The Need for a New Perspective on Second Language Literacy

The reader might ask, Why do we need another book about literacy instruction and why one that is specific to second language learners? Bernhardt (2003) states that 80 percent of all reading research in the world has been done in four countries—the United States, England, New Zealand, and Australia—all of which are English-speaking countries. This research, although instructive, has been conducted largely by monolingual English researchers on monolingual English-speaking students and then applied to second language learners without question and, in many cases, without modification. Bernhardt adds that the preponderance of this monolingual English view of how children learn to read is exacerbated by state and federal policies regarding best practices for reading instruction, which rely solely on this monolingual research base.

Further compounding the issue is the production of commercial reading programs that are also based on this monolingual view and that are purchased by states and local school districts and used with diverse populations of children, assuming that the research base applies across languages and cultural groups. This deeply entrenched approach toward literacy has left little space for biliteracy and multiliteracy development or guidelines for how teaching literacy in English may need to be modified for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Moll, 2001; Moll & Dworin, 1996; Perez, 1998; Reyes, 2001; Schwarzer, 2001).

This situation has resulted in a call for a new perspective on teaching literacy to second language learners that emphasizes approaches and strategies specific to the needs of CLD learners. The chapters in this text address some of the gaps in research surrounding literacy instruction for second language learners so that English as a second language (ESL) teachers and grade-level/mainstream teachers can bridge theory to practice as they develop a culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers of English as a second language are encouraged to continue providing ESL services if a CLD student qualifies for them via a solid oral ESL program that takes place daily and is explicit in its focus on literacy development. Grade-level/mainstream classroom teachers are encouraged to provide a comprehensive second language reading program that takes place in addition to and not instead of ESL. This text provides grade-level/mainstream classroom teachers with the information they need to support second language literacy development with their CLD students, in addition to whatever ESL program the school has in place.
Our research has found that teachers and schools who incorporate the languages and cultures represented by their CLD students have far greater success in supporting literacy development than those that do not. This success is further enhanced when ESL teachers and grade-level/mainstream classroom teachers work together to create a comprehensive literacy development program. Each of the chapters in this text provides concrete suggestions and hands-on strategies for both ESL and grade-level/mainstream teachers to implement in their daily instructional practice. Following these suggestions and applying these strategies will help ensure that children’s languages and cultures are the cornerstone of their literacy development.

New to This Edition

The revisions included in this text provide important theoretical and practical applications that reflect the changing landscape of education. These revisions are driven by the current educational climate and needs of second language learners. Our goal is to provide readers with the most up-to-date information possible when it comes to literacy instruction with CLD students. We hope that readers will find this information valuable and enlightening. Specific examples of the new features and updates to be found in this text include:

- **Common Core State Standards Connections**: This boxed feature can be found in Chapters 3 through 7. Each has been strategically placed to show how critical concepts from the chapter align with a Common Core State Standard and the implications for instructing CLD students.
- **Secondary Connections**: This feature is also in the form of callouts in Chapters 3 through 9 and highlights how key content concepts reflect the needs of older students. Readers who teach CLD students in grades 7 through 12, or even adult learners, will find this feature particularly beneficial.
- **Updated Strategies in Practice**: Several chapters have new Strategies in Practice features included. In addition, many of the existing Strategies in Practice have been updated with new directions and/or student artifacts to support implementation in practice.
- **Teacher Voices**: More examples from the field have been included throughout each chapter as evidenced in teacher quotes and/or examples in practice. By including these examples, we hope that educators across the country are more readily able to identify with or relate to the content and concepts being discussed.
- **New Research**: Each chapter has also been updated to reflect the newest research on literacy instruction, particularly as it relates to CLD students. This
new research reflects the latest trends and key information that educators need to know when providing literacy instruction to CLD students.

- **Updated Standards:** In addition to the Common Core State Standards, the new TESOL standards for K–12 ELLs have been referenced in this text. Given the national emphasis on the Common Core State Standards, this discussion is particularly critical for educators working with CLD students.

### Beginning to Develop a New Pedagogy

Chapter 1 sets the stage for this text by exploring what *literacy* means for CLD students. The chapter then introduces the five elements of literacy instruction that the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) views as critical to any reading program: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Chapter 1 also details current approaches to reading instruction for alphabetic languages, which include analytic or top-down approaches (whole to part), synthetic or bottom-up approaches (part to whole), and interactive approaches. The NRP (2000) findings were synthetic (bottom-up) in their recommendations. This text proposes that rather than a focus on learning to crack the code, literacy instruction for second language learners must focus on meaning.

Chapter 2 presents an introduction to the CLD student biography and its role in literacy development. Central to this discussion is the need for educators to consider the whole child by exploring each student’s sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive dimensions to best use his or her assets to further the abilities to read and write in a second language. Too often, these dimensions are overlooked, viewed as problems to be solved, or seen as sources of interference in learning to read in English. Suggestions for getting to know students and using their languages and cultures in instruction are presented.

At the core of this text is a focus on the five core elements of reading instruction that were introduced by the NRP (2000). Chapter 3 begins this exploration by proposing a reexamination of phonemic awareness with CLD students. Traditionally, the development of phonemic awareness in monolingual English reading programs is based on instruction in phonemic awareness tasks. The challenge for CLD students is that these tasks are often decontextualized drills of isolated English letter sounds. For CLD students who are learning English and who do not yet know these letter sounds, this decontextualized approach to phonemic awareness instruction often results in a disconnect. The reexamination in Chapter 3 is centered on research that found that CLD students can engage in cross-linguistic transfer by accessing existing phonemic awareness skills in their native language and transferring these skills to reading and writing in English. In an analysis of the word recognition view and sociopsycholinguistic view of reading, this chapter...
identifies which view is most beneficial for CLD students. The chapter proposes multiple strategies for teaching phonemic awareness tasks by modeling a contextualized approach to instruction that emphasizes cross-linguistic transfer.

Chapter 4 takes a historical look at the role of phonics in reading instruction. Building on the presentation of the word recognition view and the sociopsycholinguistic view of reading presented in Chapter 3, this chapter contextualizes phonics instruction from a sociopsycholinguistic viewpoint. Phonics instruction in the sociopsycholinguistic view incorporates three cueing systems to support the learner: the graphophonetic, semantic, and syntactic cueing systems. Using authentic literature, Chapter 4 suggests possible ways educators can build from their prescribed reading programs to provide integrated phonics lessons for CLD students. Founded on a student-centered approach to phonics instruction that supports and builds on CLD students’ existing phonics skills, this chapter also identifies specific strategies that promote the use of linguistic investigations as the starting point from which educators can develop phonics skills with CLD students.

Chapter 5 explores the implications of current approaches to vocabulary development in instruction with CLD students. Building from these current approaches, the chapter highlights the importance of providing vocabulary instruction within meaningful linguistic and cultural contexts. To support teachers in the development of these meaningful contexts, this chapter provides specific examples of how vocabulary development can be linked to each of the four dimensions of the CLD student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive). Central to this discussion is a focus on differentiating vocabulary for CLD students at different stages of English language acquisition. Chapter 5 also explores how to tap into students’ prior and background knowledge before the lesson to bridge and connect the known to the unknown. Multiple strategies for promoting student interaction, practice, and application of academic vocabulary are provided. Furthermore, authentic assessment of students’ understanding of academic vocabulary is discussed and modeled through student samples.

Cognizant of the fact that vocabulary development underlies reading comprehension, the text moves from a discussion of vocabulary instruction to comprehension instruction in Chapter 6. Building on current research, this chapter proposes that central to comprehension instruction are the schematic connections students make while reading. Culturally and linguistically diverse students who bring different life experiences than those of their monolingual English-speaking peers frequently make schematic connections that differ as well. Chapter 6 explores this juxtaposition by illustrating how teachers can tap into the CLD student biography to promote the use of schematic connections in practice. Additionally, Chapter 6 provides teachers with three types of hands-on reading comprehension
strategies that have been specifically designed to support CLD students’ schematic connections to text. The first type of strategy is metacognitive in nature and promotes CLD students’ monitoring of their own thought processes while reading. The second type, cognitive strategies, provides CLD students with concrete tools they can use individually or with peers. The third type, social/affective strategies, promotes student interaction and cultural connections to text.

Chapter 7 brings together the aspects of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension development by identifying how they work in unison to support fluency development. Traditionally, fluency instruction for CLD students has focused largely on surface constructs of fluency development, in which accuracy, speed, and prosody are the emphasis (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). This chapter introduces key considerations for promoting surface constructs of fluency development. Additionally, it explores how teachers can transition CLD students to deep constructs of fluency development, in which the ultimate goal is comprehension. Numerous strategies are introduced to support teachers in providing fluency instruction that guides CLD students to develop these deep constructs of fluency. The emphasis of each of these strategies is on the power of collaboration and modeling. Through the use of interactive grouping configurations at the partner and small-group level, these hands-on strategies provide the reader with a new twist on fluency development.

Often, literacy books are about reading and not about writing. Chapter 8 specifically addresses the need to modify writing instruction for second language learners. As with reading instruction, writing instruction with CLD students is frequently approached in the same manner as writing instruction for monolingual English-speaking children. We propose that teachers adopt the perspective that what students know about writing in one language can be used to help teach the second language. For example, conducting a mini-lesson in which CLD students contrast languages might be more effective than asking students to correct grammar errors in written English sentences.

Chapter 9 challenges teachers to look “outside the lines” of traditional literacy assessment when working with CLD students by building from the multiple dimensions of the CLD student biography when approaching assessment. This chapter provides an overview of some of the most common assessments currently used in classrooms, including RTI, to identify students’ language proficiency levels and reading proficiency in the following areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Building from an authentic approach to assessment, this chapter explores the ways teachers can assess CLD students’ knowledge in each of these areas by going back to the CLD student biography. Formative assessments are presented as one of the key ways for educators to apply authentic assessments in practice. Strategies for extending questioning that advances CLD students’ thinking, learning, and application are also introduced. The chapter
concludes by presenting two student case studies that illustrate how to bring together the CLD student biography, reading instruction, and authentic assessment.

Chapter 10 brings the text to a close by examining how the information learned in the previous chapters aligns with three sets of standards: the Common Core State Standards (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010), the Standards for the English Language Arts of the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (IRA/NCTE, 1996), and the ESL Standards for Pre-K–12 Students of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 1997). Using these standards as a theoretical foundation, Chapter 10 discusses how educators can maintain fidelity to the core curriculum they are required to teach yet still make accommodations within their reading curriculum to support their CLD students’ academic success. The chapter provides specific strategies that demonstrate how teachers can blend what they already do in their daily instruction with the new information they have learned so that they are able to maintain fidelity yet approach literacy instruction with a new lens rooted in the CLD student biography.

In sum, this text is organized around the principles that reading and writing instruction for CLD students begins with the CLD student biography and should have at its core a focus on meaning. Consequently, the languages and cultures of second language learners are considered resources to be used in teaching, rather than problems to be solved. Throughout this text, teachers are guided to modify literacy instruction in ways that address both the assets and needs of CLD students. Modification does not mean doing the same thing only slower, more frequently, after school, or on Saturdays. Modification means doing something differently and changing our habits of mind!

**Additional Features**

To support readers’ understanding, additional features are included in each chapter of this text. These features have been designed to reflect the various learning styles of readers and to highlight critical concepts.

**Critical Considerations**

After each chapter outline, questions are posed for teachers and practitioners working with CLD students. The Critical Considerations prompt the reader to reflect on the issues to be explored in depth in the chapter.

**Chapter Outlines**

Every chapter begins with a chapter outline, which serves as a graphic organizer by providing the reader with an overview of the key content to be presented.
Strategies in Practice

These boxes provide the reader with detailed instructions for implementing the strategies introduced in each chapter. Special emphasis is given to the adaptations included with each strategy that are specific to CLD students. Driven by the strategy itself, these adaptations reflect the specific sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive dimensions of the CLD student biography.

Samples of Student Work

Select samples of student work have been included in this text and incorporated in several of the Strategies in Practice to depict student products. The student samples have been gathered from multiple classrooms in multiple states and reflect a wide range of CLD students. Not only are these students culturally diverse but they are also linguistically diverse in that they represent multiple language groups in addition to Spanish speakers.

Teacher Voices

In our work with public school teachers, we have been fortunate to see and share in the successful implementation of literacy instruction modified specifically for CLD students. We have included quotations from teachers throughout the text to share the insights gained by teachers from their various experiences and to highlight critical concepts. From the teachers’ voices, readers can learn firsthand how literacy instruction that targets the multiple dimensions of the CLD student biography not only significantly impacts the academic success of CLD students but also helps create powerful communities of learners with monolingual English students in grade-level classrooms.

Vignettes

Vignettes are included in selected chapters to provide the reader with specific classroom scenarios that highlight critical concepts. Using the vignettes, readers are prompted to critically reflect on how these concepts directly impact their daily instructional practice.

Key Theories and Concepts

Each chapter provides a theoretical orientation and defines critical concepts relevant to the chapter content. At the end of each chapter, these key theories and concepts are presented via a list of key vocabulary terms, which serve as a reminder to the reader of the theoretical foundation on which the chapter was based.
Professional Conversations on Practice
These prompts provide readers with topics for discussion about the key issues presented in each chapter. This feature guides educators to elaborate on the concepts presented and to engage in critical reflection on the application of this content in their own professional practice.

Questions for Review and Reflection
At the end of each chapter, questions are provided to engage readers in self-reflection on key content. The prompts further challenge teachers to consider their own readiness for implementing what they have learned in their professional practice.

- Classroom Artifacts: Authentic preK–12 student and teacher classroom artifacts are tied to course topics and offer you practice in working with the actual types of materials you will encounter daily as teachers.
- Lesson and Portfolio Builders: With this effective and easy-to-use tool, you can create, update, and share standards-based lesson plans and portfolios.

Glossary
This feature is designed to aid readers in their understanding of this text as well as in their future applications of content in practice. Attention has been given to acronyms readers are likely to be unfamiliar with and terms that are essential to literacy instruction for CLD students.

References
A complete list of works cited in American Psychological Association (APA) bibliography style is included at the end of the text. This reference list documents the multiple sources used to provide the theoretical foundation and the research-based and practical applications of content suggested by the authors throughout this text. Additionally, this feature can be used as a resource for educators of CLD students at the preservice and inservice levels.

Starting the Journey
This text has been written to support educators in navigating the precarious task of teaching CLD students to read and write. Literacy instruction that is modified to be relevant and meaningful for second language learners provides these children with a solid path to academic success.
As we navigate the never-ending tides of politics that drive what happens in schools, we urge educators to let the following proverb guide their steps:

Not to let a word get in the way
Of its sentence,
Not to let a sentence get in the way
Of its intention,
But to send your mind out to meet
The intention as a guest,
That is understanding.

Understanding the unique aspects of literacy development for CLD students must be the goal if we are to educate the children who sit before us. We must understand literacy development from a new perspective where pedagogy is important but the unique aspects of students’ cultures and languages and their interaction with learning to read and write are more important. This text is intended to provide educators with the necessary information to move one step beyond their current practice to ensure more intentional accommodations for their CLD students.

Acknowledgments

Perhaps the greatest gift a teacher can give a child is to instill a passion for reading and writing. With the support of many colleagues and educators, we have shared our passion for educating culturally and linguistically diverse students so that they can receive this gift and become passionate readers and writers of English.

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We acknowledge, too, the many teachers across the United States who contributed valuable insights and examples in practice to contextualize critical concepts throughout this text. Each of these educators exemplifies what it means to go above and beyond for culturally and linguistically diverse students and families in and out of the classroom. Thank you for inspiring us through your example and sharing with us a piece of your heart.
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CHAPTER 1

Literacy and the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- In what ways is literacy more than simply reading and writing?
- What are the essential elements of a literacy development approach or program?
- What theoretical framework guides your instructional approach to literacy instruction?
- Why is it beneficial for culturally and linguistically diverse students to interact with meaningful text prior to knowing the letters and sound system of the English alphabet?
- What role does schema play in the reading process?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Interactive Literacy: Defining Literacy for CLD Students
- Literacy Is Biographical
- Literacy Is Fundamental
- Literacy Is Research Based

Essential Elements of Literacy Development

The Theoretical Foundations of Reading
- Reading the Symbols and Sounds of English: The Bottom-Up Reading Process Model
- Schematic Connections to Text: The Top-Down Reading Process Model
- Reading as a Circular Process: The Interactive Reading Process Model

Common Core State Standards
Ms. Gilbert has 24 children in her third-grade class. Thirteen of these children are classified as *culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)*. Eight of the CLD students are Spanish speaking, but they are hardly homogeneous. Four of these children have been in Ms. Gilbert’s school since kindergarten; their instruction has been all in English, and they have had English as a second language (ESL) classes. Two of the children arrived at her school this year. They are beginning-level ESL students, but they can both read and write in Spanish. The other two children have moved back and forth between Mexico and the United States over the past four years and, in the process of moving, have missed many days of school in both countries. Three of the five remaining CLD students are Vietnamese children born in the United States. All three have attended school since kindergarten and speak English, but they struggle with reading and comprehension tasks. The final two students are Hmong and have recently immigrated to the United States. One has some basic English skills, and the other is classified as a non-English speaker; both have been placed in an ESL class for part of the school day. This is the first time Ms. Gilbert has had any Hmong students in her classroom.

The teacher has just returned from a district-mandated literacy workshop, where she was told that the basic reading program that was purchased for the monolingual English children should be “just fine” for her culturally and linguistically diverse students. Because the program is research based, Ms. Gilbert might need to repeat lessons for the CLD children in her classroom. She is frustrated because she has observed that none of the 13 CLD students is progressing well in English; they have different needs than monolingual English children, and they are not “all the same.” The seven students who have been in the United States since kindergarten are good decoders, but they have poor comprehension in English reading and have very weak writing skills.
The two Spanish-speaking newcomers try very hard and use their knowledge of Spanish to read and write in English, but they cannot read English text at the third-grade level. The two Hmong newcomers are having difficulty transferring their knowledge of Hmong to English because a number of phonological features in Hmong are unfamiliar to English speakers. The two children with interrupted schooling are simply lost in this curriculum.

Using the mandated reading program for CLD students as it was meant to be used with native English speakers is not working for half of Ms. Gilbert’s class. Ms. Gilbert has observed that the program needs to be modified for her English language learners and realizes that there is no one type of CLD student.

The dramatic demographic changes in the United States have been well documented. The U.S. Department of Education’s (USDE) National Center for Education Statistics (2009) reported that between 1998 and 2008 the number of students who speak English as a second language has increased 53 percent. Of the more than 150 languages represented in U.S. schools, Spanish is spoken by 73 percent of the total kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) CLD student population. Of the remaining languages spoken, Chinese, Vietnamese, French/Haitian Creole, Korean, and German are among the top five, and each comprises 1 to 4 percent of this remainder (Batalova & McHugh, 2010).

Given the diversity of languages and cultures represented by students across the country, our preferred term to describe the students for whom this book is targeted is culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). However, when discussing instruction and learning processes unique to second language learners, we frequently will use the term English language learner (ELL).

Culturally and linguistically diverse students are not only located in urban school districts; they are also increasingly present in small-town schools and rural school districts. In addition to those areas that historically have had large immigrant populations, more and more areas that have never had immigrant populations are now home to CLD students. The impact of this new population is particularly apparent in K–12 public schools. Almost one-fifth (19 percent) of U.S. schoolchildren speak a language other than English at home, and 28 percent of these students are limited in English proficiency (NCES, 2006). By 2025, an estimated one out of every four students will be an English language learner (Spellings, 2005).

According to the U.S. Department’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011), there are 3.2 million public school teachers educating the nation’s 49.4 million children attending public PK-12 schools. Despite the growing number of students who bring diverse language experiences to school, a 2008 Schools and Staffing Survey found that only 27 percent of teachers reported having access to professional development that addressed the needs of this population.
Another key consideration is the fact that 83 percent of U.S. teachers are white (NCES, 2011), and 83 percent are estimated to be monolingual in English (Boser, 2011). Frequently, those who work with CLD students have little experience adapting to a new culture or learning a second language. Although they may be caring teachers and want to be effective with all their students, many have no knowledge of what students are experiencing culturally or linguistically and have few concrete strategies and approaches for teaching this population. In short, most teachers will have second language learners in their classrooms, yet few will have the preparation to teach them.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the instruction of literacy. Of the public school teachers across the United States, only 12.5 percent of those who have CLD students in their classrooms have had eight or more hours of professional development targeting the needs of these students (NCES, 2002). Moreover, only a small portion of this training has focused on literacy development. Yet teachers need this explicit training to support English literacy development among students who are second language learners of English. In most states, ELLs score 40 or more percentage points below non-ELLs on their first try at the reading/language arts/English portion of exit exams (Center on Education Policy, 2005).

As in the case of Ms. Gilbert, the majority of teachers care about the children they teach and want to be effective in teaching them. However, these teachers often are frustrated by the “one size fits all” reading programs they are given and the misguided advice that suggests that good methods will be equally effective with all students. Good teachers know that all children do not learn in the same way and at the same pace, and they are well aware that children who do not speak English need different methods to help them learn English and be successful readers and writers in U.S. classrooms. This book explores how teachers can provide differentiated literacy instruction that addresses the specific linguistic and cultural needs of their CLD students by proposing an interactive literacy design.

**Interactive Literacy: Defining Literacy for CLD Students**

The *Newbury House Dictionary of American English* defines literacy as “the ability to read and write.” In this book, we propose that literacy is much more than simply the ability to read and write. *Literacy*, as defined in this text, is biographical, fundamental, and research based. For CLD students, the biographical dimensions that define literacy are sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive in nature. The fundamental domains that define literacy are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The research-based elements that define literacy are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension,
and fluency. Figure 1.1 identifies each of these components and illustrates the interactive nature of these elements during instruction as teachers continually move back and forth between them when teaching literacy to CLD students. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, we will explore each of these components and their implications for CLD students’ literacy development in depth. The power of this interactive literacy design is best summed up by an elementary teacher:

The Interactive Model is most effective for working with CLD students because it uses culturally relevant and authentic experiences with which students can make connections between their L1 [first language] and L2 [second language]. Literacy is interactive because children’s first experiences with language take place in the home, which is the “heart” of the Prism Model. How children understand and learn, their cognitive abilities, is related to their cultural background.
LITERACY IS BIOGRAPHICAL

This section of the chapter focuses on the biographical dimension of the interactive literacy design. From the time a child is born, he or she is developing literacy. The family, home, and community are the foundations of interactive literacy development in the life of the child. Therefore, we propose that literacy is first and foremost biographical in nature. The sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive dimensions of CLD students are critical. Although each of these dimensions plays a role in shaping how CLD students view and approach literacy, the sociocultural dimension lies at the heart.

Socioculturally, the family and community in which the CLD student is being raised define literacy. Consider the following example:

It is bedtime, and Jesse (7 years old), Isa (5 years old), and Ruth (4 years old) sit outside on the porch with their abuelita (the Spanish name for grandmother). The air is humid, and cars speed down the road in front of the house. But the children don’t notice the heat or the noise, for this is their special time with Abuelita. It is just before 10 o’clock, and it will be several hours before their parents get home from work. Knowing that it is almost bedtime, Isa asks Abuelita to tell them the story of “La Llorona.” At the mention of the title of the story, Ruth grabs Abuelita’s hand and squeezes it tightly. She smiles in anticipation, even though she is scared.

In this example, these Mexican American children are engaged in an act of literacy development that is rooted in their sociocultural background. “La Llorona” (“The Weeping Woman”) is a traditional story told to children so they do not stray from home at night in fear that the weeping woman will mistake them for her own children and take them away with her. The children here are being exposed to a form of storytelling that is culture specific and unlike more traditional examples of bedtime stories, in which a book is read aloud while the child is tucked snugly into bed. Instead, the children in this example are sitting outside on a porch late at night, listening to their grandmother tell the story orally. However, other CLD students are not exposed to these specific kinds of literacy at all. Rather, they come to school never having had a book read to them or a story told to them, making their socialization to literacy very distinct from that of their peers.

Building on the previous example, the children’s abuelita told the story of “La Llorona” in Spanish, the family’s native language. For many CLD students who enter school with a native language other than English, literacy is defined by their native language, making language the second way in which literacy is biographical. Some of the key language factors that shape literacy development are:

• Phonology: the sounds of the native language, which may or may not exist in the English language
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Knowing about these language factors can support educators as they approach literacy instruction with CLD students.

Equally important for educators to know is the academic biography of the CLD student. Academic literacy, as defined by Gipe (2006), is the instructional literacy children have been exposed to through personal experiences with books and other forms of written or spoken language. For CLD students, exposure and access to books or text may or may not have been part of their academic literacy. Therefore, the academic literacy biographies of culturally and linguistically diverse students may not necessarily match those of peers encountered in a public school setting.

The final dimension that makes literacy biographical is the cognitive dimension. Cognition refers to “the nature of knowing, or the ways of organizing and understanding our experiences” (Gipe, 2006, p. 5). The experiences that CLD students bring to the classroom shape the way they view and understand information. These experiences may or may not match those of their monolingual English-speaking peers.

Within this text, the biographical nature of literacy is the foundation on which literacy instruction is based. Understanding the impact of the sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive dimensions on CLD students’ literacy development informs educators by providing a holistic picture of each CLD student. Knowing the biographical literacy backgrounds of their CLD students empowers educators as they build on students’ assets to promote their literacy development and academic success.

LITERACY IS FUNDAMENTAL

The fundamental domains of literacy are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. When CLD students begin to receive formal instruction in literacy at school, these are the four areas targeted. Consider the following examples:

- **Speaking**: First-grade students are asked to tell a peer about their favorite part of a story being read aloud by the teacher in English.
- **Listening**: Second-grade students are asked to listen to a partner as they predict what a book will be about after looking at the cover.
- **Reading**: Third-grade students are asked to read a story from a basal.
- **Writing**: Fourth-grade students are asked to write a short story.
As demonstrated in these examples, students must listen, speak, read, and write from the day they first enter school. The teacher’s role is to “integrate these separate but interrelated skills in a unified curriculum that moves CLD students from beginning to advanced proficiency in classroom English” (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010).

Research by Walqui (2010) emphasizes the importance of **oracy**, or academic oral language, in literacy instruction. According to work done by Williams and Roberts (2011), academic language is “more structured and oriented towards grammatical correctness than informal oral language, and therefore forms a perfect bridge between oracy and literacy” (p. 2). Cummins (1981) defines the distinction between informal oral language and academic language as follows:

- basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) = social language
- cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) = academic language

By stretching culturally and linguistically diverse students to go beyond everyday social language (BICS) to use the academic language (CALP) when speaking, teachers promote oracy in the classroom. The main point to remember when it comes to oracy is that CLD students are engaged in the use of multiple complex skills and strategies simultaneously (i.e., word identification, understanding of grammatical structure, and interpretation of the prosodic elements of language such as intonation, stress, and rhythm).

However, speaking is just one part of oracy. In order to comprehend what is said, CLD students need to be able to listen and separate the words being spoken to them into meaningful units of speech (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). To assist them with this process, CLD students access their background knowledge to help them identify and interpret the words being said. In addition, they use their “expectation of the message to be conveyed as they actively work at understanding conversational elements” (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010, p. 71). Providing CLD students with authentic and purposeful activities for engaging in discourse with their peers is key to promoting the development of these listening skills.

Williams and Roberts (2011) found that oral language helps lay the foundation of literacy, which is one of the reasons oracy is considered the bridge to reading and writing. Another strong predictor of CLD students’ success in their reading and writing proficiency in English is their level of literacy in their first language. Diaz-Rico and Weed (2010) attribute this to the concepts and skills transfer from first-language literacy to the second-language literacy, including “concepts about print, knowledge of text structure, use of semantic and syntactic knowledge, use of cues to predict meaning, and built in reading strategies” (p. 81). To fully promote reading and writing development among CLD students, it is essential to root instruction in a research-based approach to literacy instruction.
CHAPTER 1 / Literacy and the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student

LITERACY IS RESEARCH BASED

The research-based elements of literacy are defined by phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. According to the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000), these five research-based elements need to be present in any reading approach or program designed to develop the skills necessary for children to become successful lifelong English readers. For CLD students, acquiring these research-based elements of literacy is central to becoming literate; therefore, a foundation of research comprises the final characteristic of literacy. In fact, it is acquisition of these research-based elements of literacy that provides the framework for this text.

The characteristics of literacy, as discussed in this book, are interactive in nature, such that no single aspect should be considered in isolation when working with CLD students. Throughout this text, we illustrate how teachers can continually build on CLD students’ biographical literacy to foster and promote fundamental and research-based literacy in English.

Essential Elements of Literacy Development

Teachers in today’s classrooms must focus on literacy. As previously shared, the National Reading Panel (2000) identified five research-based elements that need to be present in any reading approach or program designed to develop the skills necessary for children whose first language is English to become successful lifelong readers. These elements are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

The NRP made a conscious decision not to include the scientific literature available on the development of language and literacy for those students learning to read in English for whom English was not their first or native language (NRP, 2000). Furthermore, the NRP focused solely on reading, although by definition, literacy includes both reading and writing. The NRP did not address, in any way, what research says about learning to write in English for native English speakers, thereby giving no direction to policymakers and practitioners about the potential best practices for teaching writing. If little is known about how to teach writing to native English speakers, then even less is known about teaching writing in English to students who are second language learners.

In 2006, a second report on literacy that specifically addressed second language issues was published. That report, titled Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners (August & Shanahan, 2006), examined and reported on the research regarding the development of literacy in children whose first language is not the societal or majority language (i.e., English). This second report sought to determine whether the principles set forth by the NRP report might apply to
English language learners and specifically to Spanish-speaking children. Although
the report concluded that little quality research is available on how best to teach
literacy to English language learners, it did discuss several noteworthy trends.

First, August and Shanahan (2006) report that bilingual instruction has a
positive impact on English reading outcomes. That is, children who learn to read
and write in their native or first language either before or while they are learning
to read and write in English have better outcomes in English literacy than children
in English-only or English immersion classrooms. The reality in current policy and
practice is that most second language learners are in English medium classrooms
and are learning literacy only in English. Regardless of the language of instruction,
however, a student’s first language is a resource for learning to read and write in
English, not a barrier or a problem. The relationship between the first language
and the second language and how teachers can use both languages to enhance
literacy learning are dominant themes throughout this text.

Second, August and Shanahan (2006) report that English oral proficiency is
closely associated with reading comprehension skills in English. Thus, literacy pro-
grams for second language learners need to include a strong oral language component
that builds on the students’ existing oral language skills and supports the transfer of
those skills to English. The relationship between oral language and literacy, although
important for monolingual English learners, is critical for second language learn-
ers. This text includes suggestions for promoting oral language development and the
transfer of oral language skills from the CLD student’s native language to English.

Third, August and Shanahan’s (2006) findings suggest that elements of lit-
eracy instruction that help monolingual English-speaking students learn to read
and write are advantageous for second language learners as well. However, these
authors caution that the strategies, routines, and approaches used with monolin-
gual English speakers need to be modified for second language learners to make
them effective as well as linguistically and culturally relevant.

Finally, although August and Shanahan (2006) call for modifications to basic
literacy elements for second language learners, they do not provide concrete direc-
tion for practitioners in terms of how such instruction should be modified. This
text strives to provide practitioners with concrete strategies for modifying the ele-
ments of reading instruction for second language learners.

The Theoretical Foundations of Reading

As literacy instruction has evolved over time, so have the methods of literacy
instruction used in classrooms across the United States. To better understand this
historical evolution and the impact it has had on instruction, this section will dis-
cuss three of the most prevalent research-based reading process models: bottom-up,
top-down, and interactive. Each of these reading process models presents a specific theoretical framework that explains how monolingual English-speaking children learn to read.

These models were chosen for their strong research base, historical significance, and historical prevalence. However, such historical models are not part of the research base on teaching reading to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Therefore, as each model is introduced, the instructional implications for teachers working with CLD student populations will be explored. Having an understanding of each reading process model is important, as educators select models that reflect their beliefs about the reading process, the reader’s role in this process, and how reading instruction is contextualized in daily literacy instruction (Leu & Kinzer, 2003).

**READING THE SYMBOLS AND SOUNDS OF ENGLISH: THE BOTTOM-UP READING PROCESS MODEL**

One of the first reading process models that emerged from the research is the bottom-up reading process model. This model depicts reading as a process of decoding written symbols into sounds (Gunning, 2000; Kuder & Hasit, 2002; Marzano, Hagerty, Valencia, & DiStefano, 1987; Reutzel & Cooter, 2000, 2005; Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2006). Figure 1.2 provides a visual demonstration of the steps readers go through for acquiring literacy proficiency in the bottom-up reading process model.

Figure 1.2 illustrates how the reader sequentially processes information to decode text. Each level and the prerequisite skills associated with that level are defined on the left-hand side of Figure 1.2. In the bottom-up reading process model, it is only after achieving mastery of the first level that the reader can move on to the next level. To get to the whole, the reader must pass sequentially from the smallest unit of meaning to the largest unit of meaning (Vacca et al., 2006). The right-hand side of Figure 1.2 identifies the implications of each level for CLD students. Because the bottom-up model was developed around monolingual English readers, such implications were not made an integral part of the original model. For educators working with CLD students, consideration of these implications supports the contextualization of literacy instruction within the classroom.

**Literacy Instruction via the Bottom-Up Reading Process Model**

Educators who use the bottom-up reading process model as the foundation for literacy instruction view literacy as a series of skills to be mastered in a sequential order (Gunning, 2000; Marzano et al., 1987; Reutzel & Cooter, 2005; Vacca et al., 2006). However, when consideration is not given to the broader issues associated
with mastery of each level for CLD students, this sequential approach to literacy development may hinder rather than support these students’ literacy development.

This process model is most commonly associated with phonics-based reading programs. In phonics-based programs, the initial emphasis is on identifying the
individual sounds and symbols found in text. Educators who approach instruction in this manner emphasize a structured approach to literacy instruction by focusing on teaching students to blend sounds to form words. As these skills are mastered, the student is then taught how to combine these words into phrases and clauses and finally how to develop phrases and clauses into sentences.

The drawback to using this phonetic approach with CLD students is that identifying letters and their corresponding sounds is considered a prerequisite to reading. As a result, before being exposed to authentic text, CLD students often end up enduring hours of drill and practice to master isolated letter names and sounds that have no meaning. This approach also assumes that the primary obstacle readers must overcome, particularly CLD students who do not speak English, is an inability to decode the English text. According to Reutzel and Cooter (2005), this assumption explains why teachers using phonics-based approaches believe that readers “must be taught phonics first via the letters of the alphabet and the sounds these letters represent before beginning to read books” (p. 8). However, by contrast, studies have shown that when these phonics skills are taught via authentic experiences with text, students acquire and master letter names and sounds much more quickly (Escamilla, 2004; Krashen, 2002). This is particularly true for CLD students, who benefit greatly by having a meaningful context to draw from when learning letters and sounds of the English language.

Decodable books are also based on the bottom-up reading process model and typically comprise words that follow phonic generalizations or patterns readers are expected to learn, such as short vowel families (e.g., *sit, fit, bit*) (Ruetzel & Cooter, 2005). These books are meant to provide repeated practice on specific letter/sound patterns; however, they rarely emphasize meaning. This type of text, although repetitive in nature, does not help CLD students make schematic connections to existing background knowledge, and without these schematic connections to text, little if any comprehension takes place (Gunning, 2000; Nunan, 1999). For culturally and linguistically diverse students, reading comprehension is highly dependent on schematic connections to text that are made before, during, and after reading. These schematic connections provide CLD students with the meaningful connections they need to successfully understand and interpret the text. The importance of these schematic connections is explored in more detail in the second model, the top-down reading process model.

**SCHEMATIC CONNECTIONS TO TEXT: THE TOP-DOWN READING PROCESS MODEL**

The *top-down reading process model* “assumes that reading begins at the schema level and works down to the letter level” (Marzano et al., 1987, p. 46). Accordingly, the process of reading in the top-down model is the exact opposite of that
presented in the bottom-up model. As seen in Figure 1.3, the top-down model highlights the central role of schematic connections in the reading process.

To understand how reading within the top-down model begins with schema-level analysis, let us take a moment to discuss what a schema is and what role schematic connections play in this reading process model. Rumelhart (1980) developed a theoretical model known as schema theory to describe how
knowledge of objects, events, and situations is categorized and retained in the reader’s memory. In a sense, a schema is a mental, representational storage facility for experiences.

The top-down reading process model proposes that the reader accesses these stored experiences (or schemas) for making sense of the information encountered while reading. Thus, proponents of the model argue that using schematic connections enables a reader to manipulate existing concepts and knowledge for comprehending text (Gregory, 1996). When educators begin reading instruction by bringing students’ schemas to the surface, the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of CLD students are not only acknowledged but also built on to promote meaningful connections to text.

The top-down reading process model also aligns with a theory of second language acquisition known as transfer theory. Developed by Cummins (2000), transfer theory is built on the idea that the literacy and language skills a CLD student has in the native language are transferable and can aid in his or her acquisition of second language literacy skills. Instrumental to this theory are the connections CLD students make to existing schemas when reading. It is important to consider that words by themselves do not have meaning. Rather, the reader constructs meaning from a personal understanding of the words, along with the schematic connections that accompany this understanding.

**Literacy Instruction via the Top-Down Reading Process Model**

Educators who use the top-down reading process model are most often described as “whole language” teachers. A primary reason for this characterization is that teachers using this approach see it as their responsibility to guide understanding of the reading process and text by tapping into students’ prior knowledge (Williams & Snipper, 1990). As such, the CLD student continually draws on prior experience while reading in an effort to create meaning. This approach to instruction provides learning leverage by ensuring, as Rutherford (1987) aptly notes, that the CLD student “does not embark upon his/her second-language learning experience as a tabula rasa or in total ignorance” (p. 7).

In addition, teachers using the top-down reading process model contextualize literacy instruction by using authentic texts rather than predictable and decodable texts, which are constructed to provide repeated practice of phonemic skills. Authentic reading materials represent naturally occurring patterns of language. For example, in the story “The Three Little Pigs,” readers learn repetitive patterns such as “I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house down.” Such patterns of language can be linked to CLD students’ schemas and work to support their development of the sounds and patterns of words in authentic contexts.
The more research focused on the bottom-up and top-down models, the more theorists came to believe that neither model adequately explains the complexity of the reading process (Reutzel & Cooter, 2005). As a result, researchers proposed the interactive reading process model. This model defines the reader’s role as a constructor of meaning, whereby the reader simultaneously makes schematic connections and decodes letters and words, thus moving fluidly between the skills and processes defined in the bottom-up and top-down models. Thus, the interactive reading process model combines the theoretical perspectives of the bottom-up and top-down models (Kuder & Hasit, 2002; Marzano et al., 1987; Reutzel & Cooter, 2000, 2005; Vacca et al., 2006). Figure 1.4 illustrates the interactive reading process model, showing how readers use top-down and bottom-up skills concurrently during the reading process.

The interactive view of reading assumes that readers proceed cognitively from both whole to part and part to whole. They navigate among multiple processes to comprehend text in the most efficient manner. Readers take an active role when
they possess a relevant schema about the information presented. For example, when a student is reading a text about birds and already knows a lot about birds, he or she can more actively engage in reading and comprehending the text. If, however, a student is reading a text for which he or she has no relevant schema to draw from, he or she will spend more time decoding the text to understand the author’s message. Thus, the reader takes on a more passive role. According to this model, a CLD student uses schematic connections to comprehend text while simultaneously decoding letter sounds and word meanings as necessary to comprehend the text by taking on both active and passive roles (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1995).

**Literacy Instruction via the Interactive Reading Process Model**

Teachers who use the interactive reading process model approach reading from a skills-based perspective. Skills-based reading instruction comprises three components: decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. As such, “children are expected to integrate their knowledge of decoding and their background knowledge, vocabulary, and experiences as needed to construct meaning from text” (Reutzel & Cooper, 2005, p. 16). Many teacher editions of basal readers used in U.S. classrooms are structured to follow this format:

- Basal readers traditionally guide teachers to draw out students’ background knowledge before reading the text.
- Teachers are encouraged to preteach vocabulary before assigning a reading.
- During reading instruction, teachers are guided to teach decoding and vocabulary skills as well as comprehension strategies.
- After reading, students are assessed to determine their comprehension of the story.

The benefits of this model for culturally and linguistically diverse students relate to the interactive nature of the reading process. For example, the interactive model teaches CLD students to draw on relevant schemas and background knowledge to support text comprehension. Equally relevant in this model are the decoding skills that are contextually taught as students interact with text. Finally, this interactive reading process model recognizes that each child is unique and brings different sets of skills and knowledge to the reading process.

Each of the reading process models presented in this section has a strong theoretical foundation on which it was developed. This information can be used to support educators as they perform these tasks:
• Critically reflect on their own beliefs about literacy development and instruction
• Articulate the theoretical foundations on which their instruction is based
• Adapt the mandated curriculum to support and foster literacy development for their CLD students

Educators’ socialization influences their initial views on literacy development. This socialization involves not only the ways they were taught to read but also the ways they were trained to teach reading. For educators working with CLD students, it is important to understand how their own literacy instruction can affect CLD students’ success in learning to read English.

Common Core State Standards

The final factors that greatly influence how educators approach literacy instruction in the classroom are the current standards being used within each teacher’s state, district, and school. As specified by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA), the Common Core State Standards are “(1) research and evidence based, (2) aligned with college and work expectations, (3) rigorous, and (4) internationally benchmarked” (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010, p. 3). At publication, 45 states within the United States had adopted the Common Core State Standards.

The standards “establish a ‘staircase’ of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school” (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010, p. 3). The nature in which the Common Core was written provides educators with a powerful voice in the implementation of these standards. As Hull and Moje (2012) point out, the Common Core has set the stage for teachers to negotiate the curricula and identify activities that connect to learners’ backgrounds, cultures, and communities; that capitalize on the social nature of learning; and that position CLD students to experience literacy as purposeful and themselves as skillful and confident makers of meaning.

Chapters 3 through 8 of this text will explore the implications of the Common Core State Standards on the instruction of CLD students in the following areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and writing. As you read these chapters, we challenge you to think of the ways you might expand on the examples provided to enhance your instructional practices and raise the bar for your CLD students within your own literacy instruction.
Conclusion

In this chapter, we defined literacy as interactive. The biographical, fundamental, and research-based aspects of literacy are intertwined. For CLD students, the biographical dimensions of literacy are sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive in nature. The fundamental domains of literacy are listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and the research-based elements of literacy are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Together, these aspects communicate to educators the necessity of keeping the whole child in mind as they develop instruction that targets the research-based aspects of literacy, while maintaining an emphasis on communication for meaning.

The chapter also identified and discussed the theoretical foundations of three dominant reading process models. This discussion articulated the impact of teachers’ philosophical foundations and personal beliefs on their daily literacy instruction. Teachers’ ability to maximize the assets CLD students bring to literacy endeavors is enhanced by knowing how they define literacy and understanding the ways their literacy instruction and practices can directly affect how CLD students learn to read.

KEY THEORIES and CONCEPTS

- authentic text
- biographical dimensions of literacy
- bottom-up reading process model
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)
- fundamental domains of literacy
- interactive reading process model
- literacy
- research-based elements of literacy
- schema
- top-down reading process model
- transfer theory

PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS on PRACTICE

1. This chapter defined literacy as biographical, fundamental, and research based. Talk about your own definition of literacy and how the information presented in this chapter might affect your definition.

2. Central to the definition of literacy presented in this chapter was the proposition that literacy is first defined via the biographies of your students. Think of a CLD student you know and identify considerations for him or her related to the biographical dimensions of literacy (i.e., sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive).

3. This chapter explored the theoretical foundations of three models of literacy instruction for monolingual English-speaking students. Discuss the implications of each model for CLD students’ literacy development.
QUESTIONS for REVIEW and REFLECTION

1. How is interactive literacy defined in this chapter?
2. In what ways do you address biographical, fundamental, and research-based aspects of literacy in your own instruction?
3. What are the key components of the bottom-up reading process model, and what are the implications of this model for CLD students?
4. The top-down reading process model argues that background knowledge is central to reading comprehension. What are the implications of this model for CLD students whose background knowledge differs from that of their monolingual English-speaking peers?
5. What are the key components of the interactive reading process model? In what ways does this model support CLD students’ literacy development?
6. How does access to authentic text (or lack thereof) impact the acquisition of key literacy skills for CLD students?
CHAPTER 2
Contextualizing Literacy Development for the CLD Student in the Grade-Level Classroom

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- How are the multiple dimensions of the CLD student biography addressed within literacy lesson planning and delivery?
- How can teachers access CLD students' sociocultural needs to support literacy development?
- What cross-language transfer occurs between a CLD student's native language and English to support literacy development?
- How is the academic knowledge of CLD students built on during literacy instruction?
- How can CLD students' existing cognitive assets be built on to promote literacy development?

CHAPTER OUTLINE
The CLD Student Biography
- The Sociocultural Dimension
- The Linguistic Dimension
- The Academic Dimension
- The Cognitive Dimension
When describing her approach to literacy instruction, one elementary teacher explained as follows:

> When I first started teaching, I approached literacy instruction in a very systematic and structured way, as prescribed by the district-mandated curriculum. However, as the biographies of my CLD students became increasingly diverse, I found that this structured approach no longer worked. So I began to pull from a variety of resources and instructional methods that complemented and enhanced my mandated curriculum so that I could better meet the needs of my CLD student populations.

As demonstrated by this quote, effective educators of culturally and linguistically diverse students not only base their literacy instruction on scientifically based research methods but they also adapt existing curricula to address the multiple dimensions of the CLD student biography. This chapter explores in depth the sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive dimensions of the CLD student biography. Each dimension helps to inform educators about the diverse assets, as well as the differential learning needs, that CLD students bring to the literacy process.

**The CLD Student Biography**

The CLD student biography is based on the following four dimensions: sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic. Research by Thomas and Collier (1995) found that these four interdependent and complex dimensions form the foundation for understanding CLD students’ linguistic and academic growth. These four dimensions, known as the *prism*
model, are depicted in Figure 2.1 (Collier, 1987; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Evolving from the work of Thomas and Collier, Herrera (2010) defines the CLD student biography as “a concept that accounts for the challenges and processes associated with each of the four dimensions” (p. 22). To better understand the implications of the CLD student’s biography on classroom practice, consider the following example.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students bring multiple knowledge reserves to the classroom (Moll, Armani, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Thus, the more teachers know about these existing knowledge bases, the more accurately they can structure literacy lessons to reflect students’ needs. The following conversation between two teachers, Mrs. Ramirez and Mrs. Dye, illustrates how information gathered about a fifth-grade CLD student, Yamin, can support literacy instruction in the classroom.

Mrs. Ramirez: Hello, Mrs. Dye. I wanted to see how things were going with Yamin. It has been a week since he moved from my ESL pullout class into your classroom for literacy instruction. Do you have any questions?

Mrs. Dye: Thanks for coming to see me. As a matter of fact, I do have some questions. I’ve noticed Yamin is having difficulty with the story we are reading this week: The Wall, by Eve Bunting.

Mrs. Ramirez: I love that story! It’s a really powerful example of the impact of war. It is so sad that the little boy never got to meet his grandfather, who died while fighting in the war. But I love the fact that the father could take his son to the Vietnam Memorial, where he could see his grandfather’s name inscribed on the memorial with the names of all the other soldiers who died fighting.

Mrs. Dye: I agree. The story really has grabbed the interest of the class, and I thought Yamin would connect with it as well. But he really doesn’t seem engaged when we read the story.

Mrs. Ramirez: Actually, I think the content may be a little too real for Yamin. When he first enrolled in school, I did a home visit and talked to his parents. They shared with me that the whole family had recently moved from Iraq to escape the war. They talked about losing their oldest son in the war and how they wanted to give Yamin a chance at a better life. They have only been in the United States five months.

Mrs. Dye: Wow! I didn’t know that! No wonder Yamin is having a hard time. His English is a little weak, but overall, it’s pretty good, so I assumed he had been here longer than that.

Mrs. Ramirez: Yes, his grasp of conversational English is deceptive, making him appear to know more English than he does.

This conversation illustrates the central role the CLD student’s biography plays in instruction, as well as some key considerations teachers should explore as they meet the literacy needs of CLD students. These considerations go beyond...
FIGURE 2.1 The Prism Model

Questions to Consider

SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSION:
Love, Laughter, Life
- How has the student been socialized to literacy based on culture/family background?
- What type of resources and literacy experiences has the student had within the home?
- How is reading perceived/defined, and how does this fit the teacher/school definition?

LINGUISTIC DIMENSION:
Comprehension L1 and L2, Communication L1 and L2, Expression L1 and L2
- How is the native language used as a resource to support the CLD student's literacy development in English?
- What stage of language acquisition is the CLD student in, and how is literacy instruction accommodated to meet the CLD student's language level?

ACADEMIC DIMENSION:
Access, Engagement, Hope
- What literacy skills does the student bring to the classroom based on his or her prior academic experiences?
- In what ways is the CLD student immersed in academically challenging tasks to promote grade-level literacy acquisition?

COGNITIVE DIMENSION:
Know, Think, Apply
- How is instruction designed to build on existing cognitive and language assets to promote literacy development?
- What learning strategies are explicitly taught to promote the cognitive academic language skills CLD students need to understand grade-level text and academic concepts?

Source: Prism is from Herrera (2010). Used with permission of Teachers College Press.
language acquisition issues, which educators often foresee as the primary obstacle in teaching CLD students to read.

THE SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSION

Central to the culturally and linguistically diverse student biography is the sociocultural dimension, which consists of the social and cultural factors that influence student learning. As depicted in Figure 2.1, this dimension is the heart of the prism model. The sociocultural dimension also represents the heart of CLD students—what they love, what makes them laugh, and what shapes and defines their lives to make them who they are as individuals. According to Herrera (2010), the sociocultural dimension also includes “the adjustment and development processes that students go through as they learn to respond to the unique, idiosyncratic ways of being and behaving both in and out of school” (p. 22). It is difficult to overstate the importance of sociocultural influences in shaping CLD students’ lives, particularly when it comes to literacy instruction.

The following list identifies the multiple sociocultural influences on CLD students’ literacy development, as noted by Raphael and colleagues (2001):

- **Historical background of the family**: the values, beliefs, and goals within the family, as influenced by cultural traditions and experiences
- **Literacy resources**: types and uses of literacy resources, as well as the time spent on literacy activities
- **Perceptions**: the children’s perceptions of both teachers and the nature and importance of reading

To promote deeper understanding of these sociocultural influences on literacy development, we will explore each in greater detail.

**Historical Background of the Family**

The historical background of the CLD student’s family reflects the values, beliefs, and goals of the family. The more insight educators have into the historical backgrounds of their CLD students, the better equipped they are to use this information to enhance their instructional practice.

Consider, for example, the historical differences between immigrant and native-born CLD students. Those students who are recent immigrants to the United States may have more pressure placed on them by their families to excel academically so they can achieve the “American dream.” As such, newly or recently arrived students may struggle to balance the expectations of the family with those of the new culture in which they are immersed. This process of acculturation, or adjusting to a new culture, while maintaining the values, beliefs, and goals of
the family can be very difficult for CLD students. For instance, parents of newly arrived immigrants often want their children to acquire the English language as quickly as possible; therefore, they do not want their children to receive special services, such as English as a second language (ESL) instruction. Research has shown, however, that such a complete and abrupt loss of the native language may actually hinder rather than promote the acquisition of English (Cummins, 2000; Escamilla, 2004; Krashen, 2002).

The process of acculturation also occurs for culturally and linguistically diverse students who were born in the United States. However, CLD students who are second generation (i.e., their parents were also born in the United States) or even third generation (i.e., their grandparents were born in the United States) may not experience the same demands as those of recently or newly arrived CLD students. For example, second- and third-generation CLD students may have become so acculturated to life in the United States that they have actually begun to lose their native language. This is particularly true among third-generation students, who may still speak the native language at home or with grandparents but who have not been taught to read or write in their native language. Educators who are aware of such family dynamics are better equipped to understand the sociocultural demands that might be placed on students and the implications of these demands.

Understanding the family’s goals, beliefs, and values provides educators with valuable insight into the behaviors and learning patterns of their CLD students. Educators who want to learn more about the historical backgrounds of these students can engage in numerous formal and informal activities. For example, teachers might do a class activity such as creating family brochures. Family brochures can be structured in multiple ways, but the key is to request information that will inform educators about the family dynamics and cultural backgrounds of CLD students in the classroom. Strategies in Practice 2.1 provides a glimpse of the valuable information one teacher gained by doing family brochures with his CLD students.

Teachers can also conduct home visits to learn about their students’ historical backgrounds and see nontraditional forms of literacy development and evidence of student skills that might not otherwise have been observed in the traditional classroom setting (Herrera, 2010). Home visits can provide valuable insights as to the roles of extended family members in supporting a child’s education, family perceptions of involvement in school, and a family’s overall goals for the children. For example, if a teacher learns during a home visit that the student has no access to books or other text in the home, he or she will have a new understanding about the challenges this student might face in practicing reading skills outside the classroom. To address the needs of students who do not have access to books or other
Family Biography

Materials Needed
- Large sheet of art paper for each student
- Pencils, crayons, and/or markers for each student

Directions
- Have each student fold the paper into a trifold, making the opening flap on the left-hand side.
- Have each student create a title page for the brochure.
- Determine five other guiding topics (one per page) for students to use on the remaining five sections.

```
MY FAMILY

MY BROTHER
I like soccer and basketball. We play together. We are both good at sports.

MY MOM works at McDonald's. She brings me hamburgers.

MY DAD
He builds bridges. He paints the bridges.

WHERE I'M FROM

My great grandma is from Zacatecas.

My mom is from Fresnillo Zacatecas.

My brother is from Fresnillo Zacatecas.

My dad is from Fresnillo Zacatecas.

FAVORITE FOOD

Are favorite food is enchiladas. You put chicken on the tortillas in the chili. You put chicken, the tortillas, and cheese on the tortillas. Your finished.
```
text in the home, the teacher can send home books that students can easily read and share with siblings or parents. If the parents are literate in their native language, sending books home in the native language is a wonderful way to actively involve parents in the student’s literacy practice while simultaneously validating the native language and culture. Research has shown that modeling of literacy skills in the native language supports the development of foundational literacy skills that can then be readily transferred to English (Collier & Thomas, 1992; Cummins, 2000; Escamilla, 1987; Rodríguez, 1988).

Another more informal way to learn about families is to conduct student interviews, in which educators talk to students about their family and home lives. This information can also be gathered through informal discussions with parents before and after school or even during parent/teacher conferences. The more teachers can learn about CLD students’ sociocultural backgrounds, the better prepared they will be to address each student’s individual needs in and out of the classroom.

**Literacy Resources**

Culturally and linguistically diverse students approach literacy learning from the basis of their own exposure to and experiences with text, and often, these experiences are less formal than those traditionally valued in U.S. classrooms. For instance, consider that many monolingual English-speaking children are raised with extensive exposure to text. Whether in the form of books read by parents at bedtime or the simple availability of books, magazines, and other reading materials in the home, literacy experiences and ongoing text exposure are natural elements of these students’ daily lives. By contrast, CLD students may not have such access to text in the home, let alone have formal interactions and repeated reading practice with a parent. Consequently, their experiential knowledge related to formal literacy instruction may not be as extensive as that of their peers. However, this lack of formality should not be interpreted as a lack of relevant knowledge or ability. Rather, the important point to consider is that different cultural groups encounter and develop literacy in different ways.

A study by Heath (1983) emphasizes varying modes of literacy development among diverse groups. Heath explored the literacy orientations of three culturally distinct sets of families and found marked differences in how they reinforced literacy development. For example, children from an African American mill community were socialized in the oral tradition, in which storytelling is the main form of literacy development. Caucasian children from the same mill community were expected to learn to read by memorizing the alphabet and doing drill and practice worksheets. The third group, however, came from upper-class Caucasian families, in which the children engaged with authentic text, created written and oral
narratives, and encountered written materials and questioning routines geared toward higher-level thinking skills.

When a CLD student enters school with limited experiential knowledge of text or formal literacy practices, this lack of experience can have a profound impact on the rate and speed at which he or she learns to read. Therefore, those teachers who have the greatest success helping CLD students become literate in English do so by tapping into students’ nontraditional literacy experiences. When literacy instruction builds on the background knowledge and experiences of CLD students, these students are able to make valuable connections to text as they construct meaning (Marzano, 2004a).

One way teachers can gather information about these experiences is to create student literacy profiles, which paint a vivid picture of the experiential knowledge an individual CLD student brings to the reading process. A literacy profile can be created for each aspect of the CLD student’s biography: sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive. Figure 2.2 presents a sampling of questions teachers can ask when developing a sociocultural literacy profile.

Perceptions

When a CLD student enters school, he or she brings along the cultural identity of the home. Oftentimes, this home identity conflicts with the school culture, leading to discontinuity. The term cultural discontinuity describes the internal conflict a CLD student may experience when his or her cultural background or social values conflict with those taught in school or demonstrated by the teacher. This type of conflict can have a negative impact on how a CLD student approaches and learns about literacy in the classroom. As educators, it is important to recognize when and how cultural discontinuity occurs so it can be addressed proactively.

When CLD students first enter the classroom, they continually assess the environment to determine what perceptions the teacher and other students may have about them. For example, they may look to see if any aspects of their culture are acknowledged or represented through posters or native language books. Students may note whether the teacher seats them at the back of the room or toward the front. Culturally and linguistically diverse students also consider whether they are allowed to sit next to a peer who speaks their native language or even whether the teacher allows use of their native language in the classroom. These are but a few examples of the perceptual filters that CLD students often use when they enter a new classroom. It is essential to consider how such filters influence CLD students along with their understanding and approach to learning. The more support these students have and the more welcome they feel, the more likely they are to be active members of the class.
### FIGURE 2.2 Sociocultural Literacy Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural Profile</th>
<th>Completed Sociocultural Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: Sahle</td>
<td>11 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>6th Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level:</td>
<td>Amharic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language:</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth:</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin:</td>
<td>English and Amharic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What language do you speak most at home?</td>
<td>English and Amharic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What language did you first learn to read?</td>
<td>Amharic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do you read at home (e.g., letters, cookbooks, books in the native language, books in English, magazines, newspapers)?</td>
<td>The Bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Who do you read with at home?</td>
<td>I read with no one at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you like to read? What do you like or dislike about reading?</td>
<td>I don't like to read, but do it to get better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If you could choose anything to read about, what would it be and why?</td>
<td>I would read about Jesus, it changes my attitude and gives me strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What kind of reader do you think you are?</td>
<td>C—Average reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. A very good reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. A good reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. An average reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. A poor reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. A very poor reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After they have been accepted within the community of learners, CLD students eagerly approach the learning process. However, just as they use their perceptual filters to determine their place in the classroom, CLD students also use their perceptual filters to determine their role as learners. When it comes to literacy instruction, the more educators inspire CLD students to become readers, the more likely they are to become readers. The key is to “draw on our CLD students’ experiences, knowledge, and problem-solving skills and frame them within the contexts of our academic world” (Herrera, 2012, p. 27). Another way educators can do this is to immediately immerse CLD students in rich and authentic experiences with text. This approach not only helps CLD students see themselves as readers but it also promotes increased English language development, as students are exposed to text in context-embedded and meaningful ways. To better understand how this exposure to text promotes CLD students’ English language acquisition, the next section will explore the dynamics associated with the linguistic dimension of the CLD student biography.

THE LINGUISTIC DIMENSION

Language is more than words and more than cognition. The linguistic dimension contributes greatly to CLD students’ sense of identity. It is through language that students comprehend the world around them. Language is also the vehicle through which students communicate and express themselves. For the CLD student learning to speak English as a second language, the native language is the medium through which he or she is socialized and through which his or her culture is transmitted. If educators fail to acknowledge the value of the CLD student’s native language, they are in fact also devaluing the student’s family and sense of self.

Transfer Theory

Placing value on the native languages of students involves more than making a superficial effort at addressing cultural and linguistic diversity. It also requires teachers to embrace the value the native language has for English literacy development. Research by Cummins (1981, 2000) showed that CLD students’ acquisition of a first language (L1) and second language (L2) is developmentally intertwined. This interdependence hypothesis proposes that first language development directly impacts second language development. Cummins’s (2000) transfer theory also suggests that “academic proficiency transfers across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in their second language” (p. 173).
Additional research has also shown that the more proficient a CLD student is at reading in the native language, the faster he or she will acquire English, because existing native-language reading skills support second-language reading ability (Collier & Thomas, 1992; Escamilla, 1987; Rodríguez, 1988). Clay (1993) found that the least complicated starting point for literacy learning with CLD students is to use what the student already knows from the native language to boost English language acquisition.

Unfortunately, a common misconception is that use of the native language hinders English language development. Consider the following example (Escamilla, 1998):

Two students finish kindergarten at the end of the school year. The first student, José, knows three colors in Spanish and three other colors in English. His teacher determines that he is limited in both Spanish and English and recommends that he be taught in English only as he enters the first grade. Bill is a monolingual English speaker. He knows five colors in English at the end of kindergarten and is labeled as an average student who has no problems. Who actually knows more, José or Bill?

José actually knows one more color than Bill, but because the teacher does not recognize the importance of knowledge in the native language, José is labeled as knowing less.

Educators who would like to learn about the native language literacy profiles of their CLD students can do a linguistic literacy profile. Figure 2.3 provides a sample of the types of questions an educator might ask in order to learn about a CLD student’s native language literacy skills. These questions are only a starting point, from which educators can build to learn more about the linguistic profiles of their CLD students.

Stages of Second Language Acquisition and CLD Student Literacy Development

Another important aspect of linguistic knowledge can be best understood in terms of the stages CLD students go through when developing second language proficiency and literacy skills. Culturally and linguistically diverse students arrive in the classroom with varying levels of English language proficiency. Although most CLD students are conversationally proficient in English within two years, it takes five to seven years to acquire the academic language needed to perform at grade level with their native English-speaking peers (Collier & Thomas, 1999a; Cummins, 1989).

The more a teacher knows about a student’s particular stage of second language acquisition, the better able the teacher is to plan literacy lessons that support the student’s comprehension and engagement in academic tasks.
### Linguistic Literacy Profile

**Name:** Alicia  
**Age:** 9 years old

**Grade level:** 5th Grade  
**Native language:** Spanish

**Place of birth:** Mexico  
**Country of origin:** Mexico

1. **What is your first language?** Spanish

2. **What language do you most often speak at home?** English

3. **What other languages do you speak at home and with whom?** I speak Spanish at home with my mother.

4. **Do you read in your native language? If yes, who taught you how to read and how well do you think you read in your native language?** I like to read in Spanish. I learned how to read in school, but I think my English reading is better.

5. **What types of things do you read in your native language (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, letters from your native country)?** My mother has a book that she kept when I was little. She has me read it to my little brother.

6. **Do you write in your native language? If yes, who taught you how to write and how well do you think you write in your native language?** I learned to write in Spanish when I first went to school. I think I write pretty good in Spanish.

7. **What types of things do you write in your native language?** I like to write my mother cards in Spanish because she reads in Spanish.

8. **Does it help you to read in English when you see words that are written or sound almost the same as words in your native language?** It helps me to read in English when the words are written or sound almost the same as words in my native language because they sound the same and are spelled almost alike.
Figure 2.4 summarizes the literacy development demonstrated by CLD students according to Krashen and Terrell’s (1983) five stages of second language acquisition: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. As demonstrated in the figure, there are multiple considerations for instructional practice based on a CLD student’s stage of second language acquisition. It is important to note that these stages are not fixed, as students can move in and out of these stages at various rates. The transition from one stage to the next is highly influenced by the CLD student’s native language literacy level.

The more proficient the CLD student is in his or her own language, the faster he or she will transition from one stage to the next. Research by Herrera (2010) indicates “the optimal learning environment for CLD students is one that leads to literacy skills in both the student’s native language and in English” (p. 33). To better understand how a CLD student’s native language literacy supports this transition, educators can consider the academic dimension of the CLD student biography.

THE ACADEMIC DIMENSION

The academic dimension reflects the CLD student’s prior academic experiences, as well as the curriculum and instruction that he or she is currently experiencing in school. Knowing the types of academic experiences a CLD student has had provides valuable information about the kind of access he or she has had to literacy development. Such insight into students’ literacy experiences helps educators make sense of differences they may observe in students’ levels of engagement and students’ hopes that they can and will acquire the literacy skills they need.

According to Herrera and Murry (2005), also “critical to this dimension is an understanding of the differential academic challenges that CLD students encounter, especially those that relate to academic policy” (p. 45). This section, therefore, will explore each of these elements in greater depth, including their implications for literacy development and instruction.

Prior Schooling

The academic dimension takes into consideration the CLD student’s prior academic experiences in school. These include both experiences the student has had within the United States and those in his or her native country (if applicable). The following three short case studies exemplify the importance of knowing CLD students’ prior academic experiences.

Juan Carlos arrived in the United States as an eighth-grader. He emigrated with his family from Colombia, where he had attended school since he was 3 years old. In Colombia, he was placed in advanced courses and was set to begin coursework that would prepare him for a college degree.
### FIGURE 2.4 Continua of English Language Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: __________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preproduction</th>
<th>Early Production</th>
<th>Speech Emergence</th>
<th>Intermediate Fluency</th>
<th>Advanced Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LISTENING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cannot yet understand simple expressions or statements in English.</td>
<td>• Understands previously learned expressions.</td>
<td>• Understands sentence-length speech.</td>
<td>• Understands academic content.</td>
<td>• Understands most of what is heard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understands new vocabulary in context.</td>
<td>• Participates in conversation about simple information.</td>
<td>• Understands more complex directions and instructions.</td>
<td>• Understands and retells main idea and most details from oral presentations and conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understands a simple message.</td>
<td>• Understands basic directions and instructions.</td>
<td>• Comprehends main idea.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understands a simple message.</td>
<td>• Effectively participates in classroom discussions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPEAKING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is not yet able to make any statements in English.</td>
<td>• Uses isolated words and learned phrases.</td>
<td>• Asks and answers simple questions about academic content.</td>
<td>• Initiates, sustains, and closes a conversation.</td>
<td>• Communicates facts and talks casually about topics of general interest using specific vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses vocabulary for classroom situations.</td>
<td>• Talks about familiar topics.</td>
<td>• Effectively participates in classroom discussions.</td>
<td>• Participates in age-appropriate academic, technical, and social conversations using English correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expresses basic courtesies.</td>
<td>• Responds to simple statements.</td>
<td>• Gives reasons for agreeing or disagreeing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asks very simple questions.</td>
<td>• Expresses self in simple situations (e.g., ordering a meal, introducing oneself, asking directions).</td>
<td>• Retells a story or event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Makes statements using learned materials.</td>
<td>• Compares and contrasts a variety of topics.</td>
<td>• Communicates facts and talks casually about topics of general interest using specific vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asks and answers questions about basic needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Preproduction</td>
<td>Early Production</td>
<td>Speech Emergence</td>
<td>Intermediate Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is not yet able to read any words in English.</td>
<td>• Reads common messages, phrases, and/or expressions.</td>
<td>• Reads and comprehends main ideas and/or facts from simple materials.</td>
<td>• Understands main ideas and details from a variety of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is not yet able to identify the letters of the Roman alphabet.</td>
<td>• Identifies the letters of the Roman alphabet.</td>
<td>• Decodes most sounds of written English.</td>
<td>• Identifies learned words and phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is not yet able to decode sounds of written English.</td>
<td>• Identifies learned words and phrases.</td>
<td>• Creates basic statements and questions.</td>
<td>• Writes more complex narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reads common messages, phrases, and/or expressions.</td>
<td>• Copies or transcribes familiar words or phrases.</td>
<td>• Writes simple letters and messages.</td>
<td>• Composes age-appropriate original materials using present, past, and future tenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifies the letters of the Roman alphabet.</td>
<td>• Writes the letters from memory and/or dictation.</td>
<td>• Writes simple narratives.</td>
<td>• Compares and contrasts familiar topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decodes most sounds of written English.</td>
<td>• Writes simple expressions from memory.</td>
<td>• Writes about a variety of topics for a variety of purposes.</td>
<td>• Uses vivid, specific language in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifies learned words and phrases.</td>
<td>• Writes simple autobiographical information as well as some short phrases and simple lists.</td>
<td>• Composes short sentences with guidance.</td>
<td>• Uses vivid, specific language in writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Araseli immigrated to the United States as a fourth-grader from a rural community in Mexico. Given the rural area in which she lived, Araseli did not have access to a school in her community and had to take a bus for 30 minutes to get to the nearest school. Because of the distance to school and the need to support her family at home, Araseli rarely attended school and could not read or write in Spanish when she arrived in the United States.

Uriem, a sixth-grade student, was born in the United States and attended kindergarten in a monolingual English-speaking classroom in California. In first grade, he stayed in the monolingual classroom but was pulled out for one hour of ESL instruction each day. At the beginning of third grade, Uriem moved to a different school, district, and state, where he was placed in a sheltered ESL classroom all day with other CLD students.

As these three case studies demonstrate, knowing a student’s prior academic experience offers great insight into the literacy skills he or she brings to the classroom. If, for example, the CLD student is literate in his or her native language, like Juan Carlos, the teacher can use the student’s native language skills and academic background to promote his or her literacy development in English (Cummins, 2000; Escamilla, 1987; Krashen, 1987; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1975). Among the most common literacy understandings that frequently transfer from the native language are the following:

- **Knowledge**: When a CLD student has learned a concept, he or she does not need to relearn it.
- **Literacy is symbolic**: Regardless of how a language is spoken or written, words in any language symbolize underlying concepts, ideas, and concrete objects.
- **Literacy is communicative**: The purpose of text is for the reader to understand the message being sent by the author.
- **Phonological awareness**: Each CLD student develops phonological awareness based on the sound system of his or her native language.
- **Alphabetic and orthographic awareness**: All text is made up of a series of letters or symbols that are put together in a specific written format.
- **Concepts about print**: Each text has specific features that are learned by CLD students through exposure to print.
- **Habits and attitudes**: Study skills, task completion, persistence, and motivation are all factors that aid CLD students in literacy development.
- **Self-esteem**: The more CLD students believe they are readers and writers, the more likely they are to become successful readers and writers.

Other students, such as Araseli, may have fewer transferable literacy skills because they are not literate in their native languages. This is not to say that educators should discount the oral language proficiency in the native language that these students bring. Oral language proficiency provides students with foundational skills that will promote phonemic awareness development in English when
specific links are made to the sound system of the native language. To learn more about the academic profiles of CLD students and the academic assets they bring to the classroom, teachers can complete an academic literacy profile (see Figure 2.5).

**Academic Policy**
Regardless of the level of language proficiency or academic background knowledge that a CLD student brings to the classroom, he or she needs to be immersed in academically challenging tasks that promote grade-level literacy acquisition. Herrera and Murry (2005) highlight the reason this issue is so important for educators to note:

> From the standpoint of curriculum and instruction, one of the most contemporary, harmful, and emergent academic challenges for CLD students is the trend toward increasingly reductionistic curriculum driven by a strict focus on high-stakes assessments at the national, state, or local levels. Extra-educational and national reform agendas, such as the No Child Left Behind initiative, drive efforts to increase accountability, as measured by high-stakes assessments, often at the expense of low socioeconomic status (SES) and CLD students. (p. 47)

When under pressure to demonstrate student achievement, teachers of CLD students may feel excessive pressure to “teach to the test,” which severely restricts CLD students’ access to and interaction with text. In fact, research by McNeil (2000) found that in the area of reading, a reductionistic approach to literacy development actually limited students’ ability to “read for meaning outside the test setting” (p. 3). As this example illustrates, a reductionistic approach to instruction actually inhibits CLD students’ academic success. To understand the power of engaging CLD students in complex and cognitively challenging grade-level academic tasks, it is important to examine the cognitive assets that CLD students bring and to consider how educators can identify and build on these assets to support ongoing academic success.

**THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION**
The *cognitive dimension* is perhaps the most complex because it represents how students know, think about, and apply information. As such, it is closely related to the other dimensions of the CLD student biography. For example, the cognitive dimension explores the relationship between known language proficiency and applied literacy skills. Similarly, the cognitive dimension examines the cognitive and sociocultural connections that exist in the ways students think about what they are reading. There are numerous additional relationships between the cognitive and academic dimensions as well. However, for the purposes of this text, only the interrelationships just identified will be discussed.

**Cognition, Language, and Literacy Development**
When it comes to understanding cognition, language, and literacy development among CLD students, it is important to first understand how these three elements are
### FIGURE 2.5 Academic Literacy Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Profile</th>
<th>Completed Academic Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Miguel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>7 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level:</td>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language:</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth:</td>
<td>Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin:</td>
<td>Peru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Which schools have you attended?**
   - I went to a different school for kindergarten and first grade.

2. **Did you participate in any type of ESL classes or get additional help in the classroom to learn English?**
   - Some teachers worked with small groups of us kids who didn’t speak English very well.

3. **What do you find hardest about reading in English?**
   - I have trouble with words that sound the same, like wear and where.

4. **What have past teachers done that really helped you to understand books in English?**
   - In kindergarten, we had centers where we got to look at books after the teacher read them to us.

5. **What helps you understand new words?**
   - I make up my own sentence with the new word that I understand, and then I remember that sentence.

6. **What do you do when you get to a word you don’t know in English?**
   - I sound out the word and read the sentence without the word in it to figure out what the word means.

7. **What strategies do you use when reading to help you understand?**
   - I try to picture it in my mind. Then I read it again and try to remember the sentence I had a question about to help me understand.
interrelated within the context of daily literacy instruction. As stated in Chapter 1, educators may approach literacy instruction with CLD students by focusing on identifying individual words and the sounds within them. This phonics-based approach to literacy instruction is founded primarily on the belief that CLD students in the early stages of acquiring English do not have the language skills they need to read or, more importantly, to comprehend text in English. However, CLD students are generally more successful at acquiring English vocabulary and content knowledge when learning is focused on identifying word meanings in context, rather than on isolated word parts that have no contextual ties (August & Hakuta, 1997; Herrera & Murry, 2005).

Educators of CLD students who identify and build on existing cognitive and language assets do much to promote literacy development. Such efforts might include teaching learning strategies that promote the cognitive academic language skills CLD students need to understand grade-level text and academic concepts. (Specific strategies for how educators can do this are explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters of this text.) Educators also can encourage parents to maintain and foster CLD students’ native language skills to promote cognitive development, which is utilized in English literacy development processes. Students who do not have this ongoing support in the native language may experience more challenges in processing cognitively challenging tasks, as they will have to learn and apply concepts in a second language. Teachers can actively seek ways to make meaningful connections in their daily instructional practice to students’ current knowledge and cognitive skills. Perhaps one of the most powerful ways educators do this is by incorporating culturally relevant texts into their existing curriculum.

**Culturally Relevant Texts: Making the Sociocultural Connection**

A key way to build cognitive knowledge is to provide CLD students with culturally relevant texts. Traditionally, the materials used by teachers in grade-level classrooms are selected from a predetermined curriculum. For example, teachers who use basals or anthologies for literacy instruction teach the prepackaged stories from these texts. Historically, these curriculum materials have targeted a monolingual English-speaking student audience and therefore have reflected the experiences and backgrounds of this population. Consequently, CLD students often experience a cultural disconnect from many of the stories within such curricula. However, in the last decade, publishing companies have become more attuned to the need for stories that reflect the diverse backgrounds of CLD students and have worked to incorporate more multicultural stories into their series. Educators who want to assess the cultural relevance of the stories they teach can use the “Assessing the Cultural Relevance of Texts” checklist provided in Figure 2.6.

Research has found that reading culturally familiar texts enhances CLD students’ literacy achievement (Abu-Rabia, 1995; Kenner, 2000; Schon, Hopkins, & Vojir, 1984). When CLD students can relate to the material presented, they are
better able to make schematic and cognitive connections to it. These cognitive connections promote a deeper level of understanding and have been shown to increase comprehension. By making diligent efforts to include multicultural and multilingual texts in daily instruction, educators not only promote reading comprehension for CLD students but also validate the students’ cultural identity.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we explored the culturally and linguistically diverse student biography and the implications of this biography on literacy development. At the heart of the CLD student biography is the sociocultural dimension, which represents the love, laughter, and life of the student. This dimension provides valuable insights into the behavior and learning patterns of each student and reflects the goals, beliefs, and values of the CLD student and his or her family. The more teachers can learn about the sociocultural dimensions of CLD students, the better prepared teachers will be to address the individual needs of each student. Home visits are recommended as one of the most powerful ways of gathering information about this dimension.

The linguistic dimension encompasses the way CLD students comprehend, communicate, and express themselves in both their native languages and their second languages. Understanding that the language a CLD student first learns in the home is the medium through which he or she is socialized and through which cultural values are transmitted is central to this dimension. The more proficient a student is in his or her native language, the more easily he or she will acquire a second language. Identifying each student’s stage of second language acquisition helps teachers plan literacy lessons that effectively support students’ comprehension and engagement in academic tasks.

The academic dimension of the CLD student biography emphasizes the importance of knowing what type of access a student has had to schooling and literacy development. Access includes formal schooling a CLD student has received in his or her native language and in English, as well as the informal experiences the student...
has had in daily life. Students who have had more access to literacy development frequently have more strategies and skills on which to build. To support the academic success of all CLD students, educators can immerse students in academically challenging tasks that promote engagement, hope, and grade-level literacy acquisition.

The final dimension of the CLD student biography is the cognitive dimension. Building on existing cognitive and language assets by explicitly teaching learning strategies promotes CLD students’ literacy development. Using culturally relevant texts is another way to enhance students’ cognitive connections and knowledge. Given the diversity of the CLD student population, teachers who understand and access the sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive assets of their CLD students’ biographies are better equipped to provide instruction that meets these students’ differential learning needs.

**KEY THEORIES and CONCEPTS**

- academic dimension
- CLD student biography
- cognitive dimension
- cultural discontinuity
- home visit
- interdependence hypothesis
- linguistic dimension
- sociocultural dimension
- stages of second language acquisition

**PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS on PRACTICE**

1. The four dimensions of the CLD student biography are sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive. Discuss the ways you currently gather information about your CLD students within each of these dimensions.

2. The CLD student biography is presented as a prerequisite to effective literacy instruction for CLD students. Identify the components of the CLD student biography that you believe are central to supporting literacy instruction with these students.

3. Share two strategies you might use with your CLD students to learn more about their biographies, based on what you learned in this chapter. Be sure to articulate why you selected these strategies and how you think they will support your future literacy instruction.

**QUESTIONS for REVIEW and REFLECTION**

1. Why is it helpful for teachers to know the biographies of their CLD students before beginning literacy instruction?

2. Culturally and linguistically diverse students read at varying levels of linguistic proficiency. How can a teacher identify a CLD student’s proficiency level and then use this information to support his or her literacy development?

3. What kind of academic knowledge supports literacy development for CLD students, and how can teachers help students apply this knowledge?

4. In what ways can CLD students’ existing cognitive assets be built on to promote literacy development?