**THEORIES OF ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNING**

It is generally accepted among researchers that a first language is ‘developed’ while a second or subsequent language is ‘acquired’. This would be different for children who are raised by parents with two languages and who develop full bilingualism in two languages from birth. However, for the majority of practitioners using this guide we assume that the pupils with whom they are working are acquiring English while at school.

**How is additional language acquisition different from first language development?**

| Oracy in a first language is generally developed over a period of 5 - 10 years in the home and at school with on-going interaction and encouragement from family members. | Additional languages are commonly acquired in the classroom alongside curriculum content and in the playground through interaction with peers. Vocabulary, concepts and routines are likely to be unfamiliar. |

**Who are the key theorists in the field of additional language acquisition?**

**Jim Cummins’** work is valuable for teachers in classrooms. Cummins’ (1979) ‘iceberg’ theory of language interdependence proposed that there are common mental processes underlying both first and second language learning. Cummins (1999) also identified the two types of language that pupils need to acquire in order to access learning across the curriculum:

| Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) which is conversational fluency in a language. It takes around 2 years to develop conversational fluency if there are no other inhibiting factors present. These might be the presence of other AEN, or limiting factors such as poor self-esteem. | Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) Students’ ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school. It takes between 5 and 10 years to develop full academic fluency in spoken and written English. |

**Stephen Krashen** also has much to say that is useful for teachers. Krashen (1981) distinguishes two processes within additional language learning: acquisition and learning. Both are needed for pupils to develop fluency in their new language.

| Language acquisition is where pupils acquire language informally through immersion in the classroom setting. This is best supported through meaningful interaction with their peers and teachers in risk-free situations that foster confident spoken language. | Language learning is the formal process of learning how a language works; conscious knowledge about the language (e.g. grammar). |

**Robert Gardner** reported on a range of studies that identify the crucial role of motivation in additional language acquisition. Masgoret and Gardner (2003) summarised this work as showing that there are key dispositional features influencing success and these are: desire to integrate; attitude to the learning situation; motivation to learn the language; language anxiety; other individual differences.

For a comprehensive and highly regarded review of additional language theory and practice see Colin Baker’s *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*

You will find more relating to our current understanding of additional language learning and teaching in the sections on *Challenges Facing EAL Learners* and *Key Principles and Teaching Strategies*. 