

**Introduction to BICS/CALP**

An introduction to BICS/CALP and language proficiency

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**What is BICS/CALP?**



BICS =  
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills



CALP =  
Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

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**What is BICS/CALP?**



BICS =  
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

The language necessary for day to day living, including conversations with friends, informal interactions.



CALP =  
Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

The language necessary to understand and discuss content in the classroom.

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**Comparing BICS/CALP**

BICS	CALP
Context embedded	Context reduced
Context embedded means that the conversation is often face-to-face, offers many cues to the listener such as facial expressions, gestures, concrete objects of reference.	Context reduced is the language of the classroom in which there are fewer non-verbal cues and the language is more abstract.

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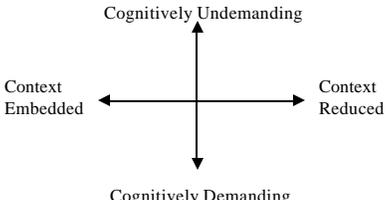
**Comparing BICS/CALP**

BICS	CALP
Cognitively undemanding	Cognitively demanding
Cognitively undemanding language is easy to understand, deals with everyday language and occurrences and uses simple language structure,	Cognitively demanding language relates to abstract concepts, has specialized vocabulary and uses more complex language structure.

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**Cummins Quadrants**

A more detailed picture of BICS/CALP can be obtained by looking at language along 2 scales...



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### Cummins Quadrants

Various school activities and subjects can then be fit into each quadrant in this chart..... [Click for more](#)

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### One language model of BICS/CALP

Sometimes BICS/CALP is represented as an iceberg....

What implications or meaning can you derive from the idea of an iceberg?

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### What does this mean for school children?

While BICS/CALP can be used to describe the language proficiency of single language students, it is primarily used as a way to understand and evaluate the language level of students learning English as a second language.

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Cummins studies of second language learners indicates that children can develop BICS (social language) in 2 years, but it takes 5-7 years for a child to work on the same level as native speakers in CALP.

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### 2 language model of BICS/CALP

Now, let's expand the "iceberg" idea to represent a person with 2 languages ...

There is a common area of language proficiency which provides the foundation for use of both languages.

Common Underlying Proficiency

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### Implications for L2....

The implications of the 2 iceberg model are that:

- The second language grows from the foundation of the first language.
- The stronger the first language, especially CALP, the stronger the second language can be.
- Deaf children may not have had the opportunity to develop BICS and CALP in their primary language

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### What does this mean for school children?

A child's language ability can easily be over-estimated by looking at the BICS and not realizing the complexity and difficulty that second language students have in acquiring CALP in the second language.

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Think about the student with whom you work. Can you see a big difference in their BICS vs. their CALP abilities?

Think about yourself in Sign Language. How's your BICS vs. your CALP?

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