Second Language Instruction and Learning Disabilities

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The crux of the matter is:

- "Unlike in other classes where the language is the process through which students acquire the new knowledge, in the SL classroom it is both the process and the product of the learning" (Arnett, 2003)

- "Students must strive to find ways to circumvent a disability in order to master content: in the case of foreign language learning, however, the language is the content" (Ofiesh 2007 as quoted in: Leons, Herbert & Gobbo)

Why this topic matters:

- All grade 5 to 8 students in B.C. study a second language (mostly in Core French classes
- 25% of students in Vancouver (VSB) are English Language Learners (ELL)
- Enrollment in second language classes is on the rise

Why learn a second language?

- University entrance/ High School graduation
- Travel and mobility
- Cultural understanding
- Employment (Federal government, international, etc.)

Leading researchers

- Richard L. Sparks, & Leonore Ganschow have researched students struggling with foreign langauge component in the college setting since the 1980s

- Katy Arnett, Canadian context, inclusion in French classes

- Elke Schneider, multi-sensory learning (MSL)

Instructional Methods

- <u>Grammar translation</u>; emphasis on reading and writing
- <u>Communicative</u>; incorporate 4 modes of communication reading, writing, *listening, & speaking*
- <u>Audiolingual method</u>; exclusive use of the target language in the classroom
- <u>Total Physical Response</u>; demonstrate understanding through movement
- <u>Multisensory Structured Language (MSL)</u>; the Orton-Gillingham approach adapted to teaching a second language
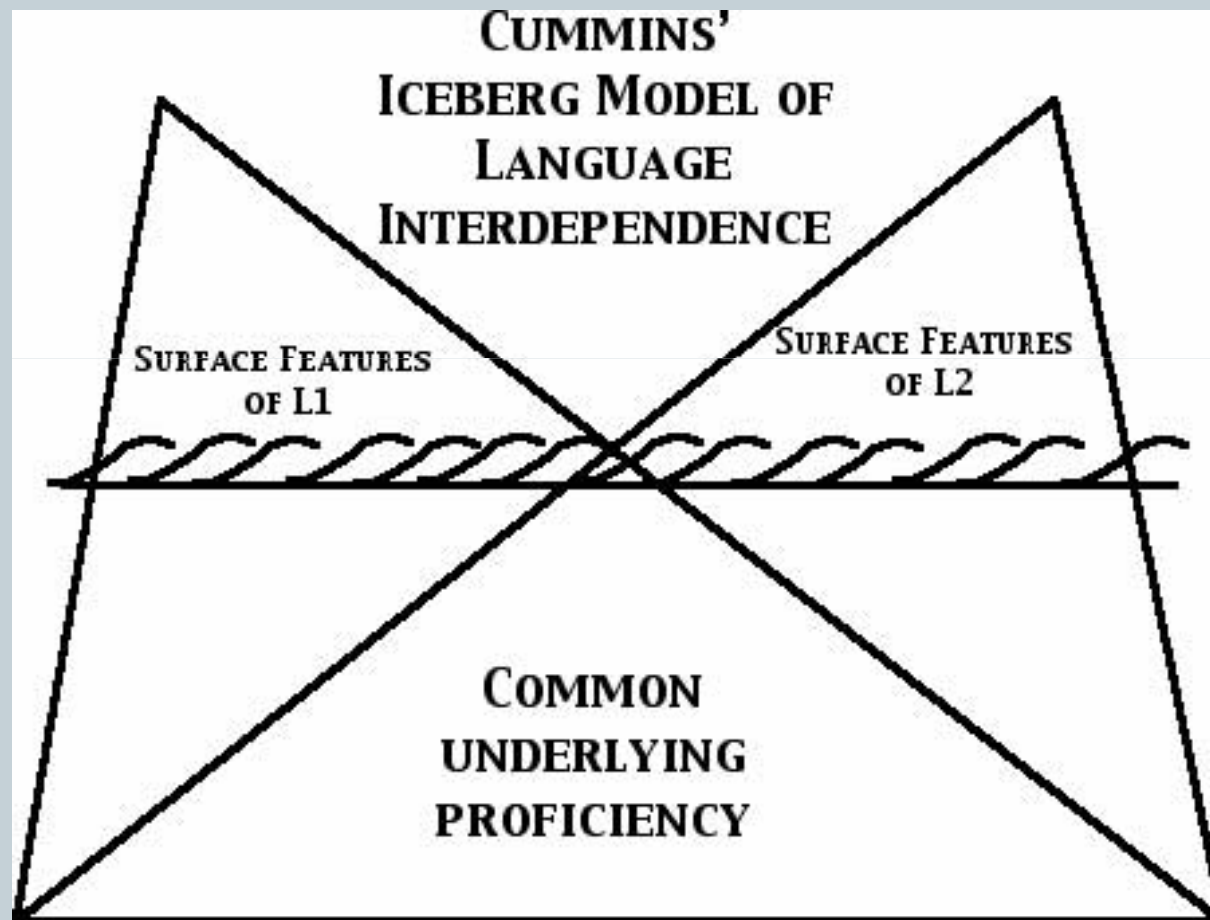
Components of Language Acquisition

Most to least important:

- Phonology (sound)
- Morphology (word roots, tenses & inflections)
- Syntax (rules of sentence structure)
- Semantics (meaning)
- Other (eg. letter markings, grammatical rules)

Language Acquisition Theory

Assessment

- Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), Carroll and Sapon, 1951

- Foreign Language Screening Instrument (FLSI-C), Ganschow and Sparks, 1991

- Teaching Adaptations in the Language Classroom (TALC)Observational Scheme, Arnett, 2003

Learning disabilities and language acquisition

- What is the nature of the interaction between the student's learning disability and the subject matter?

- Prevailing philosophy in the 1960s was that difficulties learning a L2 was caused by anxiety

- Ranges in severity

- Affects any or all areas of language: reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking
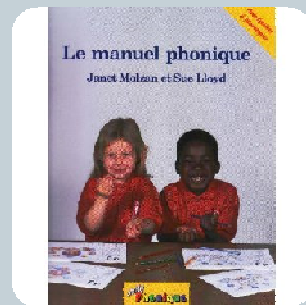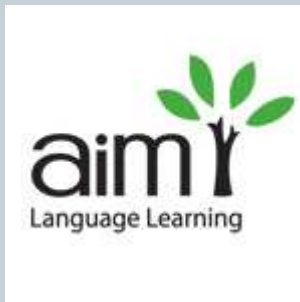
What Works

- Student-centered adaptations
- Universal Instructional Design
- Focused curriculum -pace
- Additional support - tutoring
- Adjust teaching for success- motivating
- Multisensory teaching
- Phonetic training
- Repetitive, structured, sequential
- Metacognitive skills

Programs

- Le Manuel Phonique/ Jolly Phonics
- AIM Language Learning
- Visual Grammar

INSTRUCTIONS: Form correct sentences in the simple past and present perfect and explain why you did what you did.

SUBJECT	VERB COMPONENTS		DIRECT OBJECT
DIE GÄSTE	GEKAUFT	SPIELTEN	DREI HUNDE
PETER	GEFÜTTERT	HAT	TENNIS

ANSWER KEY:

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT	VERB
1) Die Gäste	spielten	Tennis.	
2) Peter	hat	drei Hunde	gefüttert.

Research Questions

- Is it beneficial to use the first language in the teaching of the second language?

- What components of a languge make it easier or harder to study a L2 for students with a LD? To what extent is this dependent on L1?

- Do particular strategies work better with some languges over others?

- Is there a particular age or stage of development that is best to start learning a second language?

Resources

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
- Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)
- Association Canadian des professeurs d'immersion (ACPI)
- LD Online
- The Instant Access Treasure Chest: The foreign language teacher's guide to learning disabilities

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