use the target language between 80% and 100% of the school day for most subject areas. In *Early Immersion*, students begin as a cohort in Kindergarten or Grade One and build language knowledge along a grade-by-grade learning path. Immersion curricula are specifically designed to teach language through content in a cumulative manner. Although *Middle Immersion* and *Late Immersion* models are possible, they are difficult to establish due to the logistics of location (gathering students from other schools in a new location) and the language demands on students who do not begin in the primary grades.

RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE 'BILINGUAL ADVANTAGE'

There is agreement among psychologists, language researchers, and education officials that knowing more than one language has cognitive advantages. Benefits include increased conceptual understanding, flexible thinking, creativity, and executive function (Bialystok 2011, 2017, Marian & Shook 2012).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) uses the term 'bilingual advantage' when referring to English language learners in Canadian schools who are speakers of other languages, but are learning English to achieve academic success at school. Ministry officials state that first languages need to be supported by teachers, parents, and the community so that students retain first language skills while becoming bilingual, rather than losing these skills in monolingual classrooms. The quote below from the Ontario Ministry document refers to English language learners; however, the premise is applicable to any language(s) being added to a student's first language.

Students who see their previously developed language skills acknowledged by their teachers and parents are more likely to feel confident and take the risks involved in learning a new language. They are able to

view English as an addition to their first language, rather than as a substitution for it. Respect and use of the first language contribute both to the building of a confident learner and to the efficient learning of additional languages and academic achievement, including: developing mental flexibility; developing problem-solving skills; communicating with family members; experiencing a sense of cultural stability and continuity; understanding cultural and family values; developing awareness of global issues; expanding career opportunities. Students who are able to communicate and are literate in more than one language are better prepared to participate in a global society. Though this has benefits for the individual, Canadian society also stands to gain from having a multilingual workforce.

Supporting English Language Learners (2008), p. 8

According to the Associated Press (2001), there are more bilingual people in the world than monolingual people. More than 60% of the world's children are being raised as bilinguals. Now more than ever, languages are an essential vehicle for global communication and cross-cultural understanding. Language education in schools can prepare students to live, work, study, and travel in a very interconnected world.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Identify in general terms what students can do at each stage of language proficiency in the CEFR/CFR: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.
2. Explain how factors such as place, purpose and time influence the type of program model selected for language education.
3. List the basic characteristics of three program models for language learning: language as a subject, bilingual education (also called dual language, partial immersion), and immersion education.

MODULE 3 GLOSSARY

Accuracy: Describes the correct use of a language system, with specific attention to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Backward Design: A process that examines the end goals (objectives, outcomes) for a subject or course, and uses these goals as the basis for curriculum design, lesson planning, and assessment.

CEFR/CFR: Acronyms for *Common (European) Framework of Reference* that refer to a valid, reliable reference scale used to describe language abilities in four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Fluency: Unrestricted, comprehensible flow of language without specific attention to language forms.

Integrated Language and Content Instruction (ILCI): A dual-focused approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language.

Language continuum: A cumulative chart that illustrates the developmental stages of language progress observed across languages and cultures.

Language reference scale: An objective chart that describes observable language skills and abilities along a language continuum.

Proficiency: the combination of language fluency and accuracy, resulting in the ability to use language competently for various purposes and in different circumstances.

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LEARNING MODULE FOUR: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The Wiggins and McTighe (Understanding by Design, 2005) planning model shared in the previous module, called *backward design,* helps instructors to plan lessons by beginning with the end in mind. Viewed through the lens of the K-12 curriculum, this means that lesson planning should begin with a focus on curriculum objectives, or the 'results' of the learning. Backward design involves three steps:

- **Identify the desired results.** What will students know and be able to do at the end of the unit, course or term?
- **Determine acceptable evidence of progress.** What methods will be used to assess learning? How will students demonstrate their language learning?
- **Plan learning experiences and instruction.** What tasks, activities, or resources will help students to learn the target language?

When working with **language learners,** the success of lesson planning is dependent on knowing the language abilities of students at the start of the instructional program.

- What do students already know and what can they do using the target language?
- Are students absolute beginners or do they have some prior knowledge in the target language?
- How will a range of language skills affect planning for differentiated learning tasks?
- How will this affect resource selection?

This module proposes that teachers begin the backward design process with one additional step: initial assessment of language skills. Language specialist Elizabeth Coelho (2012) recommends a step by step process for initial assessment, outlined in the module, to provide teachers with a clear snapshot of the language abilities of students in the classroom. Once initial assessment is complete, teachers can plan lessons that more closely align with each student's prior knowledge, comprehension

levels, and language abilities. Instructional resources and tasks can also be selected strategically to help students expand language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Research in language education points to significant benefits when language is learned through content instruction. This requires that *language objectives* be written to match *content objectives* referred to in the first step of the backward design process. Instructional planning that considers both language objectives and content objectives improves classroom progress with language learning. According to Genesee (1994), a leading researcher in immersion and second language education:

- *Instructional approaches that integrate content and language are likely to be more effective than approaches in which language is taught in isolation.*
- *The use of instructional strategies and academic tasks that encourage active discourse among learners and between learners and teachers is likely to be especially beneficial for second language learning.*
- *Language development should be systematically integrated with academic development in order to maximize language learning.*

Source: Coelho (2012) Ch.3, p. 71.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT: A SNAPSHOT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

Conducting an **initial assessment** helps to determine each student's language proficiency in the target language at the beginning of a language program. The results offer a snapshot that acts as a baseline starting point from which all language progress can be assessed throughout the year. Initial assessment can be very revealing! Comments such as *"We thought they remembered more from last year"* or *"Although the students read fluently, many don't understand the content"* are common.

One of the major strengths of the initial assessment process is the collaboration that can take place between language teachers and grade-level teachers. A clear picture of each student's academic capabilities emerges. The language teacher then documents a student's language level using a reference framework such as the CEFR (explained in the previous module), and then makes decisions about how to structure lesson plans that will help language students achieve the course objectives. Planning takes place with teachers fully informed about language strengths and areas that need support.

Coelho outlined a comprehensive sequence of activities for initial language assessment in her book *Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms (2012).* Originally designed for English language learners in schools, Coelho's process of initial assessment is applicable to all language learners (Chapter 2, pp 28-31). The steps below are an adaptation of Coelho's original sequence for English learners.

STEP 1: WRITING AND READING SKILLS

(A) Ask the student to label a picture in the target language.

- If the student can label the picture, ask the student to write a few sentences or paragraphs to

introduce themselves, describe a favourite place, describe the picture, or retell an important event.

- Take note of the following: How long does it take the student to produce the piece of writing? Does the student check and edit the piece? How simple or complex is the language used in the writing?

(B) Offer a few samples of text to determine the range of reading abilities.

- Allow the student to select the text that they are comfortable reading aloud.
- Ensure that samples reflect a range of reading levels and interests, e.g., basic greetings, friendly conversation, informational text, poetry, and an excerpt from a novel.
- Provide a few minutes for preparation.

This is not meant to be a comprehension exercise; rather, you will learn something about the student's familiarity with print, ability to decode, place stresses on the correct parts of words or phrases in sentences, and read aloud with confidence and fluency.

STEP 2: ORAL SKILLS – INFORMAL INTERVIEW

Proceed to this step **only if** the student has some basic oral language skills.

- Ask simple, open-ended questions to get a sense of the student's conversational skills. Make note of the student's fluency, pronunciation, accuracy with grammar and word choice, and overall ability to communicate effectively. Sample questions might be:
    - What is your name?
    - How old are you?
    - Where do you live?
    - What are the names of your parents?
    - Do you have grandparents (or a favourite aunt or uncle)? What are their names?
    - What is your favourite movie (or song, book, or app)?
    - Tell me about your last birthday (or family gathering). Did you have a party?
    - Do you play sports (or take dance lessons, music lessons, other lessons)? Tell me something about your hobby.

STEP 3: ORAL SKILLS – PICTURE PROMPT

Proceed to this step **only if** the student was able to participate in Step 2.

- Provide a set of pictures showing people of various ages involved in different activities.
- Ask the students to select a picture and to talk about what they see. Some students might point and name objects in the picture, while others might describe the picture. Students with greater oral fluency may be able to tell a story, using the picture as the starting point or the ending.

STEP 4: WRITTEN SKILLS

Proceed to this step **only if** the student was able to complete Step 1(A). *If the student has no experience with writing in the target language, you will need to adjust lesson plans accordingly for this student.*

- Ask the student to write about the picture they selected. Some students will be able to label a few items, while others may be able to write sentences or a descriptive paragraph. Students with greater levels of fluency may be able to create a story about the picture.
- Offer a bilingual dictionary and see whether students make use of it (if age-appropriate).
- When assessing the writing, use a holistic approach. First, consider the writer's age, level of detail in the writing, organization of thoughts, and flow of information. Then consider vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

STEP 5: READING COMPREHENSION

- Provide a selection of short reading passages with age-appropriate content and at various levels of difficulty.
- Ask the student to choose a passage and read it silently.
- Ask the student to talk about what was read. You can provide prompts or ask questions to encourage the student to retell or summarize the content.
- Ask students to connect the passage to their own prior knowledge *(e.g., Have you ever seen...? Has this happened to you? When?)*
- Proceed to more challenging questions involving analysis, inference, or synthesis *(What would you do if...? Do you think that...? What might happen next?)*
- If the student is able to talk about the content quite easily, encourage the student to try a more challenging reading passage.
- If you have time limitations, a quiz format could be used with students, e.g., true-false questions, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short answer questions.

After conducting an initial assessment, teachers will be able to check some of the "I can" statements found in the CEFR/CFR chart of descriptors (N. Prokopchuk, 2021) found in **Appendix B** of this text. Most teachers agree that the knowledge gained through the initial assessment process is invaluable to lesson planning.

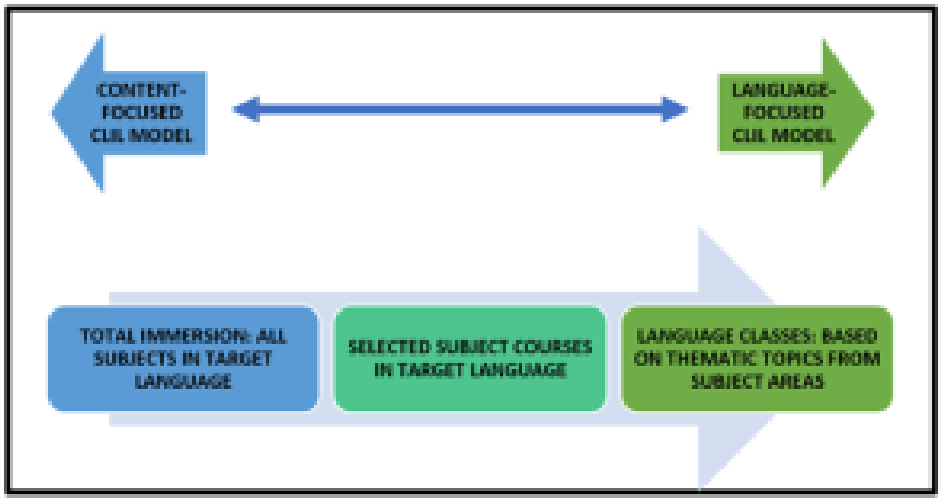
LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH CONTENT INSTRUCTION

The early success of bilingual and immersion models resulted in an increase in research on the process of learning language through content. Researchers Genesee (1994) and Met (1998) recognized that content gives language learning meaning and purpose. Language becomes the vehicle for learning school-based topics.

The positive effects of this combination resulted in a gradual shift from the Communicative Approach to an approach called **Content-based Instruction, CBI** (also known as **Integrated Language and Content Instruction, or ILCI,** introduced in the previous module). The approach describes language

teaching that shifts the focus away from the language itself to content (linked to school subjects) that can be learned in the target language. Met (1998) characterized this gradual shift as a movement toward a content-driven rather than language-driven approach.

The European variation, called **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL),** proposed that the traditional *language and grammar* approach used to study foreign languages be changed to a *content-driven* approach. The 'content-language continuum' emerged as a new model for language learning (The CLIL Guidebook v.2, 2021).



Adaptation: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan. Based on: Attard-Montalto, S., & Walter, L., (2021). The CLIL4U Guidebook v.2 2021, (p. 38).

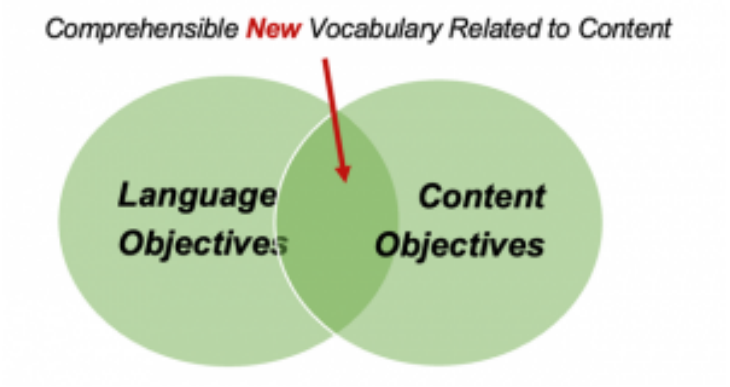
Brief video clips to extend your understanding are available here:

1. Presentation by J. Alberich. (n/d) CLIL – A Brief Introduction 1:32 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIRZWn7-x2Y
2. Explained Simply. (n/d). CLIL – Content & Language Integrated Learning 4:37 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h33LnIqR1c
3. CLIL4U Swiss Project. (n/d). Six Videos Demonstrating CLIL. 14:15 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFuCrxRobh0
4. CLIL 4U Main Website. (n/d). https://languages.dk/clil4u/

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES: A FOCUS ON ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Educators are familiar with **content objectives,** which are statements that define what a student is expected to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of each grade, unit, or specific course of study. In K-12 education, content objectives are the end goals of subject-area curricula at each grade level.

Language objectives (in relation to content area teaching) are a more recent construct. **Language objectives** present the a*cademic language* required to achieve content objectives. Well-constructed language objectives complement the knowledge and skills identified in content objectives. Language objectives combined with content objectives can benefit all students in K-12 education, not just those learning an additional language.



Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

When language objectives are infused into the study of content from various subjects, students become engaged in learning the target language through the real-world environment of the classroom. In other words, language learning has a function and a purpose. *Real communication* is taking place for *real purposes in the classroom* to achieve course and grade-level objectives.

Coelho (2012, p. 73) identifies several features of ILCI that make it successful, such as: attention to **comprehension** in the new language, more opportunities for **interaction**, **purposeful learning tasks** linked to mainstream curriculum, and attention to **forms and functions** used naturally in a classroom context.

WRITING LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES THAT ALIGN WITH CONTENT OBJECTIVES

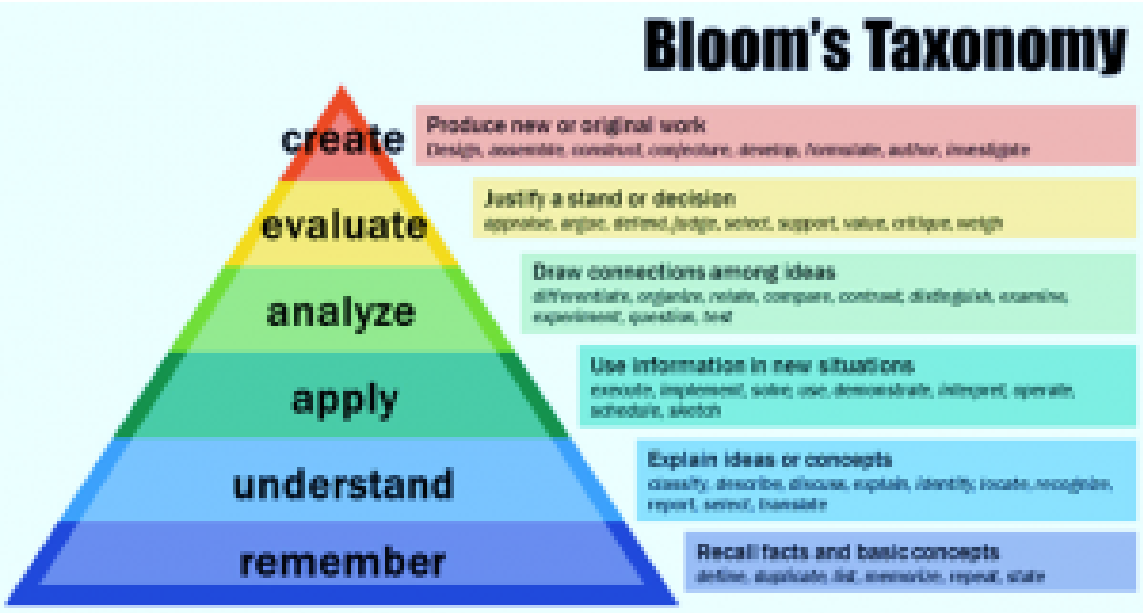
Now that we know **why** the combination of language and content objectives is important, **how** do we create language objectives? The acronym SMART is helpful when creating objectives, to ensure that they are **specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based**.

Source – Permission: CC BY-SA 4.0 Courtesy of Dungdm93

One proven way to ensure that language objectives are well-written is to use **verbs** that are specific and measurable (observable), linked to the four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To ensure that verbs are not limited to simple or lower-level cognitive tasks for language learners, (e.g., list, retell, categorize, read), the verbs should also reflect a range of tasks that tap higher levels of thinking along **Bloom's Taxonomy**.

The two images that follow contain verbs that support the creation of language objectives.

NOTE: The first image represents the updated 2001 version of the taxonomy with upper levels labeled as 'evaluate' and 'create'. The second table of verbs represents the original categories of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), with the upper levels being Synthesis and Evaluation. There is clearly some overlap between the upper levels in both versions of the taxonomy.



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Knowledge "I Remember"	Comprehension "I Understand"	Application "I Apply"	Analysis "I Analyze"	Synthesis "I Evaluate"	Evaluation "I Create"
Arrange	Classify	Apply	Analyze	Arrange	Appraise
Define	Compare	Change	Appraise	Assemble	Argue
Duplicate	Defend	Choose	Calculate	Collect	Assess
Label	Describe	Complete	Categorize	Combine	Conclude
List	Discuss	Construct	Contrast	Compose	Defend
Match	Distinguish	Demonstrate	Criticize	Construct	Discriminate
Memorize	Estimate	Discover	Debate	Create	Estimate
Name	Explain	Dramatize	Differentiate	Design	Evaluate
Order	Express	Illustrate	Distinguish	Develop	Explain
Outline	Extend	Interpret	Examine	Devise	Judge
Recall	Give Examples	Interview	Experiment	Formulate	Justify
Recognize	Indicate	Manipulate	Identify	Generate	Interpret
Record	Locate	Modify	Illustrate	Plan	Relate
Repeat	Paraphrase	Practice	Infer	Propose	Predict
Reproduce	Predict	Predict	Model	Rearrange	Rate
Select	Review	Prepare	Question	Reconstruct	Score
State	Summarize	Produce	Relate	Reorganize	Support
Underline	Translate	Schedule	Separate	Revise	Value
		Show	Subdivide	Rewrite	
		Sketch	Test	Synthesize	
		Solve	Write		
		Use			
		Write			

Chart Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan. A more comprehensive list of verbs may be found here: Utica University PDF

Examples of Language Objectives Aligned with Content Objectives

Content Objective	Language Objective
Investigate popular trends related to healthy eating and physical activity.	- **Record** responses to a survey about breakfast habits among classmates. - **Interview** classmates about their favourite snack foods. - **Create** a summary of basic yoga movements following a video presentation.
Make predictions based on contextual cues in the text.	- **List** clues that predict what may happen next based on the text (e.g., newspaper clip of volcanic activity) - **Predict** next steps using the sentence frame "I predict…because… - **Sketch** a scene from the text to illustrate your prediction.
Analyze the relationship between geographic features and settlement in Saskatchewan.	- **Locate** cities and towns that border a river or lake in Saskatchewan. - **Produce** a chart to illustrate rural to urban migration in Saskatchewan. - **Justify** your choice of location as an early settler to the province, using the sentence frame "I chose to settle (near water, near a forest, on prairie land) because….

Chart Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Try it! Write language objectives to match one of the content objectives below**.** Hint: Focus on the verbs.

Content Objective	Language Objective
Elementary: Debate whether a school dress code is necessary.	
High School: Differentiate between the characteristics of friendship and harassment or bullying.	

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Describe some ways to conduct an initial assessment to document a student's language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
2. State the benefits of writing language objectives to correspond with content objectives linked to the school curriculum.
3. Demonstrate your ability to write language objectives that correspond to content objectives linked to the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Use one or two content objectives from your own school curriculum for this task.

MODULE 4 GLOSSARY

Bloom's Taxonomy: A hierarchy created by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 (revised 2001) to present six stages of observable actions that tap higher levels of thinking and increased cognitive activity.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): A dual-focused approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language.

Content based instruction (CBI): An approach in which students learn the language in real-world contexts using subject matter that is important or relevant to their needs.

Content objectives: Statements that indicate what a student is expected to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of each grade, unit, or specific course of study.

Initial assessment: Involves a series of steps that help to determine a child's language proficiency in the target language at the beginning of a language program.

Language objectives: Target the vocabulary required to comprehend subject matter and achieve the content objectives.

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LEARNING MODULE FIVE: INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES - LISTENING AND SPEAKING

INTRODUCTION

The next two modules focus on the four skill areas for language learning: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

The 'swirled' line drawing below offers a visual representation of the acronym SWRL, used by some language experts to represent the four skill areas.

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Authors Cohan, Honigsfield & Dove (2020) prefer to use SWIRL, which specifically mentions Interaction (two-way) as an extension of Speaking (one-way). Whether you use SWRL or SWIRL, the purpose of the acronym is to highlight the equal importance of **receptive skills** (listening and reading) and **productive skills** (speaking and writing). Krashen referred to receptive skills as **input,** while Swain labelled the productive skills as **output.**

This module discusses ways to enhance listening and speaking skills in the language classroom. Several strategies that encourage **student talk** in the classroom will be shared.

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LISTENING

In the book *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*, Pauline Gibbons (2015) states that "The teaching of listening is often assumed to 'happen' in the process of the teaching of speaking or reading; teaching programs often refer to 'listening and speaking' as a single unit, so the specific teaching of listening may be overlooked." (p. 183). Gibbons believes that the process of listening is very similar to the process of reading in that both skills involve a high degree of comprehension to be meaningful.

During the listening process, the listener needs to focus intently on incoming messages. The idea of *visualizing* what is said while it is being said (much like creating an audiovisual clip in your head) can be helpful. Gibbons states that "…your 'in-the-head' knowledge allows you to map key words onto the words you are hearing, and therefore predict meaning." (p. 185). If the incoming text is too difficult, the listener sinks rather than swims in a sea of new words. There is no prior 'in-the-head' knowledge that can be linked to the new messages. Without a firm base of prior knowledge, the meaning of new words cannot be predicted, and *the message carries no meaning* for the listener.

To understand the role of context while listening, imagine that a colleague is telling a story in the staff room about a recent plane trip that did not go smoothly. Your colleague is speaking about air turbulence, oxygen masks falling during the flight, and a lack of in-flight service. The full impact of this story is understood more clearly if others in the staff room have had the experience of flying. For those who have never flown, it will be difficult to listen and comprehend why this colleague was distraught about air turbulence, oxygen masks, and in-flight service. These terms carry meaning in the context of air travel. Only those colleagues who have travelled by plane will literally be able to 'picture the scenario' while their colleague is relating the situation.

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Our Noisy World

Is it common for teachers to take time to teach the skill of listening to support learning? Have you ever taken time to focus on listening with your students? The answer is likely *no*. We make the assumption that students come to class ready to listen and learn.

Today's world is filled with noise. Unfortunately, we have all grown accustomed to the noise and may choose to ignore important pieces of information being shared by others. Students (and many adults!) have learned to practice **selective listening** amidst this noise. They choose to listen only to what interests them or what is relevant to their needs, while actively ignoring other incoming information. In fact, social media apps have become successful largely due to algorithms that detect each person's selective listening and reading interests. Background mechanisms built into the apps de-select other topics or noteworthy items. A user's newsfeed is then saturated with pre-selected items based on the user's search history. The user is drawn into selective listening, viewing, and reading through these algorithms.

Brief video explanations are available here:

1. TED Talk: 5 Ways to Listen Better. Speaker: Julian Treasure 7:50 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSohjlYQI2A
2. Career and Life Skills Lesson: Listening Skills – Active Listening 4:48 min.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al3NfpVJl-U

THE CEFR/CFR AND LISTENING

The CEFR/CFR reference scale identifies listening as one of four distinct skills for language learning. It is helplful to spend some time reviewing the Listening Descriptors found in the CEFR/CFR chart (Prokopchuk, 2021), available in **Appendix B.**

A1.1 Listening	A1.2 Listening
I can: ○ Follow single step routine instructions by observing others. ○ Follow one-step classroom instructions. ○ Recognize the numbers 1-20. ○ Recognize letters of the alphabet or writing system. ○ Listen for and point to familiar, isolated words in the target language. ○ Categorize a small number of familiar items. ○ Demonstrate comprehension of a simple story or event by using pictures, numbers, or sentence strips. ○ Show like/dislike with gestures (e.g., thumbs up, thumbs down, nod or shake head). ○ Identify basic opposites by matching (black-white, big-small, long-short).	I can: ○ Follow single step routine instructions (e.g., echo-acting routine, musical chairs, follow the leader) ○ Understand simple directions. ○ Recognize the numbers 1-100. ○ Listen for and point to simple words, such as title, date, time, and location of an event. ○ Point to locations on a map when prompted. ○ Understand phone number(s), calendar dates, time of day, basic prices. ○ Categorize known vocabulary (e.g., food, plants, animals, colours, numbers, transportation). ○ Point to words from a list to complete unfinished sentences on familiar topics. ○ Demonstrate comprehension of a simple story read out loud by ordering events (e.g., using pictures, numbers, sentence strips).

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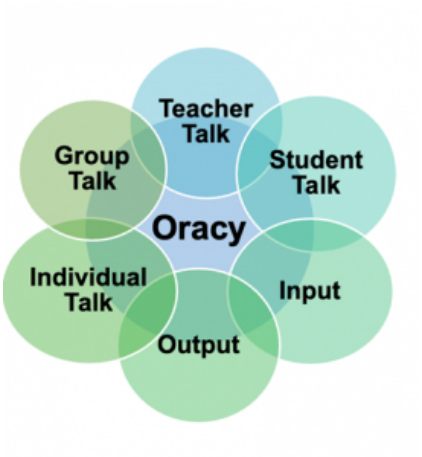
The descriptors in each column illustrate a growing level of comprehension. For example, a beginner student begins by *following one-step classroom instructions* (A1.1) but is soon able to *understand simple directions* (A1.2). This means the student has made progress with language comprehension and listening skills.

SPEAKING (ORACY)

When creating lesson plans, teachers are encouraged to take a step back and view the topic, the vocabulary and reading materials through the eyes of a language learner. Where might the students experience the greatest challenge with comprehension? Which vocabulary has been taught previously in class and will be understood by students? Which words are new? Can the students use the vocabulary confidently?

Classroom talk is a term used to describe *a balanced approach* to teacher talk, student talk, individual and group talk in the classroom. Each type of 'talk' requires comprehensible input (teacher talk) and many opportunities for output by students. Selecting strategies that allow students to practice their speaking skills may seem challenging (particularly in large classrooms) and time is in short supply! However, it is possible to plan strategically and support each student's oral language progress in the target language.



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You will recall from a previous module the terms *comprehensible input, the Goldilocks Rule and the Five-Finger Rule.* These terms drew attention to the number of unfamiliar words encountered by a language learner. To ensure that input is comprehensible, teachers can lessen the language load by reducing the number of new words in a lesson using strategies such as:

- revising or simplifying the language in learning materials;
- using visuals or graphic organizers to aid comprehension;
- presenting information in short, comprehensible chunks;
- pre-teaching key vocabulary; or
- using a pre-during-post teaching strategy to ensure comprehension of oral or written text.

Output is central to the language learning process. To enable output, students must become active participants in the communication process by asking for repetition or clarification (e.g., Can you repeat, please? Can you explain?), making gestures (e.g., raising hands and shoulders for "I don't understand"), making a drawing, pointing to a symbol, paraphrasing, or using **circumlocution,** which means talking around a topic using known words when key terms are unknown. In the example shown below, the student cannot remember the word 'winter'. The teacher sparks the student's memory using two different prompts.

Teacher: What season comes after fall?

Student: The season that comes after fall is… very cold.

Teacher (Prompt 1): Which season is very cold?

Student: After fall it is very cold and there is snow.

Teacher (Prompt 2): Repeat after me: Spring, Summer, Fall, and …

Student: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter!

Teacher: What season comes after fall?

Student: The season that comes after fall is winter.

The term circumlocution goes hand in hand with Merill Swain's phrase **stretched language.** Swain (2000), a noted Canadian linguist, describes this as language that is somewhat unfamiliar to the learner but is used within a conversation *in an experimental fashion* to convey a message. "You are pushed to go beyond the language you can control well and to try out ways of saying something that requires you to use language you are still unsure of, probably using faulty grammar or inaccurate vocabulary" (Gibbons, 2015, p. 26). Using the example above, the student's attempt at stretched language is highlighted.

Teacher: What season comes after fall?

Student: The season that comes after fall is… very cold.

Teacher: Which season is very cold?

Student: After fall it is very cold and there is snow. Outside is very white, snow is crunchy like sugar. So cold…temperature is minus.

Teacher: That is true! Repeat after me: Spring, Summer, Fall, and …

Student: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter!

Teacher: What season comes after fall?

Student: The season that comes after fall is winter.

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Gibbons (Chapter 2, 2015) introduces two terms that are linked to classroom talk. **Dialogic teaching** refers to a classroom technique that encourages students to make connections to their prior learning both in and out of school and to voice their thoughts freely, knowing that their ideas and opinions will be accepted by their teachers and peers. Dialogic teaching is a combination of *teacher talk, student talk, individual and group contributions.* The teacher establishes an environment for conversations that are not dominated or controlled by one person. "Where the talk is teacher-led, exchanges are extended beyond students offering only one-word or short answers, and there is a sustained and topic-related series of exchanges" (Gibbons, 2015, p. 33). From this description, it appears that dialogic teaching reflects the principles of the **Communicative Approach** to language learning!

Another technique that supports classroom talk is **message abundancy.** This term refers to *strategically delivered*, *multiple encounters* with vocabulary in order to ensure full comprehension. The

example offered by Gibbons in Chapter 2 (pp 43-44) of driving to a new location using *verbal directions, a map, and a GPS* illustrates the effectiveness of multiple encounters with the same message.

Another example of message abundancy is offered here. If the concept of *reduce-reuse-recycle is* being studied in the mainstream classroom, students can reinforce this concept (which is likely familiar to them in L1) through ***action items***, such as:

- having a wastebasket marked 'recycle' in the classroom;
- 'reusing' plastic containers for markers, pens, and pencils, and
- 'reducing' the amount of waste by asking students to bring refillable water bottles.

Then, as a language arts project, the class can create ***dual language booklets*** (using students' first languages and the language being learned at school) to explain why the reuse-reduce-recycle initiative is important for the environment. For example, if the school language is English, the booklet text in English can be created together in the classroom. Students can then create a translation of the English text together with their parents as a take-home project. Students can illustrate the booklet to complete the project. (To read more about various types of dual language texts, see the article titled *Affirming Identity in Multilingual Classrooms.*)

To further reinforce the three words in the new language, students can participate in an ***art project*** to recreate or redesign the reduce-reuse-recycle symbol using both their L1 and L2.

Left Image: Source: Permission: CC BY-SA 4.0 Courtesy of Nadine3103. Right Image: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Although some may think that these projects are repetitious, the term ***reinforcement*** is more accurate. Repetition means delivering the same message in the same way multiple times, while reinforcement involves different ways of delivering the same message to ensure understanding.

Strategies for dialogic teaching and message abundancy include:

- explicit (direct) vocabulary instruction;
- multiple exposures to words (e.g., oral reading + graphic organizer + text + video clip);
- careful selection of key vocabulary that is useful across many contexts (e.g., describe, investigate, search, illustrate, decide, combine, compare, analyze, demonstrate);
- tasks that involve recurring use of vocabulary;
- active engagement that draws out more than definitions of words;

- use of technology for language reinforcement;
- opportunities for incidental learning.

STRATEGIES TO MAKE TEACHER TALK MORE COMPREHENSIBLE

There are a few changes that teachers can make in their own teaching practice to facilitate language learning. From your own teaching experience, you may know that language learners have difficulty understanding a string of instructions or an explanation of a concept in class. Students may ask you to repeat what you have said or speak more slowly. Language learners are listening intently for key words or phrases that will help them understand the overall message. However, even when a language teacher (or native speaker) talks at 'normal speed', it can sound like a continuous chain of syllables to a language learner. Students need 'think time' and 'wait time' to process and decipher messages. A few strategies that can make Teacher Talk more comprehensible to language learners are recommended by Reiss (Chapter 6, 2012).

1. Slow down speech.
2. Limit the use of contractions.
3. Use fewer pronouns.
4. Simply sentence structure.
5. Use familiar words and be consistent.
6. Be aware of idioms.
7. Audiotape and analyze your own speech.
8. Animate your words or be dramatic.
9. Use visuals and graphics.
10. Display the learning plan.
11. Post the homework assignment.
12. Review while you teach.
13. End each lesson with an oral and written review.
14. Provide review notes.

THE CEFR/CFR AND SPEAKING

A comparison of the descriptors found in the CEFR/CFR chart (Prokopchuk, 2021), available in **Appendix B,** will result in a better understanding of how speaking skills progress over time.

A1.1 Speaking	A1.2 Speaking
I can: ○ Identify the numbers 1-20 orally. ○ Identify the letters of the alphabet or writing system. ○ Answer simple Yes-No questions at school. ○ Make introductions, share greetings or well-wishes with others. ○ Sing songs learned with my class. ○ Ask and answer basic questions that are part of a daily routine at school (e.g., day, month, weather colour of my clothes) ○ Give information about myself (e.g., name, grade, age, phone number, address, family members, hobbies)	I can: ○ Use simple words to describe something. ○ Ask and answer simple questions about what I like and don't like. ○ Ask for or provide basic directions to a familiar location. ○ State phone number(s), calendar dates, time of day, basic prices. ○ Convey immediate needs and ask for assistance. ○ Carry on a basic conversation (e.g., greetings, 2-3 questions, responses, and farewell). ○ Respond to questions about a short, simple text using phrases or sentences taken from the text. ○ Repeat and use grammatical structures that have been modelled in the classroom (e.g., simple sentences on familiar topics). ○ Orally categorize vocabulary on familiar topics (e.g., matching exercise, close exercise, yes-no game)

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The descriptors in each column illustrate growth with speaking abilities in the new language. For example, a beginner student begins by *answering simple yes/no questions* (A1.1) but is soon able to *carry on a basic conversation* (A1.2).

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Explain the relationship between listening and comprehension during the language learning process.
2. Compare the terms dialogic teaching and message abundancy, and the role each plays in building oral language skills for language learners.
3. Identify strategies that improve teacher talk and encourage student talk in the classroom.

MODULE 5 GLOSSARY

Circumlocution: Talking around a topic using known vocabulary when more specific terms or phrases are unknown or not part of the speaker's lexicon.

Dialogic teaching: An approach to learning that encourages student contributions, promotes classroom talk, and stimulates students' thinking through a high level of engagement in the learning process.

Message abundancy: A term coined by Pauline Gibbons to describe multiple encounters with vocabulary in order to ensure full comprehension.

Selective listening: A phrase that describes mental filtering of sounds and messages to focus attention on specific information that is relevant to you.

Stretched language: A process in which a language learner incorporates new or somewhat familiar words into various situations in order to experiment with language and go beyond the comfort zone to build a broader vocabulary base.

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LEARNING MODULE SIX: INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES - READING AND WRITING

INTRODUCTION

The skills of *Listening* and *Speaking* were the focus of the previous module. The remaining two SWRL skills, *Reading* and *Writing*, are presented in Learning Module 6.

In each of Modules 5 and 6, one receptive skill was matched with one productive skill, as shown in the image below. Both **receptive** and **productive** skills are highlighted in these modules to ensure that all four skills receive balanced attention during the language learning process.

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READING

Two barriers to reading in a new language are (a) decoding and (b) comprehension. Comprehension has been discussed in previous modules and will be reinforced in the current module.

Decoding is the ability to distinguish between letters, sounds, and letter patterns, enabling students to recognize familiar words and to sound out words that are unfamiliar.

When a student demonstrates skill with decoding in a target language, this means that the student has mastered the *mechanics* or the phonetics of reading letters and their matching sounds. This **does not** mean that the student also *comprehends* what is being read; it only means that the student can read with fluency (ease of word recognition, sentence flow, pauses).

Some language students experience challenges with reading. They may have difficulty remembering the sounds of letters, pronouncing the letters, or putting letters together to make words. If this is the case, teachers are encouraged to examine whether the same issues with decoding exist in the student's first language. Decoding challenges may be a signal of deeper issues with literacy, or this may be a sign of a speech or hearing impairment.

Phonemic Awareness

It is important to pay close attention to the sounds of a new language. However, it may not be possible for some students to pronounce letters and words in exactly the same manner as native speakers of the language. Pronunciation in English, for example, is impacted by first language phonemic distance from English, the number of hours spent learning the language, the age of learners, and individual oral adaptability. In some cases, the cause may be a physical impairment with the tongue. Note the following quote from Gibbons (p. 170):

"The phonemes of different languages are rarely exactly the same, although many phonemes in the student's first language may be close. This means that for English language learners, their own languages will not match all the sounds in English, and vice versa. Most language learners, especially in the early stages of learning the language, make use of the closest sound in their own language when the English phoneme is unfamiliar (and they probably "hear" it as the sound in their own language, too).

Gibbons (2015), p. 170

The general consensus among language educators is that accents should not be considered problematic unless pronunciation is *impeding* comprehension of oral language and/or negatively affecting development of reading and writing skills in English.

An infographic titled *What are the Hardest Languages to Learn* (Source: Voxy) can be viewed here: https://voxy.com/blog/2011/03/hardest-languages-infographic/. It presents an interesting perspective on the number of hours an English speaker typically needs to learn another language. While not grounded in academic research, the infographic is thought-provoking because it separates languages into three distinct categories based on **language distance**. The concept of language distance will be discussed in greater detail in an upcoming module.

Fluency vs Accuracy in Reading

As mentioned previously, fluency is a focus on mechanics: the combination of letters, patterns, and blends to create specific sounds, leading to word recognition. However, a native speaker will also know how to read accurately, with proper points of emphasis, stress, and intonation. This requires a deeper understanding of context in the target language. One distinct clue that a reader does not comprehend what is being read is the lack of accuracy when reading.

To emphasize this point, if a reader is **proficient** in English, the words in the sentences below will be read with *both* fluency and accuracy (Source: Coelho, 2016, p. 60).

- We polish the Polish furniture.
- A farm can produce produce.
- The soldier decided to desert in the desert.
- The dove dove into the bushes.
- The insurance for the invalid was invalid.
- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- They were too close to the door to close it.
- The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- I shed a tear when I saw the tear in my clothes.
- I spent last evening evening out a pile of dirt.

However, if a reader is limited to decoding skills, the sentences may not be read accurately. Accuracy requires a broad range of vocabulary and background knowledge in English. In other words, the input must be comprehensible to the student. A fluent reader will easily read the words, but an accurate reader will read the statements with the correct sentence stress and accenting on words that look alike, but require different pronunciation. A fluent and accurate reader has a high level of proficiency in the target language as evidenced in the reader's comprehension of vocabulary and contextual meaning.

An example of the power of comprehension for proficient readers is shown below.

I cnduo't bvleiee taht I culod aulaclty uesdtannrd waht I was rdnaieg. Unisg the icndeblire pweor of the hmuan mnid, aocdcrnig to rseecrah at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mttaer in waht oderr the lterets in a wrod are, the olny irpoamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rhgit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whoutit a pboerlm. Tihs is bucseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey ltteer by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Source: Google Images

Proficient readers will be able to unscramble the letters to determine the words in each sentence. Research (at the university named in the text) illustrates that even if words are misspelled or letters are scrambled, proficient readers can decode the message due to their knowledge of vocabulary and ability to pick up contextual cues in the text.

BEFORE-DURING-AFTER READING STRATEGIES

Gibbons (2015) and other language specialists consider **before-during-after reading strategies** to be the most effective means of introducing, explaining, and reinforcing vocabulary. These strategies ensure a high level of comprehensible input, so that students can *read and comprehend* texts in a new language. This is particularly important for students learning subject area content in a new language. A summary of before-during-after strategies is given below.

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
In the 'before reading' stage, strategies allow teachers to extract what students already know using an informal approach that lowers each learner's affective filter. Students are encouraged to share what they know using the words that they know. This may include using L1 or code-switching (translanguaging) to support delivery of the message in L2. During this stage, teachers should create a visual reference of all the vocabulary that is already known to learners. After this information is gathered, teachers have a starting point from which to plan instruction based on areas of real need.	In the 'during reading' stage, comprehension is monitored at various stages using strategies such as predicting*, making inferences, text features, skimming and scanning, questioning, or summarizing at various intervals. *similar to pausing a movie to try and guess what will happen next'	'After reading' strategies include opportunities for reinforcement of vocabulary and comprehension exercises. Examples include the use of story maps, timelines, true-false exercises, cloze tasks, and writing assignments.

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In general, reading skills are enhanced by the use of the following strategies:

- brainstorming, explicit instruction, word walls, language experience charts, graphic organizers, visuals (photos, props), questions, interviews, sequencing tasks, choral reading, small-group reading, guided reading.

Electronic tools can be particularly helpful when introducing a topic, recalling prior learning, or reinforcing concepts between L1 and L2. Some examples of online tools are:

- news clips, audio/video recordings, online textbooks, online dictionaries, Wikipedia, informational emails, online library resources (particularly dual language books).

Before-during-after reading strategies explicitly target vocabulary building, but teachers are ultimately responsible for *selecting and adapting* appropriate reading resources and strategies to suit the age, prior knowledge, and language proficiency level of the learners in class.

Practicing an after-reading strategy that uses a three-step pattern can be especially helpful when

reviewing the content of a subject-specific text. Samples of questions and frame sentences are shown below.

What did you read about?	What happened in the text?	What do you know (or what have you learned) after reading the text?
The story is about… The text is about… In this chapter, I learned that… The text gave information about…	The main character is… The story takes place in… The text tells the story of… An important event was… The main problem was…	From the text, I learned that… After reading the text, I know that… I would like to know more about… I am still wondering about… I am confused about… The story made me (happy, sad, angry, confused) because…

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Other samples of after-reading questions can be downloaded from Mercer Island Schools Mondo Bookshop, Grade 4. PDF.

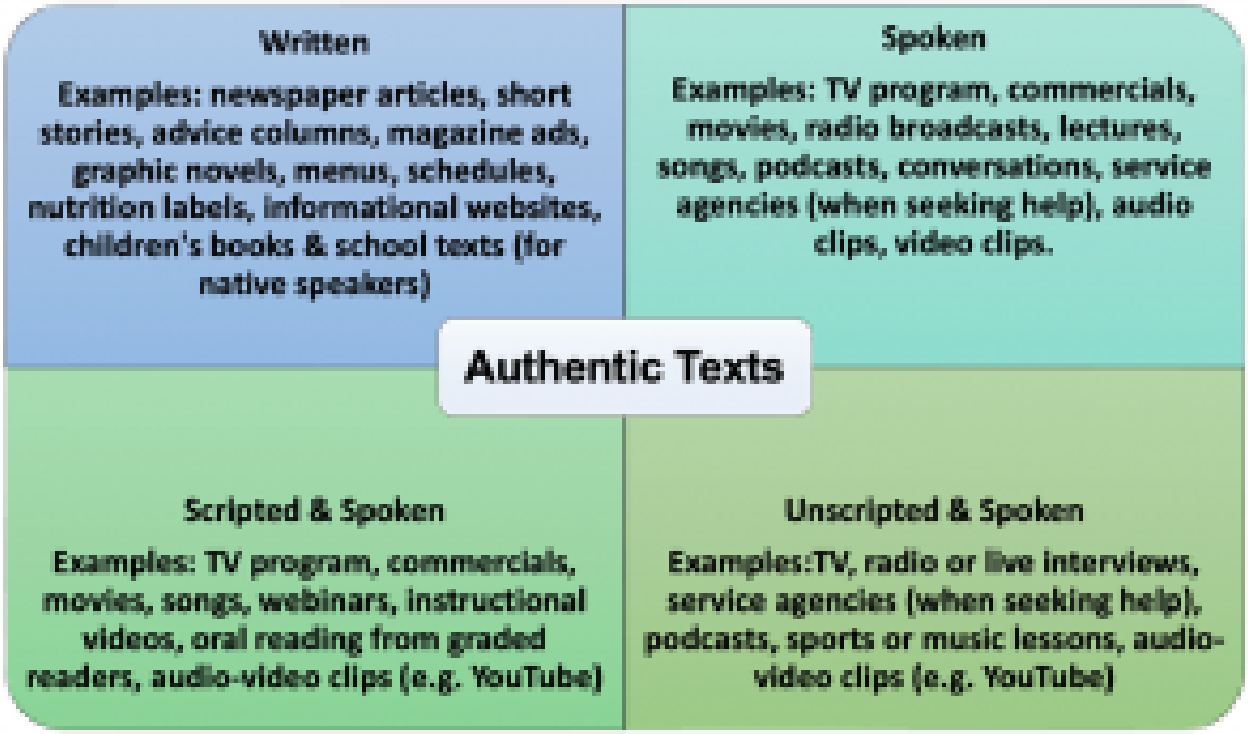
Brief video explanations are available here:

1. University of New Brunswick. (2019). Intentional Vocabulary Instruction L2RIC. 6:24 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXlkTMmXOZU
2. University of Toronto (OISE). Before, During, and After Reading Comprehension.The Balanced Literacy Diet. 5:45 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sd1FlXxpVIw
3. Oxford University Press ELT. Reading Effectively: A 3-Stage Lesson Guide. 4:29 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh8M_x57pa4

USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AND TEXTS

There is a pervading myth that **authentic materials** are too difficult for language learners and should therefore be avoided as resources in the classroom. In their book *Authentic Materials Myths*, authors Zyzik & Polio (2017) describe authentic materials as "…those created for some real-world purpose other than language learning, and often, but not always, provided by native speakers for native speakers." The definition indicates that materials were not created for language learning, but rather, to communicate something of value to native speakers. However, the materials provide a *culturally-appropriate, real-world example* of how the language is used by native speakers. For this reason, authentic materials are a rich source of support for language learners. In their book, Zyzik & Polio share many ideas for practical ways to incorporate authentic texts into the language learning classroom.

Authentic texts can be divided into 4 categories: written, spoken, scripted and unscripted (Zyzik & Polio, 2017). Each category contains texts that can be useful for language learning, if teachers take time to use pre-during-post reading strategies to ensure that language is comprehensible.



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Supplementary video clips to support this topic are available here:

1. American English. (n/d). Task-based Reading Activities Using Authentic Materials & Skills. 3:27 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXPzKa2_-y4
2. Storyline Online (2022). English stories/books read aloud by various actors. SAG-ACTRA Foundation. https://storylineonline.net/

THE CEFR/CFR AND READING

A review of the Reading Descriptors found in the CEFR/CFR chart (Prokopchuk, 2021), available in **Appendix B,** provides a comparative look at skill progression in reading.

A1.1 Reading	A1.2 Reading
I can: ○ Read a basic greeting or welcome message (e.g., Happy Birthday, Get Well Soon, Welcome to School) ○ Recognize simple words and straightforward sentences in very basic texts if I have seen them before. ○ Understand short and simple instructions if I have seen them before in a similar form. ○ Recognize and read my own name, age, and one or two other details (e.g., location, phone number, grade). ○ Read a short repetitive or cumulative story. ○ Read words to a song that I know. ○ Match simple words and pictures on familiar topics studied in school. ○ Read and understand short sentences which we have practiced in class.	I can: ○ Read a simple story orally or silently. ○ Find information in simple texts. ○ Read phone numbers, dates, time of day, or prices. ○ Read a short poem, dialogue, text message, email, or postcard. ○ Attempt to read and determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word used in a familiar context. ○ Locate basic information in posters, messages, or announcements (e.g., library hours, daily schedule, calendar of events) ○ Pick out the main idea in a short, simple text that contains pictures or symbols. ○ Use a word list or class dictionary to search out the meaning of new words. ○ Identify whether an event has taken place in the past, present, or future by studying verbs and action words. ○ Read and categorize names of people, places, and objects that are related to familiar topics. ○ Identify basic words and expressions on signs, particularly when symbols are also used. ○ Read and understand vocabulary used in the context of familiar topics (e.g., community helpers, transportation, seasons, activities).

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The verbs used in the second column of descriptors illustrate progress with both reading and comprehension. For example, at A1.1, a student can '**match** simple words and pictures on familiar topics'. With more practice and support, in level A1.2 the student can '**read and categorize** names of people, places, and objects'.

WRITING

According to Gibbons (2015, p. 144), a principle of good teaching is "…to go from what students already know to what they don't yet know, to move from the given (already known) to the new (what is yet to be learned)…" Therefore, when encouraging language learners to write, they should move from '*the known to the new*'. A thorough scan of known vocabulary and visible/accessible word banks of new vocabulary should be part of the instructional process. The following questions can guide classroom planning for writing activities:

- Is there an opportunity for students to 'show what they know' by visual representation if they have not yet learned enough vocabulary in the target language?

- Is there a plan for introducing new vocabulary that offers opportunities for students to access L1 as a link to prior learning?
- Does the selected strategy expand learner knowledge of vocabulary?
- Within the strategy, is there an opportunity to list, define, and record vocabulary for future reference (e.g., personal word journal, word walls, class dictionary)?
- Does the student have (access to) information about grammatical rules?
- Is this genre appropriate for the language learning process at this time?

Explicit, Age-Appropriate Instruction About Grammar

Many linguists agree that students require explicit instruction about the rules of a language in order to help them achieve language proficiency. In her book *Adding English* (2016, p. 170), Coelho states:

"Most students require a certain amount of explicit instruction to help them figure out some of the rules of English grammar. The older students are, the less likely they are to intuitively pick up the patters of English and the more formal instruction they may require. Even young children and beginning learners of English can understand the concepts "one" and "more than one" when learning the plural endings of nouns, such as books..."

Coelho (2016), p. 170

Grammar instruction is most effective when it focuses on patterns of language use in meaningful contexts. Isolated drills and practice lessons without some type of practical context has been shown to be ineffective (e.g., Grammar-Translation Method). Students are often unable to reproduce the patterns or remember the rules in spontaneous, real-life situations.

Language learners of all ages benefit from explicit instruction about rules. The instruction must be developmentally-appropriate and based on language that is meaningful to students. Young learners often need appropriate examples, predictable order, and multiple exposures to the rules of the language. Formal instruction will not be effective at certain ages and stages of learning. For example, young language beginners will not benefit from a lesson on subject-verb agreement if they have not yet learned the meaning of the words 'noun' and 'verb'.

Writing Genres

Genres encompass a broad range of writing types as shown in the chart below. This chart is certainly not exhaustive, but it conveys the expansiveness of writing genres. Within these genres are also sub-types such as fiction (fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction) and non-fiction (informational writing, autobiography).

Understanding imagery, figurative speech, or literary language in certain genres (e.g., poetry, fantasy) can be problematic for language learners. Imagine the depth of language required for a non-English speaker to read and comprehend a chapter in one of the Harry Potter books (Author: J. K. Rowling), followed by a written assignment based on the reading! This would be a daunting task.

Teachers need to consider the language level, purpose, and goals of their program before expanding their use of genres.

Narrative Writing Structure - beginning, middle (plot), end (conclusion) Examples: Original short stories, sequels, scripts, retold familiar stories
Expository Writing Structure: reporting facts, sequences, cause-effect, problems-solutions Examples: autobiographies, summaries, reports, essays, posters, directions
Persuasive Writing Structure: viewpoint or opinion, backed by examples or evidence Examples: opinion article, persuasive essay, letters to the editor, movie review, book review, ads
Descriptive Writing Structure: writer uses literary tools, e.g., descriptive language, metaphor, simile, personification Examples: descriptive essay, comparison, character sketch
Personal Writing Structure: informal personal messages to self or others, formal messages for specific purposes Examples: journals, letters, emails, courtesy letters, business letters, learning logs
Poetry Structure: writer uses literary tools, imagery, rhyme schemes, wordplay Examples: traditional rhyming poem, sonnet, haiku, limerick, ballad, lyrical (song lyrics)

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BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING

When language teachers ask students to write for a specific genre, they may need to provide sentence frames to help students complete the function or tasks. Sentence frames can be displayed in wall charts or recorded in each student's personal journal.

Some examples of sentence frames (*in italics*) are provided in the chart below, organized by language functions.

Agree or disagree *I agree that…* *I disagree because…*	Ask for or give directions *Can you tell me how to get to…?* *To get to the… go…*	Ask for or give permission *I would like permission to…* *May I please…?*	Compare things *This is similar to…* *This is different than…* *This is the same as…*	Ask questions *5 W's: Who, What, Where, When, Why* *How?* *How many?*
Apologize *I am sorry that…* *I apologize for…*	Relate a sequence *First…* *Next…* *Finally…*	Ask for assistance *Please help me…* *I need help with…* *Can you help me …?*	Explain something *I can tell you how to…* *I can share how…*	Make suggestions *Maybe we can…* *My idea is…* *Let's try to…*
Express likes or dislikes *I like…* *I do not like…*	Report an event *I saw…* *I was at…and saw…* *I notice that…*	Ask for or give instructions *Can you tell me how to…?* *To complete the task, you must…*	Hypothesize, guess, predict *I think that…* *I am guessing that…* *I predict that…*	Give greetings, best wishes *Good luck!* *Happy Birthday!* *Get well soon!*

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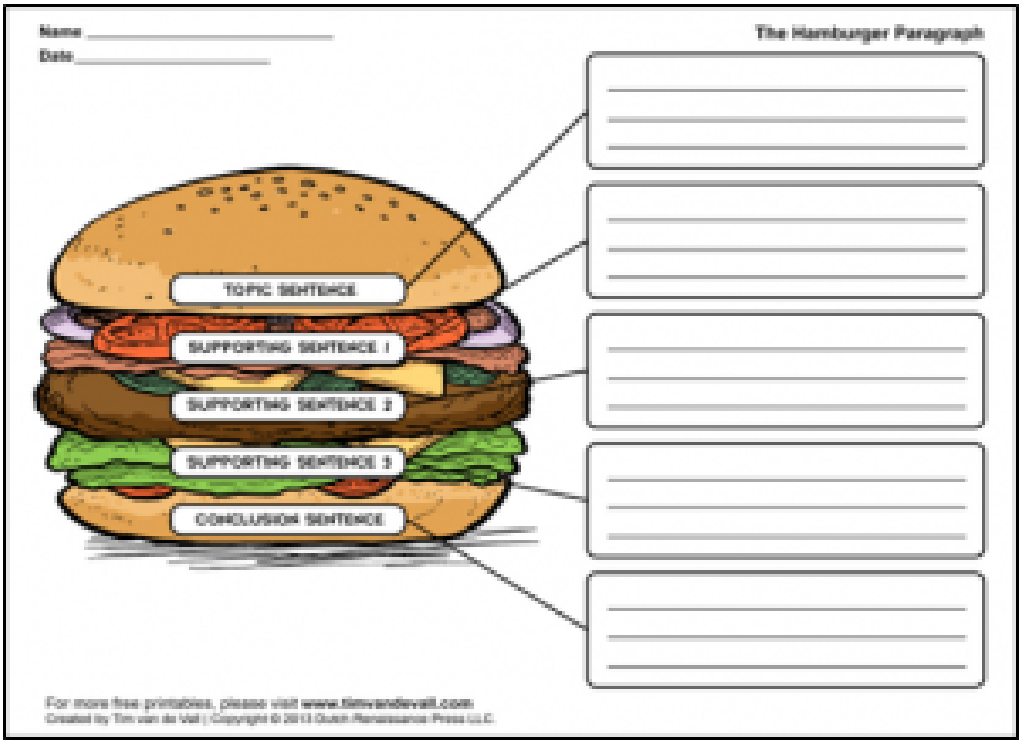
In general, writing skills are enhanced by the use of the following strategies:

- a print-rich environment, explicit instruction, word walls, graphic organizers (timelines, flow charts, webs, Venn diagrams, tables, other types of organizers), illustrations, picture prompts, cloze technique, sentence frames, paragraph frames, and story-starters.

As with reading, electronic tools can also be used to support writing. Examples of online tools that support writing assignments are:

- news clips, audio/video recordings, online textbooks, online dictionaries, Wikipedia, informational emails, online library resources (particularly dual language books).

Students may also need help constructing a well-written paragraph in the target language. The illustration of a 'paragraph frame' provided below is commonly used in schools to explain the components of a well-written English language paragraph. Students certainly remember the image of a hamburger with multiple layers! The number of supporting sentences is flexible (not limited to 3).



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In the video presentation titled *Scaffolds for Writing* (2011), Elizabeth Coelho offers a simplified explanation of the **paragraph frame** pictured above, using three statements: "This is what I know" (topic sentence); "Here is some evidence to show what I know" (supporting sentences); and, "Now you should believe me" (concluding sentence). In this same video presentation, Coelho adds a valuable explanation of an effective strategy for language learning known as **cloze.** The Coelho video clip is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdvXJ1GsSkk .

THE CEFR/CFR AND WRITING

A comparative look at the Writing Descriptors in the CEFR/CFR chart (Prokopchuk, 2021), available in **Appendix B,** illustrates how writing skills progress during the earliest stages of language learning.

A1.1 Writing	A1.2 Writing
I can: ○ Form letters appropriately. ○ Use left to right printing patterns. ○ Copy letters or words from the board. ○ Distinguish between capital and lower-case letters. ○ Label familiar objects. ○ Copy names of friends or family members. ○ Print simple phrases or sentences from the board. ○ Transfer words seen in print to writing. ○ Use capitals and punctuation in a simple sentence or question. ○ Construct 1-2 sentences about a familiar topic using everyday words. ○ Attempt to spell new words using the sound/symbol system in the target language. ○ Write a negative sentence. ○ Write a simple sentence to state a like or dislike. ○ Use a very simple graphic organizer to copy key words in appropriate categories. ○ Fill in a simple form asking for name, grade, age, or other basic details about myself.	I can: ○ Write 2-3 sentences about myself, my family, friends, or things I like to do. ○ Fill in a form with basic information about myself. ○ Use a graphic organizer to identify key vocabulary. ○ Write about a topic of interest using words and phrases drawn from memory. ○ Deliver a simple informal message about me and my family. ○ Write words and simple phrases about everyday objects. ○ Use spacing, capitalization, and punctuation with reasonable accuracy. ○ Write on a known topic by using familiar, modelled sentence patterns. ○ Write a brief text about a favourite activity. ○ Describe, using basic words and phrases, a family member or close friend. ○ Make attempts at subject-verb agreement in simple sentences. ○ Incorporate pronoun-verb declension patterns learned in class into writing. ○ Construct a negative sentence accurately. ○ Use basic language conventions accurately: spacing, capitalization, punctuation. ○ Attempt to self-correct grammatical errors in written work by asking questions, using charts, diagrams, or notes presented in class. ○ Organize information coherently in simple sentences. ○ Use knowledge of phonetics in the target language to write unfamiliar words (expect spelling errors).

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The descriptors in the second column illustrate a growing level of writing ability. For example, in the beginning stages of writing in a new language at A1.1, the student can write *one or two sentences* about a familiar topic. As writing skills progress at A1.2, the student can write a *brief text* about a favourite activity.

TO SUM UP: CREATE A TOOLKIT OF VOCABULARY-BUILDING STRATEGIES

Many strategies and resources have proven to be effective for skill-building in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Recall that Cummins separated vocabulary into two types: communicative (BICS) and academic (CALP). Communicative vocabulary is easier to establish and can be gained in a relatively short time, while academic vocabulary requires more time and strategic support. For this reason, language teachers are encouraged to create a toolkit of effective strategies that target academic vocabulary. Language specialist Kate Kinsella (2017) uses the term **high-utility academic vocabulary** to describe a collection of words and phrases that appear frequently across a wide range of subject areas.

Kinsella states that school success for language learners is dependent on 'owning' a broad base of high-utility academic vocabulary. According to Kinsella, students "must recognize a critical mass of vocabulary and be able to competently deploy a toolkit of high-utility academic words they clearly own". *Owning* words means that students *understand and can accurately use* a broad base of vocabulary to articulate thoughts, provide oral responses, or complete assignments on academic topics.

High utility academic words differ from words used in conversational language. Many of these words have Greek or Latin roots that have been shared around the world to discuss the sciences, mathematics, medicine, business, or technology. As such, the words sound very similar and can easily be understood in academic circles. Words that are derived from a common root word and sound similar across two or more languages are called **cognates.** Some examples of cognates are *information, computer, astronomy, and biology.*

To illustrate how high-utility words can be infused into classroom language, a common phrase such as 'Let's think about this', can be replaced with 'Let's consider this perspective' or 'Let's analyze this'. The terms *consider, perspective, and analyze* are useful and transferable across subject areas. The words 'perspective' and 'analyze' are also cognates in a number of languages, such as French, Spanish, Ukrainian, Portuguese, and German.

If classroom language teachers feel at a loss for where to begin when lesson planning and building high-utility vocabulary, the chart of possibilities shown below can be used with confidence. The chart is not comprehensive; other strategies may be added to this collection.

Brainstorming	Explicit instruction	Word walls	Language experience charts	Venn diagrams
Visuals (photos, illustrations)	Questioning techniques	Interviews	Choral reading	Sequencing tasks
Small group reading	Guided reading	Authentic texts	News clips	Audio-video clips, recordings
Categorization tasks	Online dictionaries	Translation tools	Access to L1 references (e.g., Wikipedia)	Picture prompts
Dual language books	Informational emails	Print-rich environment	Cloze technique	Sentence frames
Paragraph frames	Story starters	Timelines	Flow charts	Concept webs

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REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Clarify the difference between 'reading fluently', 'reading accurately' and 'reading with comprehension'.
2. Refute the myth that authentic materials are not suitable for use in the language classroom.
3. Explain the rationale for age-appropriate explicit instruction about grammatical rules to support writing in a new language.
4. Select and describe five reading and writing strategies that are effective for language learning in a classroom setting.

MODULE 6 GLOSSARY

Authentic materials: Texts and other resources that target real-world purposes other than language learning, usually created by native speakers for native speakers.

Before-during-after reading strategies: A series of strategies that support comprehension of reading material by a) eliciting prior knowledge and introducing key vocabulary before a text is read b) supporting vocabulary growth and comprehension during reading, and c) reinforcing vocabulary and learning material from the text after reading.

Cognates: Words that are derived from a common root word and sound similar across two or more languages.

Decoding skills: Describes the ability to distinguish between letters, sounds, and letter patterns, enabling students to recognize familiar words and figure out words that are unfamiliar.

High-utility academic vocabulary: Frequently occurring words used across a wide range of subject area topics for academic learning.

Writing genres: Various types of literary writing created within a culture by members of that culture for a social purpose.

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LEARNING MODULE SEVEN: DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR A RANGE OF NEEDS

INTRODUCTION

Differentiation means that classroom learning is tailored to meet individual student needs. This is particularly important for students who experience learning delays, face barriers, or have other special needs. Module 7 offers suggestions for ways to adapt learning material in a language classroom so that all students can experience success at school.

When considering the range of diverse language learners in today's classroom, teachers may want to seek answers to a few key questions:

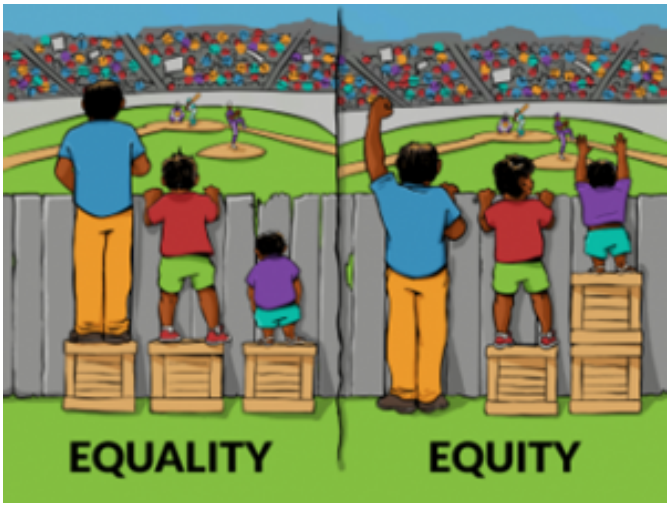
- Who is in the room?
- What do I know about my students, their families and their lives outside the classroom?
- Are their any identified special needs among students?
- Have students studied this language before?
- Have students had an initial language assessment? If so, what is their language proficiency level?

Answers to these questions, much like answers gained in the initial assessment process, will guide teachers in the selection of appropriate resources, instructional strategies and varied assessments. In other words, teachers will be able to design lessons that are *intended* for diverse students.

The module begins with a rationale for creating learner profiles. This is followed by an exploration of factors that may impact student learning, including individual learning styles. Some ideas for differentiation in the language classroom are shared, based on an adapted framework of quadrants from the *The Adaptive Dimension (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017).* The ministry's framework organizes learning adaptations into four categories: instruction, assessment, environment, and resources.

The goal of differentiated instruction is to give each learner the kind of help they need in the classroom. Not all that long ago, the school curriculum focused on equality, which meant giving each

student the ***same*** textbook, the ***same*** workbook, and the ***same*** assessments. Educators now understand that students are very diverse! One size does not fit all when it comes to learning at school. Students can work toward the same curriculum goals, but the process of learning can be adjusted to help students where help is needed most.



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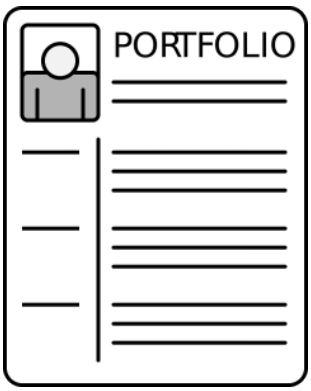
THE LEARNER PROFILE (LEARNER PORTFOLIO)

How much do you know about each student in your language classroom? What background experiences have students had with the language being learned? What is their level of academic performance in other subject areas at school? Is the student experiencing any academic challenges in the mainstream classroom? Answers to these questions can shed light on a student's performance in the language classroom.

A **learner profile (or learner portfolio)** is a collection of important information about the student. It includes information about previous language learning experiences, as well as language tasks completed during the school year. The collection often contains the results of an *initial assessment* (explained in a previous module). This assessment offers a snapshot of the student's language skills at the outset of the learning program. Samples of *ongoing assessments* given throughout the year illustrate where and how progress has been made.

Student portfolios can be created using a file folder, artifact box, or album.



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The **CEFR/CFR Language Reference Scale** (N. Prokopchuk, 2021) provided in **Appendix B** contains space to record details about each student's language level at the beginning and end of a school term. Evidence of progress throughout the year can be gathered through observations, anecdotal evidence, assignments, demonstrations, projects, or other classroom tasks. Selected tasks or assignments can be stored in the learner's profile to illustrate incremental ('slow but steady') language growth during the year.

FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT LANGUAGE PROGRESS

What happens when a student seems to be lagging behind or showing minimal signs of progress with language learning? What if a student is switching languages or mixing languages? What if a student is silent or hesitant to speak? Could there be a learning challenge, a hearing impairment, or a speech language impediment (SLI)? Some of the reasons for language challenges and delays are explained below.

A. Silent Period

In the initial stages of language learning, students may go through a **silent period**. Some students feel anxious, shy, or hesitant about speaking in the new language, particularly in front of their peers. The silent period can last for several weeks.

Coelho (2016) states that "It is important not to push beginners to produce language before they are ready. During this time, some language teachers use the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which allows beginners to remain silent for a significant period… Students who are too intimidated to speak up in class may feel more secure about talking in a small group, where the audience consists of only two or three students."

If teachers continue to be concerned about a student's silence, it may be helpful to check the learner's academic profile in other subject areas or to speak with parents about the student's openness to conversations at home.

B. Language Distance

There is evidence that **language distance** (also called *linguistic distance*) has an effect on the time needed to learn a new language. Language distance is described as the extent to which two languages

are similar or different from each other. Languages with the least language distance from English enable EAL learners to reach higher proficiency levels more quickly.

The American Foreign Service Institute (FSI est. 1947) first introduced the notion of language distance in connection with their language training programs for foreign diplomats and military personnel. The FSI created a tiered scale of language categories that estimated the number of hours required by an English speaker to reach a specified speaking and reading level in a new language. The languages were ranked from easiest to most difficult across tiers. The infographic produced by Voxy (see Module 6) reflects the tiered scale introduced by FSI.

The impact of language distance on students learning a new language needs to be taken into consideration when selecting instructional strategies. Most educators agree that students with first languages such as French, Italian, or Spanish adjust to English with greater ease than students from Asian or Arabic language backgrounds. Students whose first language(s) differ greatly from English might benefit from instructional strategies that target the differences through explicit comparisons of oral and written language forms.

C. Fossilization

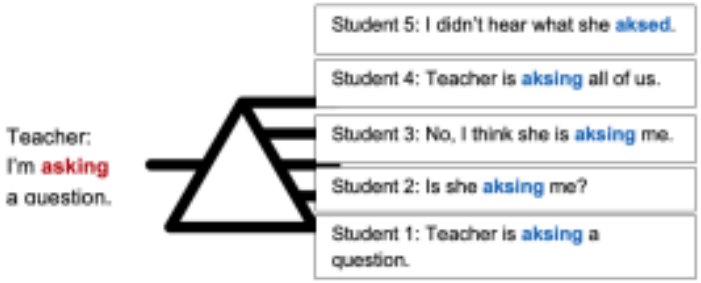
In a K-12 language class, one teacher can have 20 or 30 students. Given this student-teacher ratio, it is easy for students to pass along language errors, multiplied many times, leading to **fossilization** of errors. Fossilization is a broad term used to describe recurring errors or incorrect patterns of speech. In essence, errors become imprinted in a student's mind (like fossil imprints!) due to the number of repetitions from classmates. Language experts believe that fossilization is unavoidable in language classrooms. Some students are more susceptible than others, affecting their ability to develop **fluency** and **accuracy**. Teachers need to address errors by:

- explaining grammatical features of the target language;
- comparing grammatical rules that differ between L1 and L2;
- providing multiple audio and video examples to reinforce correct patterns; and,
- providing tutorials or small group support for recurring errors.

Coelho (2016, pp.172-175) draws attention to the student's affective filter and the need for teachers to address errors gently.

- Respond to the message first, before focusing on the error.
- Be selective when deciding which errors to address.
- Focus on one error at a time.
- Continue to reinforce the correct patterns over several weeks. Students need time to change deeply rooted fossilized patterns.

The example below illustrates how fossilization can occur. The teacher provides a correct statement. However, student 1 mispronounces the word 'asking' and each student repeats the incorrect word, multiplying the error many times! The teacher must then draw attention to the error through one of the strategies mentioned above.



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SPEECH LANGUAGE IMPEDIMENT OR CODE-SWITCHING?

To begin this segment, it is best to view a video clip about bilingual children and **speech-language impairments (SLI)** titled *Can bilingual children have speech-language impairments (SLI)? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7Sj_uRV7S4&sns=tw* (5:24 min.) prepared by the organization RADLD (Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder).

The video clip introduces the term code-switching, which has often been interpreted as a sign of a language delay or language challenge. **Code-switching** (also called '**translanguaging**') involves the use of two or more languages in the context of oral communication. It is a natural phenomenon among simultaneous bilinguals (two languages are learned from birth) and is also common among sequential bilinguals (adding a new language to a first language) as proficiency grows in an additional language. Code-switching reflects a complex and fairly rapid process of analyzing input, creating 'in your head' translations and producing oral speech. Code-switching is NOT a sign of a language delay or learning challenge.

Coelho (2016) states "For teachers, understanding the source of a specific error is not as important as knowing how to respond to it. You may remember that your own language teachers seemed to point out and correct your errors constantly. How did that make you feel? Perhaps you responded negatively, feeling intimidated and reluctant to speak. Or perhaps you responded positively, believing that your teachers were providing sound guidance…." (pp. 173-174). Coelho advises teachers to think about errors not as problems, but as markers on the path to making progress in a new language.

Brief video explanations of translanguaging are available here:

1. Crisfield, E. (2017). What is translanguaging, really? 1:56 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNOtmn2UTzI
2. Crisfield, E. (2020). Translanguaging – Why to how. 2:14 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-08jDnN9cc&t=18s

LEARNING STYLES

All learners, whether students or adults, have preferred learning styles that allow them to learn new information more efficiently and effectively. Teachers can incorporate a variety of strategies in their

lesson plans to support students with different learning styles. A brief summary of learning styles is offered below.

Visual Learners

Students who are visual learners experience greater success when they have items **to view** during a lesson. Teachers should strive to incorporate photos, diagrams, audio-visual presentations, demonstrations, handouts, displays, flip-chart information, checklists, posters, written directions, or instructions in their lesson plans. The phrase "**Let me see it**" describes a visual learner.

Auditory Learners

Students who are auditory learners experience success when they can clearly hear information and have opportunities to repeat information presented in the classroom. They have an innate ability to listen both actively and attentively. Auditory learners can comprehend and remember oral directions, instructions given over the phone, details in podcasts, or words to a song heard on the radio. The phrase "**Let me hear it**" describes a visual learner.

Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners

Students who are kinesthetic or tactile learners are successful with learning when engaged in hands-on tasks. They like to learn as they go by assembling, rearranging, experimenting, building, or designing something. Some learners have difficulty concentrating when seated at their desks. They need to include physical experiences that involve one or several of the senses. Using manipulatives, holding items, movement (exercise breaks), or engaging in hands-on projects supports their learning. The phrase "**Let me try it**" describes a kinesthetic/tactile learner.

Information in the chart that follows has been adapted from the website of the University of Massachusetts (2022) and their segment titled *How to Accommodate Different Learning Styles*.

Ways to Support Visual Learners	Ways to Support Auditory Learners	Ways to Support Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners
• Use maps, flow charts, or webs to organize materials • Highlight and color code books/notes to organize and relate material • Have students pick out key words and ideas in their own writing and highlight them in different colors to clearly reveal organizational patterns • Write out checklists • Write out and use flash cards for review of material • Draw pictures or cartoons of concepts • Use the whiteboard or display board to note important items • If using the computer, have students experiment with different font sizes and styles to enhance readability	• Engage the student in conversation about the subject matter • Question students about the material • Ask for oral summaries of material • Have students record lectures and review them with you • Have students record themselves reviewing material; listen to it together • Read material aloud to students • Use an audio feature on your cell phone to read text • Use well-known song rhythms for learning (fingerplays, action songs, steps in a process, e.g., 'Wash-Wash-Wash Your Hands)	• Write out checklists of materials to be learned or searched out • Trace words and diagrams on paper • Use textured paper and experiment with different sizes of pens, pencils, and crayons to write down information • Draw important concepts or pictures for words • Use role play or dramatize concepts. • Have the student take notes (on paper, word processor, in textbooks) while reading or listening. • Use some form of body movement (snapping fingers, pacing, mouthing ideas) while reading material to be learned.

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A brief video explanation of learning styles is available here:

1. GCFLearnFree. (n/d). Discover Your Learning Style. 3:31 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IopcOwfsoU

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Differentiated instruction (or differentiation) allows teachers in mainstream classes to plan for diverse student needs through adjustments or adaptations to the learning process, learning products, or learning environment.

When students are language learners, differentiation also requires initial and ongoing language assessment to meet the ***language needs of each student***. Teachers benefit from having an arsenal, or toolkit, of effective strategies that (a) consider the student's *current* language skills, and (b) ensure that comprehension and learning are taking place to scaffold learning *beyond* the current level.

Ways to differentiate learning are described extensively in a document titled *The Adaptive Dimension* (2017) produced by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. This document encourages adaptations in four areas so that the learning needs of diverse students can be met. Variables such as learning styles, interests, cultures, and languages impact the ability to reach curriculum outcomes. The chart that follows is an adaptation of a cross-curricular chart that appears in the Adaptive Dimension document (p.11). Given the focus of this online text, the suggestions in the chart specifically target language learners in schools.

Note that **alternative assessment strategies** are suggested in the fourth quadrant. This encourages

teachers to expand their views by moving away from paper and pencil tests or traditional approaches to assessment. Many *instructional assignments* completed by students can have a dual purpose of being informal assessments when added to a learner's portfolio. These assignments offer examples of what a student can do in the target language!

Environment	Instruction
• Digital technologies for added language support • Both in-school and out-of-school opportunities to learn • Strategic student groupings • Visual supports for language learning (wall displays, large print, charts with key vocabulary) • Mobility between learning stations or learning centres • Availability of L1 as required for learning • Personal quiet space for learning or tutorial support	• Use of differentiated teaching and learning strategies* (use key strategies that work well) • Write language objectives to support content objectives • Careful choice of materials to match learner language levels. • Attention to cultural background and prior experiences • Attention to pacing, timing • Pre-teaching of key vocabulary • Use of L1 and cognates* for cross-linguistic transfer • Include opportunities for student choice of tasks, topics, projects • Use of digital technologies, including access to L1 support material
Resources	**Assessment**
• Access to digital resources for language support (laptops, digital cameras or phones*) • Dual language books and multimedia resources • Simplified texts* for language learners • Support personnel (e.g., teaching assistants, tutors, volunteers) • Choice of resources to match learner language levels and ages • Provision of L1 resources for continued L1 literacy (e.g., dual language texts*) • Cultural diversity in resources	• Use of alternative assessment strategies • Portfolios for formative and summative assessment/'evidence of progress' • Use of anecdotal or informal assessment techniques • Attention to pacing and added timing when administering assessments • Expectations based on student language abilities (check CEFR/CFR levels) • Change of environment to decrease anxiety

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan based on Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2017). The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K–12 Students.

Video explanations of the items in the chart marked **in red** with an ***asterisk** are available here:

1. Colorin Colorado. (n/d). Teaching Vocabulary with Digital Cameras. https://www.colorincolorado.org/classroom-video/teaching-vocabulary-digital-cameras
2. BBC Learning English website. Main site: https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/
3. BBC Learning English website. Simple stories for children, audio-visual plus transcript: https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/childrens-stories
4. BBC Learning English website. Podcasts for older learners: 6 minute English: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pc9tn/episodes/downloads

5. Unite for Literacy Project (n/d). English/Spanish books available online with narration. https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/
6. Prodigy Education (Ontario). (n/d) 15 Differentiation Strategies. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbofSpSQR3c
7. Colorin Colorado. (n/d). Using Cognates to Develop Comprehension in English. https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/using-cognates-develop-comprehension-english
8. Coloring Colorado. (n/d). Amber Prentice: Using Cognates in ELL Classrooms. https://www.colorincolorado.org/guide/cognate-list-english-and-spanish

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Explain the purpose of a learner profile or learner portfolio.
2. Identify learning styles that impact each student's success in the classroom.
3. Organize strategies for differentiating learning into four categories: instruction, assessment, environment, and resources.
4. Examine ways to adapt resources to meet the language proficiency levels of diverse students in a language program.

MODULE 7 GLOSSARY

Alternative assessment: Approaches to monitoring student learning that consider a learner's specific circumstances, challenges, or language learning needs, resulting in an expansion of ways to assess student progress.

Code switching: A term used to describe the ability to alternate between two or more languages in the context of oral communication.

Differentiation: Adjusting, adapting, or tailoring instruction to meet a learner's individual needs.

Fossilization: A broad term used to describe recurring errors or incorrect patterns of speech, often the result of multiple incorrect repetitions that have become ingrained in the mind.

Language distance: The extent to which two languages are similar or different from each other.

Learner profile (learner portfolio): A collection of important information about the student, as well as samples of student work that illustrate progress with learning.

Silent period: Describes the initial stage of language learning when students prefer to observe and absorb the new language rather than trying to speak.

Speech-language impairment (SLI): Describes a communication disorder that adversely affects a child's ability to succeed in school.

Translanguaging: The use of two or more languages from one's personal repertoire to support communication, access information or facilitate understanding.

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NALDIC (2016). What is translanguaging? EAL Journal. https://ealjournal.org/2016/07/26/what-is-translanguaging/

Prokopchuk, N. (2021). *The CEFR/CFR Reference Scale: A Practical Tool for Assessing Language Skills in an Additional Language.* Chart. College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

RALLI campaign *Bilingualism and SLI. (2013). Can bilingual children have speech-language impairments (SLI)?* Raising Awareness of Language Learning Impairments (RALLI). *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7Sj_uRV7S4&sns=tw (5:24 min.)*

University of Massachusetts. (2022). *How to Accommodate Different Learning Styles*. Dartmouth. https://www.umassd.edu/dss/resources/faculty-staff/how-to-teach-and-accommodate/how-to-accommodate-different-learning-styles/

LEARNING MODULE EIGHT: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

The provincial motto in Saskatchewan is ***From Many Peoples Strength,*** a statement recognizing the value of a diverse population. The wheel in the photo below is prominently displayed on the first floor of the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. This offers another reminder that diverse populations have many cultural subsets of citizens.

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Students in schools also represent the societal and cultural subsets within a geographical location. An increased level of diversity offers a compelling reason for educational renewal. Instructional

approaches from the past need to be revised to move beyond the 'one textbook, one workbook, one exam' approach. For the school curriculum to be effective, students need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and resources. Students want to be heard, seen, and supported in the classroom.

The final learning module in this language education text supports an inclusive approach to learning known as Culturally Responsive Teaching, or CRT. Another term for CRT is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP).

WHAT DOES 'CULTURE' REALLY MEAN?

For many people, the word **culture** is specifically about ethnicity. Authors Helmer and Eddy (2012) explain that culture is not limited to a student's ethnic background. Cultural affiliations can extend to personal interests, such as music, the arts, sports, or lifestyle. These groups then become the sub-cultures that comprise a student's unique identity. To illustrate, a high school student can belong to a sports team, a choir, dance group, drama club and debating team. Each sub-culture has its own set of values, expectations, and responsibilities. Therefore, each individual becomes a unique composite of various cultural affiliations. Some cultural affiliations are visible on the surface (e.g., clothing and language), while others are hidden beneath the surface (e.g., talents and heritage).

Source: Permission: CC BY 4.0 Courtesy of A Kids' Guide to Canada.

A brief video explanation of the term 'culture' is available here:

1. Cultural Competence Introductory Video. (n/d). SOM Diversity. 3:46 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcFADtVc5FM

Personal Beliefs and Biases

Authors Helmer and Eddy (2012) encourage teachers to reflect on their own cultural values and beliefs by conducting a **personal audit**. Teachers may not be unaware that they are modeling *deeply-ingrained personal beliefs and biases* when they set classroom rules or insist on particular practices to be followed.

The authors state that "We all have a basic set of principles that guide how we live, how we interact with others, and those with whom we choose to associate. Within a given cultural group, these principles are often not articulated into a clear focus or creed." (p. 90).

The two audit exercises below were created based on information found in Chapter 7 of the Helmer & Eddy (2012) text *Look at Me When I Talk To You*. These exercises offer an opportunity to determine which values, beliefs, and characteristics have defined us for many years and may be the source of personal biases.

Values-Beliefs Continuum – Circle the number that applies to you.

I am very... I believe in being...								I am very... I believe in being...
Assertive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Compliant
Dominant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Submissive
Open	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Private
Direct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Indirect
Punctual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Flexible

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World Values Survey – Label from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important).

____determination	____feeling of responsibility	____hard work
____imagination	____independence	____obedience
____respect	____thrift	____unselfishness
____tolerance		

Permission: Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

A very useful chart of cultural values was created by L. Robert Kohls, Executive Director of the Washington International Centre (in Helmer & Eddy, 2012). The chart compares North American values with values that can be observed among other cultural groups. Kohls' intent was to help students and visitors to the USA understand societal norms and behaviours in America that might

seem puzzling to visitors or newcomers. This chart can be used as an educational tool to spark conversations among staff members about differing values, beliefs, and viewpoints.

The chart is not meant to be interpreted as an *either/or* list of values. Teachers who represent diverse cultures in North America often find themselves somewhere in between the range of identified values and beliefs.

VALUES IN NORTH AMERICA	VALUES IN OTHER CULTURES
Personal control over environment, responsibility	Fate, destiny
Change is natural and positive	Stability, tradition, continuity
Time and its control	Human interaction
Equality, fairness	Hierarchy, rank, status
Individualism, independence	Group welfare, dependence
Self-help, initiative	Birthright, inheritance
Competition	Cooperation
Future orientation	Past orientation
Action, work orientation	"Being" orientation
Informality	Formality
Directness, openness, honesty	Indirectness, ritual, saving face
Practicality, efficiency	Idealism, theory
Materialism, acquisitiveness	Spiritualism, detachment

Source: Helmer & Eddy (2012) p. 28

WHAT IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING?

According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), **Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)** means that teachers are open to learning about their students' lives, hold affirming views of diversity, and are willing to advocate for their students. Ladson-Billings (1994) describes CRT as an approach that moves the school curriculum away from superficial celebrations of heroes, holidays, ethnic foods, and national costumes. This approach:

"...integrates a student's background knowledge and prior home and community experiences into the curriculum and the teaching and learning experiences that take place in the classroom." Ontario Ministry of Education (2013) Monograph (p.2)

CRT taps into each student's rich stores of knowledge and diverse perspectives, which are rooted in family language and cultural experiences.

CRT encourages and builds positive attitudes toward student diversity. By infusing school curricula with the principles of CRT, teachers have the ability to reduce attitudes of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Some ways to infuse CRT into the school curriculum include:

- providing access to multicultural resources;
- opening up dialogues for sharing different cultural practices and beliefs;
- conducting a language audit to see which languages are represented in the classroom;
- posting words/phrases in the languages of families in the school community;
- inviting families to share cultural practices and background experiences;
- encouraging multicultural projects that focus on different cultures and countries;
- raising awareness of global circumstances and efforts to help others in need around the world, particularly after natural disasters or war.

Although language classrooms appear to be a natural fit with the principles of CRT, many language programs continue to follow the 'one language-one culture' approach in the classroom. Well-meaning teachers still believe that learning a new language involves an *exclusive focus* on ethnocultural elements of that language. This type of exclusivity does not reflect or respect diverse cultures in the classroom. By extension, it also reproduces the outdated '**monolingual principle**' described by Cummins (2007), which is characterized by three pervading myths:

- Instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language.
- Translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy.
- Within immersion and bilingual programs, languages must be kept rigidly separate.

Studying a new language can and should involve a focus on building language proficiency, but not at the loss of each student's cultural identity or background. By infusing a language program with opportunities for students to see how diversity strengthens their local and global community, students become more open to differences in their midst. They will be less afraid of 'the other' or the somewhat negative label of 'foreigners'. Students will come to understand that diverse people around the world give us new approaches to solving common world problems (e.g., environmental issues, global health issues), helping others in need (e.g., natural disasters, world hunger), or advancing global knowledge.

Brief video explanations of CRT and classroom diversity are available here:

1. Introduction to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (2010). 4:39 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGTVjJuRaZ8
2. ClickView (n/d) Wellbeing for children: Identity and Values. 5:03 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om3INBWfoxY&list=RDLVsQuM5e0QGLg&index=5

HOW CAN TEACHERS BECOME MORE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE?

Culturally responsive classrooms have teachers who set the tone for acceptance of cultural diversity. Teachers become role models who actively display respectful attitudes toward diversity by being honest, open, and genuinely interested in the lives of their students beyond the classroom.

Source – Permission: CC0 1.0 Public Domain

The language learning classroom, in particular, offers opportunities for students to share their cultures, traditions, language(s), beliefs, lifestyles, and values through an approach known as **inquiry-based learning** (see diagram above). Inquiry can be used to help students delve into topics that reflect key aspects of their culture and identity. Students can conduct research on any topic of interest using their full repertoire of languages and prior conceptual learning. They can present what they have learned in the classroom, and allow classmates to follow up with more questions or dialogue. Inquiry-based learning allows students to *wonder out loud* without fear of reprisal or negativity. They search for answers to their questions by consulting credible and reliable sources, using their first language(s) as an additional research tool. Students can *investigate, record, discover, think, try, and reflect* on their learning, as highlighted in the illustration. The opportunity to share what they have learned with classmates builds oral and written skills in the target language. It is a win-win process for all language learners!

The document *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Region X Equity Assistance Center, Education Northwest 2016), offers several best practices for creating a culturally responsive classroom. Some of the recommended practices are listed below.

- Have **high expectations** for all learners regardless of their background, socio-economic status, or identity.

- Cultivate **cross-cultural communication** and respect for others.
- Validate the **cultural identity of students** in the classroom when designing teaching units.
- Gather **diverse resources** that reflect students' lives within and beyond the local community.
- Collaborate with educators, administrators, and community members to create a **welcoming school environment** that embraces student diversity and discourages discrimination.

When teachers create warm, welcoming, and accepting classrooms, this can counterbalance negative attitudes toward those that are perceived as 'different' or 'outsiders'. Negative attitudes that go unchecked often lead to prejudice, bullying, and discrimination.

Brief video explanations of strategies that support CRT are available here:

1. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (2011). Genevieve Erker. 8:52 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_uOncGZWxDc
2. Competencies for Teaching in Multicultural Classrooms. University of New Brunswick. 7:13 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwM7kYUGUzA

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Define culture as seen through a sociological rather than ethnic lens.
2. Describe some personal cultural biases that came to light after conducting a personal audit.
3. Identify strategies for building positive attitudes toward cultural diversity in the classroom.
4. Explore ways to support cultural inclusivity by using inquiry-based learning in lesson planning.

MODULE 8 GLOSSARY

Culture: Patterns of behaviour (a way of life) among people who share similar worldviews, beliefs, talents, customs, and values.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT): Promotes a proactive approach to honouring cultural diversity by incorporating a student's background knowledge and prior home/community experiences into the curriculum as part of daily instruction.

Inquiry-based learning: A teaching strategy that offers students the opportunity to learn by exploring their own interests, asking questions, researching topics, and nurturing their natural curiosity.

Monolingual principle: An approach that requires exclusive use of the target language in the classroom to minimize perceived interference from students' first language(s).

Personal audit: A written or oral survey, checklist, or interview that allows an individual to explore their own strengths and shortcomings.

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GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

The following terms appear in this OER text. Note that the number following each term denotes the learning module in which the term was first introduced.

Academic language (M2): Describes language that is specific to schooling, including classroom terminology, subject specific vocabulary, and language used in course materials, texts, assignments, and exams.

Accuracy (M3): Describes the correct use of a language system, with specific attention to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Affective Filter Hypothesis (M2): Refers to the effects of anxiety on learning due to increased emotion, which becomes a barrier to learning when students feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or fearful.

Alternative assessment (M7): Approaches to monitoring student learning that consider a learner's specific circumstances, challenges, or language learning needs, resulting in an expansion of ways to assess student progress.

Approach (M1): A broad term used to describe a set of beliefs or assumptions about the nature of language learning.

Authentic materials (M6): Texts and other resources that target real-world purposes other than language learning, usually created by native speakers for native speakers.

Backward Design (M3): A process that examines the end goals (objectives, outcomes) for a subject or course, and uses these goals as the basis for curriculum design, lesson planning, and assessment.

Before-during-after reading strategies (M6): A series of strategies that support comprehension of reading material by a) eliciting prior knowledge and introducing key vocabulary before a text is read b) supporting vocabulary growth and comprehension during reading, and c) reinforcing vocabulary and learning material from the text after reading.

BICS (M2): An acronym for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, the term used to describe conversational language, or the language used to carry out everyday tasks and routines.

Bloom's Taxonomy (M4): A hierarchy created by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 (revised 2001) to present six stages of observable actions that tap higher levels of thinking and increased cognitive activity.

CALP (M2): An acronym for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, a term that encompasses academic language, or the language specific to schooling and subject-area learning.

CEFR/CFR (M3): Acronyms for *Common (European) Framework of Reference* that refer to a valid,

reliable reference scale used to describe language abilities in four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Circumlocution (M5): Talking around a topic using known vocabulary when more specific terms or phrases are unknown or not part of the speaker's lexicon.

Code switching (M7): A term used to describe the ability to alternate between two or more languages in the context of oral communication.

Cognates: Words that are derived from a common root word and sound similar across two or more languages.

Common underlying proficiency or 'CUP Theory' (M2): A theory that illustrates how cognitive and literacy skills established in a first language (or mother tongue) are transferred to a new language or languages. Using the image of an iceberg, the invisible part of the iceberg represents the area of the brain that stores concepts, while the visible peaks represent two or more languages that share the same conceptual base.

Comprehensible input (M1): A strategy for language learning that involves the use of language that is slightly above the level of language that is understood by learners. Krashen described this small margin between the known and the new as ***i +1.***

Content and Language Integrated Learning 'CLIL' (M4): A dual-focused approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language.

Content-based instruction 'CBI' (M4): An approach in which students learn the language in real-world contexts using subject matter that is important or relevant to their needs.

Content objectives (M4): Statements that indicate what a student is expected to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of each grade, unit, or specific course of study.

Conversational language (M2): The kind of informal, everyday language used to accomplish daily tasks and routines, and to chat with family and friends.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (M8): Promotes a proactive approach to honouring cultural diversity by incorporating a student's background knowledge and prior home/community experiences into the curriculum as part of daily instruction.

Culture (M8): Patterns of behaviour (a way of life) among people who share similar worldviews, beliefs, talents, customs, and values.

Decoding skills (M6): Describes the ability to distinguish between letters, sounds, and letter patterns, enabling students to recognize familiar words and figure out words that are unfamiliar.

Dialogic teaching (M5): An approach to learning that encourages student contributions, promotes classroom talk, and stimulates students' thinking through a high level of engagement in the learning process.

Differentiation (M7): Adjusting, adapting, or tailoring instruction to meet a learner's individual needs.

Fluency (M3): Unrestricted, comprehensible flow of language without specific attention to language forms.

Fossilization (M7): A broad term used to describe recurring errors or incorrect patterns of speech, often the result of multiple incorrect repetitions that have become ingrained in the mind.

Gradual release of responsibility (M2): Another term for scaffolding, meaning that support is gradually removed as students demonstrate the skills or knowledge to proceed independently. It is also called the "I do – We do – You do" instructional strategy.

High-utility academic vocabulary (M6): Frequently occurring words used across a wide range of subject area topics for academic learning.

Initial assessment (M4): Involves a series of steps that help to determine a child's language proficiency in the target language at the beginning of a language program

Inquiry-based learning (M8): A teaching strategy that offers students the opportunity to learn by exploring their own interests, asking questions, researching topics, and nurturing their natural curiosity.

Integrated Language and Content Instruction 'ILCI' (M3): Describes the process of learning a language while learning subject area content in the language. Similar terms are Content-based Instruction (CBI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Interpretation (M1): Involves oral transfer of information from one language to another, ensuring that the intended meaning is conveyed to the listener.

Language continuum (M3): A cumulative chart that illustrates the developmental stages of language progress observed across languages and cultures.

Language distance (M7): The extent to which two languages are similar or different from each other.

Language objectives (M4): Statements that target the vocabulary required to comprehend subject matter and achieve content objectives.

Language reference scale (M3): An objective chart that describes observable language skills and abilities along a language continuum.

Learner profile or learner portfolio (M7): A collection of important information about the student, as well as samples of student work that illustrate progress with learning.

Message abundancy (M5): A term coined by Pauline Gibbons to describe multiple encounters with vocabulary in order to ensure full comprehension.

Method or methodology (M1): Describes a systematic plan for language teaching that reflects a selected approach.

Monolingual principle (M8): An approach that requires exclusive use of the target language in the classroom to minimize perceived interference from a students' first language(s).

Output Hypothesis (M2): Based on language intake (as proposed in the Input Hypothesis), students must produce language (output) in order to demonstrate their full range of language abilities.

Personal audit (M8): A written or oral survey, checklist, or interview that allows an individual to explore their own strengths and shortcomings.

Productive language (M1): The language produced (output) through speaking and writing.

Proficiency (M3): Combination of language fluency and accuracy, resulting in the ability to use language competently for various purposes and in different circumstances.

Receptive language (M1): The language received and stored in the brain (input) through listening and reading.

Scaffolding (M1): Process of adding small bits of new information (input) to existing knowledge, guided by an individual who is a 'More Knowledgeable Other' (Vygotsky = MKO).

Selective listening (M5): A phrase that describes mental filtering of sounds and messages to focus attention on specific information that is relevant to you.

Silent period (M7): Describes the initial stage of language learning when students prefer to observe and absorb the new language rather than trying to speak.

Speech-language impairment 'SLI' (M7): Describes a communication disorder that adversely affects a child's ability to succeed in school.

Strategies (M1): Actions, tasks, or activities that support language instruction in the classroom as part of a teaching methodology.

Stretched language (M5): A process in which a language learner incorporates new or somewhat familiar words into various situations in order to experiment with language and go beyond the comfort zone to build a broader vocabulary base.

Translanguaging (M7): The use of two or more languages from one's personal repertoire to support communication, access information or facilitate understanding.

Translation (M1): Involves written transfer of information from one language to another.

Writing genres (M6): Various types of literary writing created within a culture by members of that culture for a social purpose.

Zone of Proximal Development 'ZPD' (M2): The space between what a student can do independently and what the student is not yet able to do independently, requiring help from a more knowledgeable other (MKO) to guide learning.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A:

QUADRANTS MODEL [PDF]

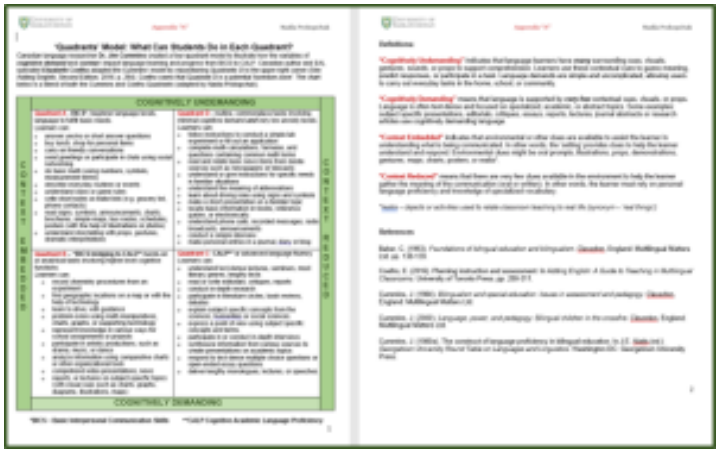
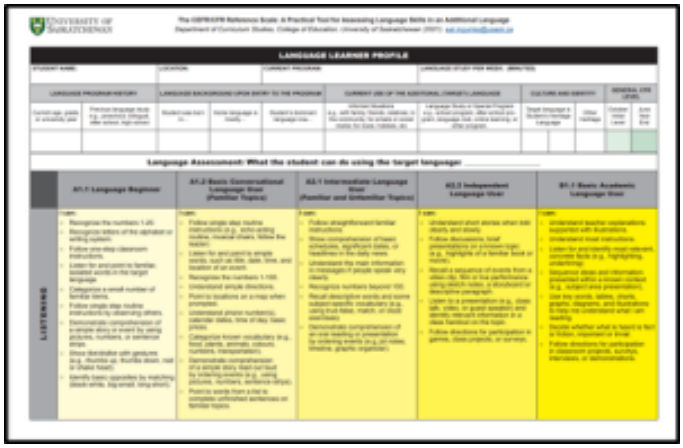


Image Courtesy of Nadia Prokopchuk Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B:

CEFR LANGUAGE_TABLE_2021_ FINAL [PDF]



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