

May 2020 - **Lecture 6**    *Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency: C U P*

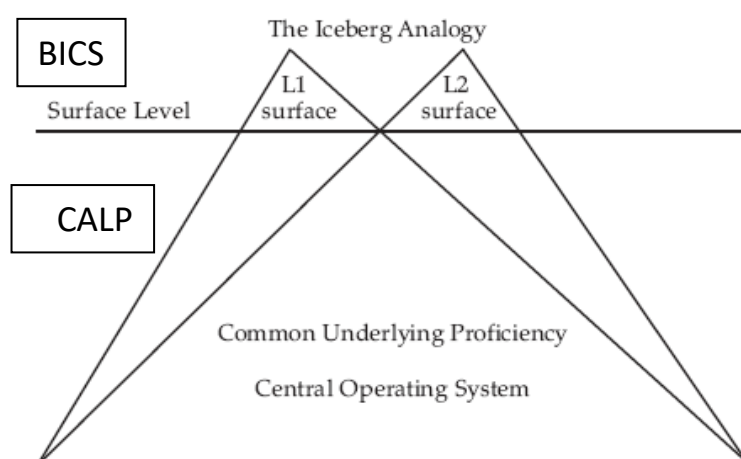
SLA researchers have proposed the view that the acquisition of L2 proceeds somewhat in the same way as L1 acquisition (e.g., Corder 1972, 1978, Selinker 1972, Krashen 1982, etc) as L2 learners take an active role similar to that taken in mother tongue acquisition. Thus, L2 acquisition is seen as a creative process (Chomsky), not in terms of habit formation and many errors made by L2 learners are the same as those made by native speakers (developmental).

After his proposal of the BICS / CALP dichotomy (1979), Jim Cummins was concerned with the interdependence between L1 and L2 and the assistance of the former to the latter. He came up with the CUP model: *Common Underlying Proficiency*.

**Cummins' CUP (1981)**

Cummins believes that in the course of their L1 acquisition, children acquire a set of skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge; and when learning a second language, they draw upon that previous knowledge. That is, skills and concepts from L1 acquisition are transferred to L2: Cummins refers to this correlation as *Common Underlying Proficiency* or CUP.

Also termed 'common interdependence hypothesis', the CUP is illustrated by means of the 'iceberg analogy': while surface proficiencies (BICS) might be very different in the two languages, proficiencies involving more cognitively demanding skills (CALP higher-order thinking skills: abstract thinking, problem-solving, content learning, hypothesizing, inferring) are common across languages: the language interdependence hypothesis.



Cummins and Swain (1986:82) expanded the concept of CUP showing that “*common cross-lingual proficiencies underlie the obviously different surface manifestations of each language.*” Such cross-linguistic proficiencies have been identified by other researchers (Davis *et al.* 1999; Francis, 1999; Garcia, 2002, etc.) who have attempted to consider the extent to which they transfer when tested in concrete language learning settings.