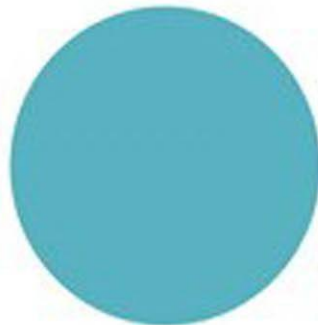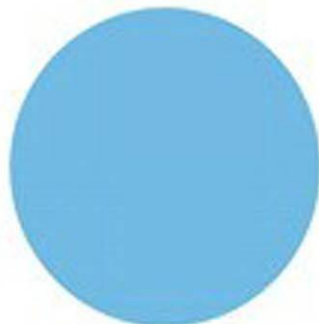# FIFTH EDITION

LANGUAGES AND LEARNERS

MAKING THE MATCH

World Language Instruction in K-8 Classrooms and Beyond

Helena Curtain | *Carol Ann Dahlberg*

Languages and Learners Making the Match

World Language Instruction in K–8 Classrooms and Beyond

Helena Curtain

University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Emerita

Carol Ann Dahlberg

Concordia College, Emerita

About the Authors

Helena Curtain has a wealth of experience as a language educator and has taught at elementary school through university levels. She served as Foreign Language Curriculum Specialist for the Milwaukee Public Schools for many years and in that capacity coordinated and supervised K–12 foreign language and ESOL programs in a district of 100,000 students. She served as associate professor at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and directed the Foreign Language and ESOL teacher preparation programs. She is the author of various articles dealing with language instruction. Helena is active professionally and has received state, regional, and national awards for her service to the language teaching profession. She is an internationally known expert on second language teaching methodology and curriculum development, bilingual education, immersion programs, and two-way immersion programs, especially at the elementary school level. She has also served as speaker, consultant, and visiting professor both nationally and internationally in 31 countries.

Carol Ann Dahlberg is Professor Emerita in Education at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, where she taught methods courses for secondary and elementary school teachers of foreign languages. She has also taught German K–12 and at the college level. She has authored and coauthored numerous articles and has received national awards from ACTFL and AATG. A founding member of the National Network for Language Learning, Carol Ann served as its first president. She works nationally and internationally as a consultant, curriculum developer, and workshop leader for early language learning.

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Languages and Learners: Making the Match is designed both as a methods text and as a practical guide for schools and teachers. It is intended for those preparing to teach languages, especially at the elementary and middle school level (grades K–8); for practitioners already involved with language teaching; and for teachers, parents, and administrators engaged in the planning or in the evaluation process. Although the focus of the book is on elementary and middle school, the principles and practices apply to all levels of language learning.

The book has been written by practitioners primarily for practitioners. We have included the theoretical and practical elements that have been important to us in our own classroom practice and that we regularly share with our students and in workshop and professional development sessions. Although we have not placed the teaching of world languages at the elementary and middle school in a comprehensive theoretical or historical framework, we believe strongly that classroom practice must be built on a basic understanding of theoretical and historical issues. An understanding of theoretical issues can help teachers know why certain strategies are successful; it can empower them to be effective planners of curricula and interpreters of the program and its methodology to fellow teachers, administrators, parents, and the public.

We do not claim to be experts in all of the areas we have been attempting to cover, but we depend on others who are experts like yourself to help us keep it as current as possible. The intent is that it is an entry-level resource that will help new teachers orient themselves to what is important and available in our profession. We want it to be based on scholarship, but it is not intended to be a scholarly work.

New to This Edition

- Organization around the TELL (Teaching Effectiveness for Language Learning) Framework: The Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning Project (www.tellproject.org) delineates characteristics of effective foreign language teachers, all of which are anchored in professional literature recommending their use. The TELL project catalogs teacher effectiveness into seven domains: Environment, Planning, The Learning Experience, Performance and Feedback, Learning Tools, Collaboration, and Professionalism. Each domain provides specific guidance as to what research tells us that effective teachers do within that domain. Because of the importance of our profession having a unified vision of what teacher effectiveness means, the chapters in *Languages and Learners: Making the Match* have been organized in this fifth edition according to the TELL domains.
- Can do statements at the beginning of each chapter.
- New examples and illustrations of concepts presented in the 5th edition.
- Insights from guest contributors.
- Examples of student-created work.
- Technology integration into many of the chapters.
- Additional information on second-language acquisition and child development.
- Information on instructional pathways leading to proficiency.
- New technology chapter.
- New assessment chapter.
- Additional thematic unit templates and completed unit plans.

- Sample lesson plans.
- Examples of differentiated instruction activities.
- Expanded section on teaching in the target language and providing comprehensible input.
- New section on teaching grammar.
- Revised guidelines for small-group and partner activities.
- Additional section on using stories and children's literature.
- Additional section on the Common Core State Standards.
- Matrix of activity types added to activities chapter. Each activity is numbered according to the matrix.

Student Population

The primary concern of this book is with the acquisition of a new language by majority-language speakers who are not living in an environment in which their new language is commonly spoken. Students in bilingual and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, by contrast, are minority-language speakers in the process of learning the majority language, and they have complex needs in their adjustment to a different society—needs that we have not attempted to address. We believe, however, that the principles and strategies for language teaching offered in this book are also applicable or adaptable for teachers working with English language learners (ELLs) and with teachers of heritage language speakers. We have included at the end of this section information on how early language learning is spreading throughout the world. Worldwide, the focus tends to be on English. See the section on Teaching English to Young Learners written by Joan Kang Shin.

Focus on Beginning-Level Classes

Many of the specific teaching suggestions presented here will be of special value to teachers who work in the first years of elementary and middle school programs that provide foreign language instruction for less than half of the school day and for teachers of students at the novice proficiency level. Numerous programs across the country are new and are staffed with teachers who are relatively inexperienced at these levels. Many of these teachers find it especially difficult to develop activities for meaningful communication in the early stages of second-language acquisition. Therefore, we believe that this emphasis will be the most helpful to the majority of readers. All of the activities can be extended and adapted to higher levels of language complexity and development and to other program models, and most of the ideas can be adapted to almost any level of instruction. In this sense, the ideas can be adapted to programs for heritage language speakers who have language skills that range across an extremely broad continuum. Unfortunately, the focus of this book is not geared to the special needs of heritage language learners; we strongly suggest, however, that these learners have programs that are specially established to meet those needs.

World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

This book makes frequent references to the *Standards* document, but does not attempt to teach readers about the *Standards* themselves. We recommend that readers use this book side by side with the *World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*. If they are not yet a part of

your own professional library, we encourage you to order them from the website for ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) online store, www.actfl.org). For quick reference, a brief summary is found in Chapter 3 in Figure 3.1 page 70.

The content of the *Standards* and the teaching philosophy they represent will be useful in any context, even for those who do not teach in a U.S. school setting.

Terminology

Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) is a term that has often been used to label programs for languages other than English at the elementary school level. Many references in the literature continue to use the term FLES. In an attempt to firmly place these programs as part of a K–12 sequence, the profession is moving away from the term in favor of more general terms, such as early start programs, early language learning programs, and programs for young learners, and we have adopted this practice for this book. Note that current best practice for these programs calls for 30 to 40 minutes a day, three to five days a week.

No alternative is without its problems or potential for confusion. The term foreign language, although still widely used in both the United States and around the world, has negative connotations for some parts of the community. Second language is used in some discussions to mean the acquisition of the majority language by minority-language speakers. The term second language is often inappropriate in any case, because a number of students in these programs may actually be acquiring a third or even a fourth language. The term language, when used alone, is easily confused with English language arts.

A number of states have chosen to use the term world languages, and still others are using the term Languages Other than English (LOTE), a term used in Australia. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards chose world languages other than English, abbreviated to world languages. In this book we have used primarily the terms world language and foreign language, occasionally second language, and frequently the terms early language and target language. We make no distinction among the terms—since we don't feel there is a consensus around any one term, we decided to use them all!

We hope that this fifth edition of *Languages and Learners: Making the Match* will serve as a useful resource for teachers, supervisors, and planners, and that it will make a contribution to the number and quality of language programs.

Acknowledgments *From Helena Curtain*

Since I have worked on this edition without the help and collaboration of Carol Ann Dahlberg, who has retired from professional responsibilities, I want to acknowledge the huge influence she has had on me both professionally and personally. We conceived the idea of this book almost as soon as we met and we worked together continuously to make a difference for language teachers at every level. We chose to focus the book on K–8 since there was so little information in this area. I owe a very large part of who I am and what I am able to do to her brilliance and her guidance. Thank you, Carol Ann, from the bottom of my heart for those many years of working and learning together. Thank you too for being a major part of the foundation on which this revision is based.

On a personal level I would like to thank:

My husband, Tony Curtain, who has supported me in countless ways.

Diana D'Amore whose friendship and support was instrumental in the completion of this fifth edition.

This book has been written in the spirit of sharing, which is such a marked characteristic of teachers whenever they get together. Many of the teaching ideas presented here have been shared with us in classes and workshops, and we continue to learn daily from our colleagues.

Finally, we celebrate especially the network of language teachers whose dedication, professionalism, and sharing bring the precious gift of new languages to learners of all ages.

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Contents

Languages and Learners: Making the Match is about the many ways in which learning a new language with skilled teachers can enrich the world of the learner. There are keys, old and new, to unlock the magic that second languages hold.

With this book we offer keys that we have found as we imagine the potential that second language learning can have for all learners in our schools. These keys may be used by teachers already working with children; by those preparing to teach; and by administrators, parents, and others engaged in the planning that brings successful language programs to life and keeps them vital.

Some keys are found in the experiences of the 1960s, when elementary school language programs were popular and numerous. There were serious mistakes made during that boom time for languages, such as inadequate planning, poor preparation of teachers, and unrealistic goals. By acknowledging and analyzing these mistakes, we can avoid their repetition. The 1960s left us with success stories, as well, and from those experiences came examples that guide our planning for the future.

Research in second-language acquisition and in related fields offers other keys. Not all can be translated directly into classroom practice, but the insights provided by research can help us evaluate programs, materials, and methodology more effectively and consistently. Perhaps the most significant key to the early language learning experience is the dramatic shift in emphasis from grammar to communication in the language teaching profession. The emphasis on communication as the governing idea in curriculum and classroom practice is reinforced both by research and by the experiences of successful language teachers.

The foreign language standards have established a new K–16 vision for language education and supported it with challenging goals and standards for curriculum content. The ACTFL *Performance Descriptors for Language Learning* (2012) translate those standards into student performances that can guide both curriculum development and student assessment. These key documents are shared by the entire profession and will help us communicate effectively with one another and with our students, parents, and community.

Communication is the essential element, the fundamental principle of this book. It unifies the guidelines offered and the methods and materials described. Communication has long been a stated goal of the language teaching profession, but it has traditionally been cast in a secondary role to grammar as an organizing principle. The experienced teacher and the beginner alike face the challenge of adapting the methods of the past to a standards-based, communicative emphasis and of developing new strategies to encourage comprehension and communication. This book suggests guidelines and examples to assist the teacher in creating a standards-based classroom in which communication has the highest priority.

The principles on which this book is based are summarized in the Key Concepts for Success, found on page xviii and on the *World Readiness Standards for Language Learning,* summarized on page 70, Figure 3.1. The Key Concepts have been shaped by the collective experience of many classroom teachers and they offer a classroom application of what many researchers have learned about languages and learners. These are the keys, some new and many familiar. The door of opportunity—the magic of language acquisition—awaits their use.

Although the focus of this book in many areas is on grades pre-K–8, the principles that underlie it apply to language learning at almost any age. Also, the focus is on language programs in the U.S. but following is information by Joan Kang Shin about the state of the art of language learning (mainly English) around the world. We are connected to a world-wide community that shares similar aspirations and similar concerns.

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL)

The worldwide phenomenon of English as a foreign language to primary school age children.

By Joan Kang Shin

English has become the world's lingua franca. English is used internationally as the language for science, technology, business, trade, tourism, and diplomacy. In fact, there are more speakers of English as a second or foreign language in this century than there are native speakers of English. David Crystal (2012) estimates that there are about 400 million native speakers of English, whereas there are over a billion speakers of English as a second or foreign language. Graddol (2006) predicts that in the next 10–15 years, there will be around 2 billion people learning English. Because English is seen as a necessary 21st century skill in order to communicate across cultures, the emphasis of English as a foreign language (EFL) in school curricula has affected education policy around the world. Ministries of education worldwide are requiring English language classes at the primary school level hoping that their children will grow up being able to use English fluently and accurately. This phenomenon has brought a new field of study to emerge called "Teaching English to Young Learners" or TEYL, which refers to the teaching of English as a foreign language to primary school age children. As Enever, Moon, and Raman (2009, 3) noted, "The last three to four decades have seen a huge expansion in TEYL programmes across the world, mainly in response to the impact of rapid globalization." Because of the special status English has in the world, there are some considerations for teaching English that may be different from teaching other foreign languages to children.

Although many of the approaches to motivate and engage young learners may be similar to teaching any other foreign language, one consideration particular to TEYL is the cultural materials used in the EFL classroom. The use of English as an international language means that young learners will grow up using it to interact with people from all around the world. Other languages like Chinese or French may have certain countries where people speak the language; some may have entire regions that speak the same language, like Spanish in Central and South America or Arabic in the Middle East and North Africa. However, English has become the language used between people of any nationality or culture in any country around the world. For example, tourists from countries like Korea, Brazil, Belgium, and Turkey who are traveling in Thailand will likely take a tour of a temple in English, and as they walk through a night market, the Thai vendors will most likely call out to them and bargain with them in English. With this international use of English, which can be found in other contexts like international conferences and business meetings, EYL teachers should introduce diverse cultural materials in the EFL classroom. Students will not just use English to communicate with people from the U.S. or the U.K., they will use it to speak with people from all different countries in the world. McKay (2002) named three types of cultural materials that teachers can use: (1) target culture from English speaking countries like the U.S., U.K., and Australia; (2) source culture from the students' home culture; and (3) international target culture from other non-English speaking cultures. Young learners should be exposed to as many cultures around the world as possible to help them keep an open mind when using English internationally. Most importantly, students should learn how to express aspects of their own culture in English, which is a great start to effective intercultural communication.

Key Concepts for Language Learners

1. Learners are active constructors of meaning and users of language, rather than passive receivers of vocabulary and information.

2. Learners participate in target language experiences with minimal use of the native language and translation.

3. Learning takes place in communicative contexts that carry significance for the student.

   - Units and lessons have a thematic center.
   - Students learn grammar in context, through usage and not through analysis.

4. Learners internalize culture through experiences with cultural materials and practices of the target culture.

5. Learners acquire academic skills and processes through lessons that focus on other content areas.

6. Learners experience instruction that

   - Is intrinsically interesting, cognitively engaging, and culturally connected.
   - Takes into account the distinctive characteristics found at each level of cognitive, social, and psychomotor development.
   - Engages students in levels of thinking (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, creating) appropriate to their stages of development.
   - Provides frequent opportunities for student language use across the modes of communication.
   - Appeals to the differing needs and interests
   - Includes concrete experiences: visuals, props, realia, and hands-on experiences.
   - Incorporates frequent, age-appropriate opportunities for physical activity.

7. Learners use reading and writing as communicative tools even in early stages of language development, but reading and writing are not the focus of the program.*

8. Teachers plan the learning environment as carefully as all other aspects of instruction.

9. Teachers and students assess learning frequently and systematically in order to gather information on progress and language development.

10. Programs establish goals that dictate the choice of a program model and the resulting quality characteristics for success.

Note: These concepts are meant to be used in conjunction with the TELL domains.
* Refers to nonimmersion programs

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1 The Learner: Setting the Stage for Language

Chapter Contributor: Rick Donato

What background information do I need to be an effective teacher of learners at any age?

Environment

The Learning Experience

Planning

Fundamentals

Professionalism and Collaboration

Performance and Feedback

Programs

Learning Tools

Second-Language Acquisition

- I can identify and explain the major concepts of second-language acquisition theory and research.

Sociocultural Theory and Second-Language Learning: The Role of Mediation

- I can identify and explain mediation tools and their role in language development.

Conditions Necessary for Second-Language Acquisition in the Classroom

- I can identify and explain the conditions necessary for second-language acquisition to occur in the classroom.

Cognitive and Developmental Characteristics of the Learner

- I can identify the major cognitive and developmental stages and explain how they apply to second-language instruction.

Children have a reputation for being natural language learners, for very good reason. Almost without exception, they have learned their native language with apparent ease, and by the time they are six years old, they have brought it to a level of fluency that is the envy of non-native speakers. Parents who bring their children into a second-language setting and immerse them in a new situation—for example, an elementary school taught in the foreign language—often experience a kind of miracle. After around six months, their child begins to function successfully in the new setting and at a linguistic level to which the parents cannot hope to aspire, even when they have been studying the language seriously for a similar period of time.

These examples of children's natural language learning ability might seem to suggest that the best thing to do to help a child learn a language is simply to place the child in the target language setting and then stay out of the way to let the miracle happen. Unfortunately, this is

not an approach that will make it possible to bring languages to every child. There is, however, both linguistic and psychological theory to help explain children's seemingly effortless second-language acquisition and to provide insights that can make the classroom a better place for such language acquisition to take place. An understanding of this theory, consideration of learner differences, and understanding the principles of child development and the characteristics of children at different stages of development will help prepare the teacher to create curriculum and activities that bring languages and children together effectively.

Second-Language Acquisition

Second-language acquisition theory may help to explain the puzzling situation of children who acquire languages more quickly and apparently with much less effort than their parents when placed in a local school in the second-language environment. The children are in a setting in which they are surrounded by language that is made meaningful because of the context and the way teachers speak to them. They are given time to sort out the language that they hear and understand until they are ready to begin to use it for their own expressive purposes. Their parents, on the other hand, are usually busy learning vocabulary and grammar rules, and they attempt to apply them later to a setting in which they have something to say.

Second-language acquisition theory is complex and varied. In what follows, we will introduce some of the major concepts and contributions of second-language acquisition theory and research to understand how instructional practice can be improved and brought in line with our knowledge of how languages are learned (see Lightbown and Spada 2006). Our review will begin with the work of Stephen Krashen in the early 1980s, one of the first researchers to examine the issue of second-language acquisition. Despite controversies and debates with his overall theory of language acquisition, Krashen can be credited for introducing a few basic concepts associated with contemporary language instruction.

However, other aspects of his theory have been questioned. For example, according to Krashen, the best way to gain ability in a new language is to bypass all conscious attention to how a language works; that is, formal instruction has little or no value to spontaneous language use. For several years, this theory, based on how children learn their first language, was widely supported and taken to be the key to successful mastery of additional languages. As we will discuss, although parts of Krashen's theory are still relevant today, some of his beliefs have been critically reviewed and expanded upon based on our growing body of knowledge about how individuals learn and develop ability in languages other than their first. According to Krashen's *learning-acquisition hypothesis,* two independent systems are used for developing knowledge of a language—the acquired system and the learned system. The acquired system is the product of unconscious processing and is similar to the way children gain knowledge of their first language. In contrast, the learned (conscious) system is a product of what happens in many foreign language classrooms where attention is paid to grammar rules, vocabulary, and language analysis. The conscious versus unconscious attention to language learning is one part of his theory that has come under considerable scrutiny and that has been questioned in light of recent theories advocating conscious control of one's mental activity for cognitive development, including language development. Recent studies on formal instruction indicate that there is an advantage for making students aware of the relationship between language form and meaning. Additionally, it has been shown that progress in language development occurs when learners are given opportunities to reflect upon and discuss the formal properties of language as a meaning-making resource and when they are asked to reformulate or repair what they say and hypothesize and experiment with the new language (see the section on comprehensible output). In this

way, conscious learning plays an important role for the learner. It might be best to think of conscious and unconscious learning as supporting each other.

A second objection to the dichotomy of learning versus acquisition derives from the analysis of the metaphors we use to represent what takes place during instruction. The *learning-acquisition* metaphor represents the learner as an information processor who takes in data and analyzes it in much the same way that a computer application independently analyzes the numbers on a spreadsheet or words on a page. A contrasting metaphor for learning that has been proposed by Anna Sfard (1998) is the *participation metaphor* for learning. Here, rather than explain learning as an individual's success at information processing on the basis of input, learning is construed as full participation in socially organized activities. The quality of the learning is, thus, directly connected to the opportunities a learner has to participate in what is taking place during instruction and the kinds of interactions he/she has with members of the learning community. Failure to learn using the learning-acquisition metaphor is often explained by individual learner deficiencies (lack of motivation, poor analytical skills, a low IQ, etc.). The same failure to learn based on the participation metaphor can be explained by a learner's lack of access to learning tools, poor instructional interactions, neglect in receiving guidance and support, or marginalization from the learning community. The point here is that the metaphorical representations of learning are important to consider from multiple perspectives and that when we choose one metaphor over the other, conclusions about leaners, instruction, intelligence, etc. are always made from a particular perspective.

Comprehensible Input: Using the Language as the Vehicle and Content of Instruction

One aspect of Krashen's theory that has remained central to foreign language education is his concept of comprehensible input, which is called the "input hypothesis." Comprehensible input is defined as the amount or level of language that the students can fully understand, plus new language that is slightly beyond their abilities but made comprehensible through context and embedding new language in previously learned language. Krashen refers to this process of comprehension of new language forms in the context of previously learned forms as i + 1. That is, a student's current level of understanding (i) plus (+) language that is slightly beyond what the student already knows (1). According to Krashen's input hypothesis, the most important factor in the amount of language acquired by a learner is the amount of comprehensible input at i + 1 to which the learner is exposed. For Krashen, comprehension leads to language processing. Processing occurs when learners reflect upon, analyze, store, and access the language in the input that they hear (note the computer metaphor of the learner). In contrast to current theories of second-language acquisition, for Krashen, comprehensible input is all that is needed for language acquisition to occur, or what he refers to as the "necessary and sufficient condition for language acquisition."

The input hypothesis provides a powerful reason for maximal use of the target language for all classroom purposes (management, directions, tasks, activities, etc.). Despite criticisms that comprehensible input is all that is needed, this theory has contributed to our understanding of the importance of *speaking in* the target language rather than just *speaking about* the target language, which is typical of grammar-based approaches to language learning. Students need to see and hear the target language in action if we expect them to be able to use the language in ways that go beyond mechanical exercises and mere knowledge of grammatical rules.

Simply deciding to use the target language, however, is not enough. The language must be used in such a way that the message is interesting, worth listening to, and understood by the student, even though every word of the message may not be familiar. Being comprehensible is accomplished through several means, including creating contexts that support comprehension (the use of gestures, examples, illustrations, experiences); the use of language that is tailored to students' abilities and that does not go "over the heads" of learners (modified or simplified input, as described below); and by engaging students in interactions with the teacher that are made comprehensible through the teacher's assistance, such as requests for clarification, provision of vocabulary when needed, and reformulations of what students are attempting to express. When teachers observe that students do not understand them when they use the target language, it may well be because they are using the target language at a level that is too far beyond the *learner's* current ability to understand—actually $i + 10$ or perhaps $i + 50$. Learners who are presented with language too far beyond their current level may well conclude that they are not good language learners and/or that this language is simply too hard to be learned.

To avoid this unintended consequence of creating feelings of failure in students and developing in them identities as non-language learners, an important part of the teacher's preparation for the use of the target language during instruction should be devoted to planning concrete ways of making the target language comprehensible to the students. For example, teachers can select visuals to support comprehension, create interesting contexts for allowing students to observe the new language in action, script what they will say and be knowledgeable about the language to be used (and to be avoided), and prepare interactive activities where students can make use of the new language they are learning and the types of supports that are needed to help them do so.

Using the Target Language During Instruction

In a classroom designed to encourage second-language acquisition, there is an emphasis on communication. The teacher provides students with an environment in which they are surrounded by messages in the target language that communicate interesting, relevant information in language they are able to understand and in language that is comprehensible to them. The teacher uses language at an appropriate level to the learners in which language material is entered and re entered in natural and non-repetitive ways. This use of language differs from the language used with peers and colleagues in the world outside the classroom. Part of creating comprehensible input for language acquirers consists of using strategies for making the message understood, variously known as "motherese," "caretaker speech," or "foreigner talk." These terms are used to indicate that the kind of language we use with learners is similar to the language directed to children as they acquire their native language or with non-native speakers to grease the wheels of communication by establishing mutual comprehension of what is being said. Some of the characteristics of this speech, as it occurs naturally, have been well documented in the first- and second-language acquisition literature.

1. A somewhat slower rate of speech (still with the normal rate of speech for that speaker, but at the lower end of the range).

2. More distinct pronunciation (not a distorted pronunciation, however, which actually changes the sounds of the language). For example, most American speakers of English pronounce the "tt" in the word letter as if it were spelled "dd." When asked to pronounce clearly, they often change their pronunciation of the sound to "tt," thus distorting the language through an attempt to pronounce it "accurately." Such distortions are not in the long-range best interests of the learner.

3. Shorter, less complex sentences. For example, complex sentences with independent and dependent clauses may be broken up into a series of independent clauses.

4. More rephrasing and repetition. Paraphrasing is often used here as a way of defining the meaning of a word in the input that the learner may not know (e.g., That man is *bald*. He has no hair!).

5. More frequent comprehension checks. These will ensure the hearer understands.

6. Use of gesture and visual reinforcement.

7. Greater use of concrete referents. For example, a speaker repeats the noun frequently when speaking to a learner rather than stating the noun once followed by utterances using a pronoun.

8. Interactive supports. The teacher surrounds learners with language, allowing them to be actual participants in dialogue. In early stages of language acquisition, the teacher actually provides both verbal parts of a conversation. Later, the teacher might embellish one- and two-word responses by learners into complete utterances in a natural, conversational manner, at the same time modeling extended discourse and providing meaningful listening experiences. Later students are capable of taking over increasing responsibility as participants in the conversation.

Comprehensible Output

Questioning Krashen's emphasis on the importance of comprehensible input as the only feature of instruction that matters to language learning, Merrill Swain (1985) has argued that, in addition to input, learners need frequent occasions to produce comprehensible "output." Her argument is that speaking serves an important function in the language learning process beyond simply "practicing the language." When learners are pushed to express themselves in the new language, they hypothesize about what they want to say and engage in meaning making, notice gaps in knowledge between what they can say and what they intend to say, and externalize language and reflect upon it, often leading to repairing what is said or noticing differences in the learner production and what is produced by more proficient speakers (Swain and Lapkin 1995). Swain claims that these processes are equally important to acquisition and that, although input is necessary for acquisition, it is not sufficient and needs to be supplemented with frequent opportunities to produce the language in meaningful and purposeful contexts.

Sociocultural Theory and Second-Language Learning: The Role of Mediation

Since the late 1980s, sociocultural theory, based on the work of Vygotsky and his colleagues, has gained increasingly more attention in the field of foreign and second-language learning. This theory contrasts sharply with early theorizing about how languages are learned, which are based on computer models of the mind (e.g., input and output and individuals as information processors). A major tenet of sociocultural theory is that learning and development of language represent higher mental functions and cannot be reduced to "in the head" models of acquisition. Rather, all higher mental functioning, such as using a language as a cultural meaning-making tool, is the result of external mediation in a social context. Mediation, as the term suggests, refers to the types of assistance and support that a learner requires to enhance performance and concept development. When teachers provide a word bank for a writing task, they help a student formulate an utterance by supplying an

important vocabulary word. By asking a leading question to enable a student to think more deeply about a topic, they are mediating the student's learning and development. Mediation may also be provided by physical tools, such as textbooks, computer programs, charts and figures, and tasks of various kinds, and symbolic tools, such as language, one of most important cultural tools for mediating activity and the most common form of mediation in classrooms. In classrooms, teachers mediate language learning by using language as a way to explain concepts, support students' attempts to use the new language, and interact with students in developmentally appropriate ways. In this way, language as a mediating tool is more than mere input to the learners' brain for processing, but rather a way to establish a supportive learning relationship with the student by allowing students to perform beyond what they can do independently and, in the process, develop conceptual understanding of the tasks in which they are engaged. Sociocultural theory claims that the quality of mediation is consequential to what is learned. The importance of this fact is that to understand learning and development of our students requires examining closely the kind of mediation that learners received during instruction.

Comprehensible input could be argued to be one such meditational tool. However, we need to be careful not to equate simply providing comprehensible input with providing mediation. Comprehensible input, while important for creating classes where the target language is used, is simply language directed to learners for individual cognitive processing. Mediation, as discussed above, implies the use of diverse tools, including language, that supports learning, assists in promoting developmental changes in the learner, and addresses the learners' potential beyond what they can only perform alone. When teachers ask interesting and important questions, cue students for more information, or provide language supports during interaction, these are cases of mediation and are quite distinct from simply directing comprehensible language to learners who passively (and ostensibly) absorb and learn what they hear.

Effective mediation takes place in a learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD emphasizes that in each learner there are two developmental levels—what learners can do on their own (their actual developmental level) and what they can do with assistance (their potential developmental level). The difference between what a learner can do alone and what he or she can do with help is the learner's ZPD. This view of a person is quite different from standard developmental psychology that views individuals as having one clearly identifiable level of development. To illustrate this concept, consider a learner who composes an essay in a foreign language without mediation and with mediation. This learner can potentially produce two qualitatively different essays under the two conditions. In the unassisted condition, the learner's essay might lack precise vocabulary, miss important elaborations, or be composed without attention to coherence. With mediation, the same learner may improve performance and produce a stronger essay. What this means is it is not fair to characterize learners on only what they can do alone, which is not a valid assessment of their ability. A better assessment of their ability is to understand how learners make use of meditational tools and assistance of various kinds to improve their performance, whether the tools are used or ignored, and how in the course of mediation learners grow and develop. Given the qualitative differences we frequently observe between assisted and unassisted performance, it is unfortunate that our present academic climate of high stakes testing seems to value only what students can do independently rather than what they can do with assistance (mediation). One goal of effective mediation is therefore to ensure that the assistance we offer students is usable and within their respective Zones of Proximal Development. If mediation is beyond the reach of the learner, it cannot be used to move learning and development forward. If mediation is redundant and not needed by the learner (e.g., over-helping), no development will take place. For this reason, working in a student's ZPD means diagnosing what the student knows and what kind of mediation is needed to move beyond

his or her current understanding. And, of course, this implies different ZPDs for students in a single class and differentiating the kind of help that teachers provide.

Conditions Necessary for Second-Language Acquisition in the Classroom

Based on what has been presented thus far, can we detail some classroom conditions that would lead to more effective language learning? It appears that some general themes emerge.

- *Learners need to see and hear the language in action and be able to comprehend what is being said to maintain their interest and motivation to listen to a foreign language.* How we speak to learners needs to be fine-tuned to their abilities; the language that we provide can be neither "over their heads" nor language that underestimates their ability to deal with new language forms, meanings, and functions. We also know that students can understand more than they can say or more than they have formally studied, so withholding certain forms of language until complete grammatical analysis has been presented is not beneficial to language acquisition and may even create in students an attitude that they must be formally introduced to an aspect of the language before they can understand it or attempt to do so.

- *Embedding new language in a meaningful context and in language students already know is a way to assist learners to comprehend and learn new language.* In other words, grammar instruction does not always ensure comprehension nor is it always required for comprehension to occur. If this were the case, no child would acquire a first language given that formal study of a child's native language might not occur until age eight, when a child is in school.

- *Students also need frequent occasions to interact using the new language.* Interaction needs to be promoted and supported in various ways. Teachers need to assist students in engaging in extended utterances by prompting them, providing needed lexical items, asking for clarification, checking comprehension, and confirming understanding of what has been said (referred to as the *negotiation of meaning* in the literature). This type of mediation clearly goes beyond the simple provision of comprehensible input from teacher to student. Additionally, assisting learners to interact in the target language is not be understood as only a test of knowledge, but rather as a site for the development of target language ability. The kinds of questions that teachers ask need to be understood as powerful tools for *assisting* student thinking, supporting conceptual development, and promoting robust learning, not only for *assessing* knowledge. But this requires a skilled teacher who knows the difference between question tools that assess what students know (e.g., What colors do you see in this picture? What is the weather like today? Can you count from 1 to 10?) and those questions that function to assist student thinking and reasoning (Can you tell me more about why you think the character in this story is a good person? What does she do that makes you think this? or What happens when we change this word in the sentence? How does the meaning change? Do you think an orange will sink or float in water? Why?).

- *Finally, classrooms need to be mediation-rich environments where students are offered tools of various kinds to support their learning and development.* Rather than focus on past performance, teachers need to teach to their students' futures by understanding where they are in the learning process and where they can go next. Mediation needs to be varied and evaluated for its effectiveness since all mediation is consequential to what students learn. Just as the tools we use in the world for a variety of tasks, such as cooking utensils, building tools, or computer applications, may be more or less effective to "get the job done,"

instructional meditational tools, including the language we use with students, may also be viewed in the same way. In some cases, the meditational tools we use may work quite well to bring students to higher levels of conceptual understanding. In other cases, our tools may simply allow students to complete a task or comply with a task requirement with little regard for how students understand the nature of the task, the concepts being used, and the potential for what is learned in one task for use in other contexts.

Instructional and Learner Factors in L2 Acquisition

Many factors are at work in the language classroom. There is variation among the characteristics of the input to which students are or have been exposed, as well as factors relating to individual students.

Some of the most important of these issues are summarized in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1   **Instructional and Learner Factors in L2 Acquisition**

Instructional Factors

Quantity
- Length of time in the program
- Time on task

Quality
- Curriculum with clear learning targets focused on what students can do with language
- Topics and themes relevant to the learner
- Meaningful and interesting comprehensible input
- Opportunities for negotiating meaning with teacher and peers
- Type of mediation provided (talk, tasks, texts)
- Specific scaffolding strategies for tasks & interactions.

Learner Factors
- Age
- Cognitive abilities
- First language literacy
- Personality
- Confidence
- Motivation
- Language background
- Social and cultural background
- Attitude toward language learning
- Attitude toward other cultures
- Feeling of belonging in a learning community
- Previous language learning experiences
- Other…

Purposeful and Meaningful Communicative Interactions

Target Language Proficiency
(With underlying knowledge of language forms, meanings, and functions in cultural contexts)

Quantity

How long has the student been learning the language? The amount of language to which the students have already been exposed is a critical element in their current and future levels of language acquisition. Time is the great ally in the development of language proficiency since language learning takes time.

Does the program offer language every day for at least thirty to forty minutes for optimal learning in a program for young learners, or is there less time available? Met and Rhodes (1990) identified time spent in language instruction and the intensity of that instruction as the two most critical factors in the rate and amount of language acquisition. The ACTFL Young Learner Task Force (Swender and Duncan 1998, 482) established thirty to forty minutes per day, three to five days per week, as a minimum time allocation for achievement of the performance goals outlined for K–12 learners.

Within the amount of time that is allocated to language in the school day, how much of that time is actually spent on language instruction? How often is the class canceled because of school programs or field trips? How much time is spent moving the students to the language classroom, or taking out and putting away materials, or on disciplining? All of these factors cut into the allocated time, so that time on task is the real measure of the input available during a class period.

Quality

In addition to how much time is spent, we also have to look at the quality of that time. What kind of instruction is taking place? Is there intensity of instruction; that is, on average, is the target language used 90 to 100 percent of the time in cognitively engaging, developmentally appropriate, and meaningful and purposeful activities?

We must also consider how learning is supported through scaffolding student performance on particular language tasks, such as helping them when they try to express themselves, breaking down a task into understandable steps that the student can follow, controlling their frustration when they encounter problems, or reducing overall task complexity. Many teachers are natural "helpers" and scaffold student performance frequently in the tasks they prepare for students and in the assistance they provide as students complete these tasks. Beyond scaffolding, we must also consider the quantity and quality of the mediation provided. Mediation is a larger concept and refers to specific forms of assistance that are present in the learning environment that focus on learner concept development, not just on moving through and completing particular tasks. Effective mediation results in conceptual development, which may or may not occur in the situated context of scaffolding a language task, such as an information-gap task. Although learners may be successful at task completion through scaffolded assistance, they may leave the task with no conceptual understanding of the underlying interactional, language, or strategic factors that led to their success. In this scenario, what is learned in the information-gap task may remain there and not be available for use in other contexts. In contrast, in a content-based reading lesson, a teacher may scaffold students' comprehension of the literal meaning of the text but then move on to mediate greater insight into the concepts of the reading through asking leading questions, calling attention to textual features, probing for understating, or engaging students in a text-based discussion where divergent and deeper interpretations of the content are encouraged.

Learner Factors

On the other side of the figure are the attributes that the student brings to the language learning process. These are the factors within the student and the student's social setting.

First, how old is the learner? Age is strongly related to learning another language. Children are more likely to develop native-like proficiency before age ten, and they are also at a maximum of openness to other cultures. How literate are the learners in their first language? These skills will influence the ability of the learner to benefit from written forms of input.

In the figure, there is interaction between the two sides. The most positive instructional factors can also fail a student if the program does not take into account the attributes of the individual learner and provide a learning community to which the student feels connected and actively involved and not marginalized or ignored. Every learner also brings significant cognitive abilities. These are related to the student's capacity for analogy and intellectualization. Each learner has a unique array of abilities and capacities, of intelligences, and of learning styles and strategies. All of these dimensions affect the types of experiences that will best facilitate language acquisition for a specific learner, no matter what his/her age.

What factors in a learner's personality will affect her or his ability to profit from target language input? Is the student a risk taker or an extrovert? Is the learner inhibited and afraid to speak up in groups? What other personality factors might support or hinder language learning?

How strong is the student's motivation to learn the language? Highly motivated students seek out input and benefit from every opportunity to experience the new language.

What is the learner's social environment? Is language learning valued at home and among peers? What is the learner's attitude about language learning and about other cultures and speakers of the new language? Has the learner had opportunities to interact with people from other cultures?

Once the input and attributes have been taken into account, the next step is interaction.

The learner must have the opportunity to use the language, to engage with the language, and to construct meaning with the language in order to learn it. With enough opportunities for communicative interaction, the final stage is, of course, proficiency in the new language.

Cognitive and Developmental Characteristics of the Learner

Just as second-language acquisition research has helped us to better understand the language development of the students in our classrooms, cognitive psychologists have given us information about learning in general. Information about the brain can help us to find better ways to reach our students, and to make our time with them more effective. Multiple intelligences and learning styles models have been developed by psychologists and educators in order to assist the teacher in planning for a whole classroom of learners whose learning preferences and strengths may be different from those of the teacher—and they are certainly not identical with those of each other!

Information from Brain Research

In the field of cognitive psychology, the study of the brain has resulted in a significant shift in orientation away from the behaviorist principles that once dominated educational thought and practice. Rote learning, memorization, and "drilling" are being replaced by an emphasis on meaningfulness, metacognition, and process. For the behavioral psychologist, the student is considered to be a relatively passive subject, to be manipulated through

reinforcement techniques and drills. The cognitive psychologist, by contrast, sees students as active agents in the learning situation, controlling and shaping their own learning processes according to their own goals and understandings and based on the type of assistance they receive. In the behaviorist classroom, the students respond to external stimuli (e.g., a teacher question) and reinforcement (e.g., praise or correction), while in the classroom based on cognitive psychology, the students' own internal motivation, interests, and abilities drive the learning process. One of the most important principles of cognitive psychology for the language teacher is that information is best learned and retained if it is made meaningful to students.

Kennedy (2006, 479) identifies several implications of brain research for the language teacher, highlighting the importance of engaging many senses and an enriched environment. She also notes:

- We use our *emotions* to tell us what is important to learn and what to remember.

- The brain stores information based on *functionality* and *meaningfulness.*

- Emotions drive *attention.*

- Attention drives learning and memory.

- *Repetition* is necessary but it requires *novelty* with regard to instructional design (which should incorporate all five language processes—observation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and utilize a variety of methods and approaches).

Caine and Caine (1997, 104–108), in their Brain/Mind Learning Principles, point out that the search for meaning is innate. Meaningful and meaningless information are stored separately, and meaningless or relatively unrelated information requires far more conscious effort to learn. Meaningful information is stored in a "spatial/autobiographical" memory that does not require rehearsal and can be recalled as a complete experience. Consider how easy it is to remember information, even a word in a new language, when it was encountered in a situation that was meaningful and memorable to you. Conversely, consider how difficult it is to recall facts when the information had no personal importance or meaning to you.

Ellis also emphasizes the significance of meaning, listing it as the second of his ten principles of instructed second-language acquisition: "Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning" (2008, 1–2). He notes that activities focused on creating meaning are intrinsically motivating for learners; they help develop both communication skills and the vocabulary and grammar needed to use the language effectively. Additionally, as stated above, memory is facilitated in meaningful interactions.

Patterning

One of the most important points about the brain and learning is the fact that the brain's search for meaning occurs through patterning. The brain looks for patterns as it organizes information according to schematic maps and categories. As learners in language classes search for meaning in the experiences we provide for them, we must be sure to create complex, meaningful experiences with ample assistance from which they construct their own patterns of understanding. This differs from common instructional practice that often attempts to over simplify tasks so learners will experience no cognitive struggle to complete them. Tasks, in addition to being meaningful and purposeful, need to be sufficiently rigorous and robust so that learners can use their cognitive abilities to solve problems, seek out patterns and solutions, and engage in higher-order thinking. Mechanical tasks that require a minimum of cognitive engagement do not respond to the recommendations of recent work in brain-based research.

What we now know about the brain suggests that it resists having meaninglessness imposed upon it; facts and skills that are presented in isolation need more practice and rehearsal to be stored. For example, if we were to ask students to memorize a random series of letters such as "f z g i h r c t u w d h," students would be able to do this task, but it would require great effort since the series of letters is presented in isolation and is meaningless. Additionally, student performance would vary greatly with some students being able to reproduce the list while others might be unable to recall even a single two-letter sequence.

If we were to ask students to memorize the first letter of a series of words such as "yet, paper, snow, drive, boat, when, through," the task would be somewhat easier, since the brain can attach some meaning to the words even though the words themselves are not connected in any way.

If, on the other hand, the teacher uses a meaningful sentence such as "The boy is going to Disneyland when school is over for the summer," the brain has much more of an opportunity to attach meaning and make connections. This last series of letters combine together into a sentence that expresses a meaningful idea connected to the learners' own experiences.

A child presented with this sentence may think of his or her favorite Disney character, or may think about some of the pictures she/he has seen of the exciting events at this place. This sentence has a much better chance of being remembered, since it connects to an experience that is already in the child's brain and it activates the child's prior knowledge. If the sentence is actually the climax of an engaging and emotion-filled story, it is likely that the whole experience will be stored in memory quite easily. This is called episodic memory, which claims that information embedded in narrative (e.g., stories) is more easily recalled than random facts and figures.

Although it may seem to teachers that they are making things easier for learners by reducing learning to isolated "simple" words and sounds, such as letters of the alphabet or the names of various vocabulary items, it requires more work for the brain to remember these things, since it has no meaningful experience to which to attach the learning. In the example of asking the student to learn a series of isolated letters or words, the task is actually made more difficult because the student has to rely on rote memory rather than on the context and the connections that make the learning meaningful.

One general conclusion to this discussion is that the brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously. While it is sometimes necessary to focus on individual pieces or discrete skills, these individual pieces or discrete skills should be presented within a rich context. Any focus on discrete items, such as individual vocabulary or writing details, for example, must be made for a clear purpose, so that the parts become building blocks for holistic learning.

Emotions

Many researchers have described the importance of emotion in the learning process and in the construction of meaning. Emotions and thoughts cannot be separated and, thus, emotions have a great effect on all learning. Vygotsky also claimed that emotion is the foundation of all higher-order thinking. One of Caine and Caine's (1997, 105) guiding principles states that emotions are critical to the brain's patterning. If an event is related to positive emotions, there is more of a chance for successful patterning to take place. Jensen (1998, 72) puts it even more forcefully: "Emotions drive attention, create meaning, and have their own memory pathways."

The socioemotional dimension of instruction and learning applies both to the types of experiences we provide for the students and to the classroom atmosphere we create.

Teachers control the emotional climate of their classes. Many of our student activities have positive emotions associated with them, such as games, songs, rhymes, and lessons involving movement and physical activity. Creating a warm emotional climate in which children feel self-confident, free, respected, and highly motivated is equally as important as providing activities that have emotional connections. Periodic celebrations of learning, target culture festivals, or individual achievements can contribute to the positive classroom atmosphere we hope to create. Mascots for the classroom can enhance the positive environment as well, such as a frog puppet "class member" or a "target language only" bear that goes home with the children on a rotating basis. A classroom climate that focuses on what learners can do rather than what they cannot do is a powerful way to establish positive emotions in students where even small successes are acknowledged and celebrated (Donato and Tucker 2010).

Stephen Krashen (1981), in his discussion of the "affective filter," highlights the importance of emotions in the language learning process and the fact that children are known to resist learning when learning is unpleasant, painful, or being attempted in a punitive environment. Students' ability to learn more readily those things they want to learn is well recognized. Krashen relates these experiences to language acquisition by describing a filter that the brain erects to block out second-language input, no matter how carefully designed that input may be. The filter goes up in the presence of anxiety, low self-confidence, or the absence of motivation. The filter goes down, and the language input can come through, when motivation is high, a student is self-confident, and the learning takes place in a relatively anxiety-free environment.

Social Dimensions

Meaning is constructed in social interaction where individuals attempt to express their views, opinions, and ideas and where all work toward mutual understanding. This process is especially important in a world language classroom. As Frank Smith (2004) put it, "Language is not a genetic gift. It is a social gift." Meaning can be constructed much more readily if social interaction is an important part of the learning. One of Ellis' (2008, 2) principles affirms that, "The opportunity to interact in the second language is central to developing second language proficiency." Games, role plays, and partner and small group activities motivate learners while at the same time enhancing learning by allowing learners to become meaning-makers in their new language.

The social dimension of games and classroom rituals provides another way in which the brain can attach meaning. Once the students have learned a concept, they can practice it in partners and small groups. The social relationships of partner and small group activities add to the richness of meaning-based experiences for the brain. Following are some examples of simple social activities that can be done in the classroom.

- At the beginning of class, the whole class can greet the teacher in the target language, but then they can also greet several of their classmates in a very short, motivating, social partner activity.
- Students can practice classroom dialogues with partners, or "read" to each other a memorized story that they have written either individually or as a class activity.
- Students can do a partner weather report. After a class member has looked out the window and reported on the weather, the other students can tell their partners about the weather outside.
- Students can turn to their partners to practice or process a new phrase or a new concept. Chapter 6, on partner and group work, will provide many other examples.

Learning Styles

The individual learners in our language classes differ in many ways, at every level of instruction. Writers and researchers about learning styles have given us a plethora of ways to analyze and describe learner differences, and all are useful. Learners can be characterized as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners; they can be classified as holistic or linear learners. Some researchers place learners on a continuum from concrete to abstract or from sequential to random. The most important insight, perhaps, from this information is the realization that almost all of the students in our classes are different from us, their teachers, and from each other, in a large variety of ways. This section describes a few of them.

We know that while some learners thrive in a highly social and interactive environment, others feel more comfortable and may do better when they can think and learn alone. Some learners are motivated and empowered by carefully structured, linear tasks and unvarying routines; they may find it annoying and distracting when bulletin boards or visuals are not carefully aligned and the classroom isn't neat and orderly. Other students feel suffocated by so much structure and long for the freedom to problem-solve and create. These same students enjoy classes in which the teacher keeps them guessing and sometimes makes random leaps from one topic to another. These students don't usually mind a little clutter—it makes them feel at home!

Some of our students need to touch, or move, in order to learn. (That's probably true of almost every primary school child.) Some students benefit most from our visuals and our gestures when they are learning or reviewing language; others won't feel confident of the information until they see it written out; still others, with poor vision or a brain that processes visual input poorly, don't benefit from either. Some children learn very well just from listening attentively to what is taking place—they may remember well without ever writing things down. Still others need to take notes and rework the information several times before it is firmly anchored. These examples just begin to describe the ways in which students differ from one another—and from their teacher! There are many other differences, too. Does a student learn best in a busy environment, perhaps with music in the background, or in a quiet setting? Some students learn best when they can volunteer and try things out; others need to feel very secure before trying anything new.

Multiple Intelligences

As we look at our classes closely, we can make an important discovery. Each class is brimming with intelligence—but as with learning styles, each student's profile is different. The work of Howard Gardner (1983, 1993, 1999) and applications by Thomas Armstrong (1993, 1994) make us aware of eight distinct forms of intelligence that exist in our students, identified in Figure 1.2. Each of the forms of intelligence is valuable and necessary in society, although our schools have tended to support and nurture only the first two: linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. This practice has tended to leave other forms of intelligence with far less recognition in the school setting. Armstrong (1993) points out that despite the emphasis on the first two intelligences, our students are not excelling in these areas, and questions whether it might not be the case that children learn best when "their entire range of capability is addressed and when multiple connections are encouraged in a balanced way."

As language teachers in a system that has long valued linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence above all, we are in a good position to support other kinds of intelligence as well.

Some teachers, as they plan their units and lessons, lay out all the intelligences on a grid and systematically include some activity for each intelligence. Such an approach respects the value of all the intelligences and encourages students to do their best work at all times.

In a thirty-minute class period, addressing all intelligences might be a challenge, but we certainly can try to keep a balance among all of them over the course of a week, or throughout a unit of study. Many of the activities and examples in this book show how we can create tasks and activities that address a number of different intelligences in our classes.

One of the important lessons that we can take from the research on learning styles and multiple intelligences is this: What interests and appeals to us as learners and as teachers is an important consideration as we plan, to be sure. However, it is a very unreliable guide to meeting the needs and interests of all the students in our classes. In every class we teach, there are bound to be more students who are unlike us than there are those who are like us. It is our job to build bridges to all learning styles, helping students to learn, as much of the time as possible, in a way that is natural and comfortable to them. Our goal as language teachers is to support the learning of every student, appealing to a variety of learning styles, and to nurture all of the forms of intelligence represented in each of our classes. Our goal is for every learner to experience success—on his or her own terms, as well as on ours.

Figure 1.2   **Multiple Intelligences and Their Applications to the Language Classroom**

Intelligence	Excels at	Language Application
Linguistic	Reading, writing, telling stories, playing word games, etc.	Almost everything we do in class!
Logical-Mathematical	Experimenting, questioning, figuring out logical puzzles, calculating, etc.	Surveys, making charts and graphs
Spatial	Designing, drawing, visualizing, doodling, etc.	Illustrating a Gouin series; creating a picture of an object by writing the word for the object over and over
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Dancing, running, jumping, activities, adding motions to songs and chants	Total Physical Response (TPR) building, touching, gesturing, etc.
Musical	Singing, whistling, humming, creating melodies for favorite rhymes	Using songs, rhythmic chants tapping feet and hands, listening, etc.
Interpersonal	Leading, organizing, relating, manipulating, mediating, partying, etc.	Small group and partner work
Intrapersonal	Setting goals, meditating, dreaming, planning, being quiet	Journaling, portfolio building
Naturalist	Understanding, categorizing, explaining things in the world of nature	Photography, field trips, classifying

Based on Gardner (1983, 1993, 1999) and Armstrong (1993, 1994).

A second lesson, every bit as important as the first, has to do with the use of the information on learning styles and multiple intelligences. Each student in our classes is an individual of remarkable complexity. No single category or set of categories is adequate to describe or explain that individual student, although at times the categories can be useful in finding a way to reach an individual student. If we begin to think in terms of "that concrete sequential in the second row," or "that naturalist right in front of me," however, we have missed the point and also missed the precious individuality of each student in our classes. The categories are useful in helping us to plan our classes and to diversify our teaching, but they should never be used to sort our students into "boxes" that limit our understanding of the whole person. Howard Gardner (1999, 91) identified this danger very clearly: "People so labeled may then be seen as capable of working or learning only in certain ways, a characterization that is almost never true. Even if it has a certain rough-and-ready validity, such labeling can impede efforts to provide the best educational interventions for success with a wide range of children." The point is that we are all made up of several learning styles and possess multiple intelligences. Trying to equate or label a student with one category of intelligence or style is misguided and wrong. Because we may have preferences for how we learn does not mean we need to be restricted to learning in one way. Rather, we need to provide opportunities for students to experiment with learning in various ways (learning styles) and through multiple ways of thinking and knowing (multiple intelligences) so that they can develop their full cognitive and emotional capacities and become a whole person.

Thematic Teaching and Construction of Meaning

Thematic instruction is an integral part of early language learning and provides an ideal environment for constructing meaning. In thematic teaching, the curriculum is organized around a thematic center, which can originate in the classroom, the school, the environment, or the target culture. Language concepts and concepts from the regular curriculum and the target culture are interrelated and presented as a whole within a thematic framework. Language is tailored to the developmental level of the students; activities address a variety of learning styles and call forth a range of multiple intelligences. Students have many opportunities for identifying patterns and connections, experiencing engaging activities with emotional content, and interacting with their peers. It is the goal of the thematic instruction described in this book to reach every child with meaningful language and culture experiences.

Developmental Characteristics of the Learner

The most important factor in teaching and learning in any setting is the learner. Learners of any age differ from one another in significant ways: Individuals may learn best through listening or reading, they may learn more easily alone or within a small group, they may require heavy visual reinforcement or learn better through verbal explanations, or they may respond better to a sequential or random organization of materials or experiences. Each learner's experiences differ from those of class peers in a variety of ways. Children and young adolescents, however, differ from older learners in certain patterned and predictable ways as they progress through the stages of development. An understanding of these general developmental characteristics is essential for the elementary and middle school language teacher.

Piaget and Stages of Cognitive Development

The teaching of children has been profoundly affected by the work of Jean Piaget, who identified four stages of cognitive and affective development in childhood and adolescence. The child develops cognitively through active involvement with the environment, and each new

step in development builds on and becomes integrated with previous steps. Because two of the four shifts in the developmental stages normally occur during the elementary school years, it is important for language teachers working with children to keep the characteristics of each cognitive stage in mind (Piaget 1963). They are as follows:

1. The stage of sensory-motor intelligence (zero to two years). During this stage, behavior is primarily motor. The child does not yet internally represent events and "think" conceptually, though "cognitive" development is seen as schemata are constructed.

2. The stage of preoperational thought (two to seven years). This stage is characterized by the development of language and other forms of representation and rapid conceptual development. Reasoning during this stage is pre-logical or semi-logical, and children tend to be very egocentric. Children often focus on a single feature of a situation at a time—for example, they may be able to sort by size or by color but not by both characteristics at once.

3. The stage of concrete operations (seven to eleven years). During these years, the child develops the ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems. Hands-on, concrete experiences help children to understand new concepts and ideas. Using language to exchange information becomes much more important than in earlier stages, as children become more social and less egocentric.

4. The stage of formal operations (eleven to fifteen years or older). During this stage, the child's cognitive structures reach their highest level of development. The child becomes able to apply logical reasoning to all classes of problems, including abstract problems either not coming from the child's direct experience or having no concrete referents.

The thinking skills of most learners in elementary school are at the concrete operations stage, and experience plays a major role in all learning. Piaget points out that children are not simply miniature adults who have less experience and thus less knowledge to work with as they approach problems and new situations. They do not think like adults because their minds are not like adult minds. It is the privilege of the elementary school teacher to share their world and learn to work with it. Characteristics of children as learners at different ages and implications for language teaching are described below.

Egan and Layers of Educational Development

The work of the Canadian educator Kieran Egan (1979, 1986, 1992) provides insights about educational development. Egan describes development in terms of the characteristics that determine how the learner makes sense of the world. He thinks of educational development as a process of accumulating and exercising layers of ability to engage with the world. As individuals develop, they add new layers of sophistication without leaving behind the qualities characteristic of earlier layers. As he puts it (1979, 1986), "Each stage contributes something vital and necessary to the mature adult's ability to make sense of the world and human experience." The final stage, the ironic layer, is made up of essential contributions from all the earlier stages, governed by the ironic orientation to the world. The characteristics of each of Egan's four layers are as follows:

The Mythic Layer: Ages Four to Five through Nine to Ten Years

- For these early elementary school learners, emotions have primary importance; they always want to know how to feel about what they are learning. They make sense of things through emotional and moral categories, e.g., good versus bad, happy versus sad.

- Young children are drawn into a topic or an idea through simple polar opposites. For example, they find it hard to resist the appeal of very tiny versus really huge; freezing cold versus burning hot; a wicked witch versus the perfect princess. Once presented in this way, concepts can be developed by filling in between the poles.
- The world of the imagination is vivid and real to these children, so they move easily in and out of worlds where animals talk or activities take place on a magical trip to another world.
- Learners in the Mythic Layer often believe that the world thinks and feels as they do.
- These learners interpret the world in terms of absolutes, in the same way that a fairy tale world operates. The wicked witch is all bad; the daring prince is all good.
- Using story form is the ideal approach for teaching Mythic Layer learners. Like a fairy tale, instruction should have a clear and strong beginning, middle, and end; it should introduce things using strong opposites; it should address absolute meanings; and it should have strong emotional and moral appeal. While it does not have to be a story, instruction should incorporate these strong story elements.

The Romantic Layer: Ages Eight to Nine through Fourteen to Fifteen Years

- Upper elementary and middle school learners begin to separate the world around them from their internal world—they no longer assume that the world thinks and feels as they do. They are developing a sense of their own identity within this wider world.
- Romantic Layer learners tend to see this outside world as both fascinating and frightening. As they seek out the limits of this world, they are drawn to extremes, e.g., the highest mountain, the longest word. They are also attracted to realistic detail, the more different from their own experience the better.
- These learners are great collectors of everything from baseball cards to amazing facts about a country on another continent. They often enjoy research on topics of their own choosing, and they are good at memorizing.
- Because the outside world can seem threatening, students learn best when new information incorporates and emphasizes qualities that can overcome the threat— "transcendent" qualities such as courage, nobility, genius, ambition, energy, or creativity.
- Story form continues to be important for the Romantic Layer learner, with emphasis on realistic detail and real-life heroes and heroines.
- Although it may not seem evident, Romantic learners are searching for and developing a sense "of romance, of wonder and awe."

The Philosophic Layer: Ages Fourteen to Fifteen through Nineteen to Twenty Years

- These learners have integrated their inner world with the outer world. They now understand the world to be a unit, of which they are a part.
- Learners in the Philosophic Layer try to organize the facts and details they collected in the Romantic Layer, creating their own systems for making sense of the world.
- Once they have developed a system of organization, these learners tend to believe that they have found *the* system, and they become (over) confident that they know the meaning of everything!

The Ironic Layer: Ages Nineteen to Twenty through Adulthood

- The learner recognizes that no one system is adequate to organize all knowledge, but that systems are necessary to make sense of information. If one system does not work well, it can be discarded in favor of another one.
- This is the mature, adult learner.

Teacher Comments: Elementary and Middle School Learners

Several experienced pre-K to middle school teachers have added their observations about students in the grade levels below, primarily from the point of view of the language teacher. They are:

Hal Groce, Anoka Public Schools, Minnesota

Alan Hans, Hilliard Tharp Sixth Grade School, Hilliard, Ohio

Patty Ryerson Hans, The Wellington School, Columbus, Ohio

Jessica Haxhi, Maloney Magnet School, Waterbury, Connecticut

Hildegard Merkle, Bethesda, Maryland

Joel Swanson, Mounds Park Academy, St. Paul, Minnesota

Myriam Chapman, Bank Street School, New York, New York

Ana Lomba, Author of language materials for children, Princeton Junction, New Jersey

Vicki Alvis, Fulton County Public Schools, Fulton, Georgia

Kate Naughter, Amman, Jordan

Preschool Students (Ages Two to Four)

These students are in a sensitive period for language development. They absorb languages effortlessly and are adept imitators of speech sounds. Because they are very self-centered, they do not work well in groups, and they respond best to activities and learning situations relating to their own interests and experiences. Although they have a short attention span, they have great patience for repetition of the same activity or game. Preschoolers respond well to concrete experiences and to large motor involvement in language learning.

Figure 1.3   **Playful three- and four-year-olds**

Ana: Young children are very active and have short attention spans. It is important to plan your curriculum with that in mind. For a one-hour class I may have from ten to fifteen different activities, but many of them are repeated from previous classes. Also, these activities are varied in nature to appeal to the diverse personalities of the students. It is a good idea to always carry an extra "life saving" activity. No matter how wonderful your activities for the day are and how great your expertise is, some days will

be rough. In days like this I would take out a bag of play dough or another tactile activity and postpone my wonderful plans for the next day. That's how it is.

Developing phonological awareness in preschool is a critical skill in alphabetic languages. These phonological skills transfer from one language to another. Therefore, by including activities that develop phonological awareness in—say—Spanish, you are also helping young children move forward in their path to building reading skills in English. Now, that's something all early language educators should know! By using rhymes, poems, stories, tongue twisters, and many other language-rich activities in your instruction you are not only helping young children acquire better communicational skills in the new language, but also taking them a huge step further in their path to becoming proficient readers in their first languages.

Primary Students (Ages Five to Seven): Kindergarten and Grades One and Two (Level 3)

Most of these children are still pre-operational, and they learn best with concrete experiences and immediate goals. New concepts and vocabulary are more meaningful when presented as pairs of binary opposites. Children like to name objects, define words, and learn about things in their own world; they also have a vivid imagination and respond well to stories of fantasy. They need to know how to feel about something in order to learn it well. Primary-age children learn through oral language; they are capable of developing good oral skills, pronunciation, and intonation when they have a good model. They learn well, especially beginning in first grade, through dramatic play, role play, and use of story form with a strong beginning, middle, and end. Because of their short attention spans, they need to have a great variety of activities, but the teacher must keep in mind that children of this age tire easily. They require large-muscle activity, and they are still rather unskilled with small-muscle tasks. Teachers of primary students must give very structured and specific directions and build regular routines and patterns into the daily lesson plan.

Kindergarten

Patty: Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students need to know that there will be daily opportunities for moving, wiggling, manipulating objects, and using songs and/or rhythm. They love to share their favorites (favorite color, animal, fruit, etc.). They love to use every available sense and to experience "magic" (using colored water, magic boxes, the appearance of unusual things in the classroom). It is crucial for them to "have a turn." When playing games, they are most comfortable when they can see the system for assuring that everyone will have a turn (cards or Popsicle sticks with each child's name).

Hildegard: I often "forgot" that my kindergarten students were not native speakers; they followed my commands and instructions with such ease. They need to feel accepted, liked, part of the group, and to be noticed and smiled at by the teacher. Feeling uncomfortable in class makes them physically sick (tummy ache). They like to move constantly, manipulate three-dimensional things, put things together and take apart, be enchanted by stories.

Jessica: Kindergartners are capable of much higher levels of conversation and content than we ordinarily assume. They enjoy short dialogues (name, likes, etc.) performed with puppets—especially talking about themselves! They are engaged when making predictions and experimenting, such as with "sink and float" lessons. They also like being able to comment at every stage of the class, using expressions such as "I'm done!" "Look at this!" and "I did it!"

Joel: These kids are a lot of fun. They will tell you what they are thinking and will not hold back. If you've gone too long someone will ask when the class is over. If they need to move, they will. When I am planning for kindergarten, I shoot for nine to ten activities in thirty-five minutes. Of course the "new" activity might just be a slight variation. You can throw in a twist on your song, or start making mistakes in a poem, but you have to plan ahead to keep them where you want them.

Grade One

Patty: First graders still crave structure and routine, but also like more surprises within that routine. Using chairs to help define each child's space is more helpful by this age. A system for turn taking is also still important. My first grade students enjoy creating and playing games that reinforce whatever language elements we are working on. Games that involve closing eyes and hiding objects are especially successful. I generally have one bulletin board dedicated to whatever the first grade students are learning about and they love seeing mysterious changes on the board and trying to figure out what caused them (e.g., what animal broke the branch off our apple tree?). They enjoy songs with big motions and the opportunity to add a silly twist to a song or game. Pretending is still very well received as well.

Hildegard: They need to feel successful. They like to take things home, tell endlessly about themselves, move, make things (crafts), draw, and label. They are interested in almost everything, holiday celebrations, fairy tales, themselves. Play, play, play! It is a good age to introduce and practice partner work and cooperative learning. Have a take-home folder for the parents to see.

Jessica: Our first graders have enjoyed cultural activities that they can participate in physically, such as a summer festival dance, tea ceremony, or pretend "flower viewing" picnic. As fifth graders, they often remember these early cultural experiences.

Joel: They are learning to read and write and love it when they can do those things in the target language. I take advantage of that every time that I can. They love to be read to and are amazed that they can read some things in the target language. Don't forget the short attention span. You will still need to plan a lot of activities for a thirty- to thirty-five-minute class.

Grade Two

Jessica: The energy of second graders must be cherished! They are the most willing to participate in story-form pretending, physical acting out of adventures, and even repetitive dialogues. As with each grade, though, units must be meaningful and have a driving purpose. Since second graders get so excited, it is helpful to have a "cool-down" song or chant that leaves them quiet at the end of class.

Joel: Every day they remind me that they may be bigger than the kindergartners, but developmentally they have a lot in common. They can do a lot in the target language, but watch out for expecting too much. They still aren't to the point where they can deal in abstracts. They also have difficulties with too many instructions at once. Don't forget to break complicated instructions down into easy chunks.

Patty: Second graders enjoy silly, surprise endings and having the opportunity to pretend that they are in a variety of situations. They also like to get specific when learning about various animals and enjoy a scientific twist to a lesson whenever possible.

Intermediate Students (Ages Eight to Ten): Grades Three, Four, and Five

Children at this age are at a maximum of openness to people and situations different from their own experience. For these students, a global emphasis is extremely important, because it gives them an opportunity to work with information about countries in all parts of the world. As intermediates develop the cognitive characteristics of the concrete operations level, they begin to understand cause and effect. Students in intermediate grades can work well in groups. They can begin a more systematic approach to language learning, but they continue to need firsthand, concrete experiences as a starting point and to benefit from learning that is embedded in context. The phenomenon of "boy germs" and "girl germs" begins to develop during these years, and children may resist partner situations with children of the opposite sex. They continue to benefit from experiences with imagination and fantasy, emphasis on binary opposites, and strong emotional connection to what is learned, as well as story form with distinctive beginning, middle, and end. In addition, they will benefit from themes based on real-life heroes and heroines who display transcendent qualities in overcoming the challenges of life.

Jessica points out that learners in these grades are bringing together much of the vocabulary and functional chunks learned in earlier years and can apply them in more complex situations. In assessment they should be given meaningful contexts in which to use the language they already know and to create new language, such as when designing commercials or skits, responding to picture prompts, or writing letters to pen pals. Students can work readily with rubrics and they usually enjoy peer editing and scoring activities. Teachers can balance their picture of students' language progress through keeping a record of mini-assessments that check for understanding during a unit, along with larger, rubric-scored assessments at the end of the unit.

Grade Three

Patty: My third grade students enjoy legends, geographic facts and details, drama, and dressing up. By this age they appreciate the addition of gross details from time to time (as with the hole in the skull of St. Aubert in the legend of Mont St. Michel). They still need structured dialogues and writing tasks (like postcards) but crave an increased amount of choice within that structure. Math tasks incorporated into our lessons are also well received at this age. For example, during our study of the Loire Valley, the students prepare floor plans on graph paper of a dream château. We then spend some time finding and comparing the area and perimeter of each student's château and the various rooms.

Joel: Most of the kids can read and write in their first language. Working on the same skills in the target language is a lot easier at this point as well. They love fairy tales and I have yet to meet the third grader who doesn't enjoy trying to make up their own in the target language. They are also at a point where they can help with younger kids because they have such strong language skills. I like to combine classes and have the third graders read to the kindergartners.

Jessica: Our third graders always seem more settled down and academic than the previous year. They enjoy more complicated story-based themes, but still love pretending. They can also handle more independent activities, such as making charts and illustrative pictures for presentations, surveying others, and working in pairs or groups.

Grade Four

Joel: You have a new kind of learner in fourth grade. They are getting into a new developmental level. Abstract thought is coming into play. So are hormones and a new kind of peer pressure. In many schools there is pressure to start "dating." Try to push yourself to see what the kids are really capable of. They will surprise you.

Patty: My fourth graders enjoy a bit more friendly competition within games than my younger students do. They are fascinated with history, facts, and legends. They are more eager to do written tasks and actually appreciate the responsibility of a little homework as long as it is a clear part of the routine (I give homework every Wednesday that is due every Friday. The parents and homeroom teachers are aware of this from the beginning of the year). Students this age seem to enjoy putting themselves in other people's shoes, so we create imaginary families as we visit French-speaking countries across the world. In this way they choose a new name and must share their likes and dislikes based upon research they have done about the country in which they now "live." We do more activities in the computer lab at this stage. We don't do free Internet searches (not allowed in most elementary schools), but with bookmarked sites the students can do guided research as we explore various topics.

Jessica: Students in this grade seem to be more metacognitive about their language learning. They ask questions about "why" the language is used in certain ways and they see patterns and differences. I begin doing some direct strategy instruction in this grade to help them see how to extend their conversations and really respond to other speakers, as well as how to find meaning in context (while both reading and listening).

Grade Five

Jessica: Fifth grade is a challenge! The "newness" of learning another language has worn off long ago, and the language students can use is becoming more difficult. Some students may have decided that they don't like learning the language. The key is to provide experiences that re-ignite students' interest in the language and culture while building on their language ability. They enjoy dialogues that they can manipulate to be funny and interesting, assignments with choices (a song, a drawing, a written piece, etc.), and learning about teens in the target culture. Some recent student interviews showed that they are most interested in being able to choose their own groups and partners at this age and throughout middle school.

Hildegard: They like to sit in their chairs (surprise!), memorize lists and poems and plays, write extensively, create books and projects, and perform. They like to work seriously and be seen as "adults." They are interested in German peers and their social life; they like to display posters with writing and art. Students had German pen pals, and many kept them till graduation.

Vicki: Fifth graders are often the oldest students in an elementary building. They are eager to serve as school and classroom leaders so it makes sense to involve them in leadership roles where they can show off their skills in the target language. My fifth graders enjoy using fun props to report the weather and give the lunch menu in Spanish for the school's daily newscast. Teachers and administrators appreciated fifth grade students using their language skills to promote special emphases during the school year. For D.E.A.R. Day (Drop Everything And Read), my students read books from the school media center in Spanish or about Spanish language cultures, and then wrote and shared mini book reviews for broadcast on the TV news. A good way to wrap up the school year is to have fifth graders write letters to tell incoming students what to expect in Spanish class. The next year's crop of new students loved receiving the letters, and writing them gave my fifth graders a chance to reflect on their journey as language students. Provide fifth grade students a chance to shine beyond the school day by performing songs or skits for PTA meetings or International Night and entering foreign language association spoken language and poster contests. Making your oldest elementary age students and their language skills visible will result in leadership opportunities for students as well as a valuable advocacy tool for your program.

In the classroom set routines and procedures that will allow students to assert their growing sense of independence constructively. For example, early on in the school year have students

practice moving into groups quickly and efficiently by saying something as simple as "You have one minute to form groups of two, three, five, etc. " Keep in mind that older students may have extended seat time in their other classes so build in opportunities for students to move in every lesson. Fifth grade students are school savvy enough to consciously begin to develop a sense of how they learn. Create self-assessment checklists and offer students choices between various products for assessments. Children at this age are developing literacy skills in the target language as they fine-tune the skills in their first language, and they are quite empathetic and social. Consequently, it is a good time to introduce penpals/e-pals or just exchange hand written and personally illustrated postcards between "secret classmates" in the same building. Be sure to recycle vocabulary and structures from prior grades, but not activities, unless the activities can be made more challenging, meaningful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate for this age. Above all, keep in mind that fifth graders may be the "seniors" in the building, but they want to have fun as they learn.

Early Adolescent Students (Ages Eleven to Fourteen): Grades Six, Seven, and Eight

During the middle school and junior high school years, students are undergoing more dramatic developmental changes than experienced at any other time in life, and on widely differing timetables. The early adolescent must learn to deal with a variety of experiences: emerging sexuality in a changing and often unpredictable body; reaching a cognitive plateau for a time, and then finding new, adult intellectual tools; multiplying and rapidly shifting interests; a fluid and flexible self-concept; a need to rework interpersonal relationships with adults; turbulent emotions; extreme idealism; a need to assert independence; and a powerful peer group. A major goal of all schooling for children of this age is the encouragement of positive relationships and positive self-image. Middle school learners need the opportunity for broad exploration, as well as an introduction to the demands of academic disciplines.

Because exploring the limits of the real world is very important at this age, students will respond well to opportunities to learn in exhaustive detail about subjects that interest them. Heroic figures with qualities that transcend threats are especially good choices for emphasis, and middle-school-aged children need learning experiences with a strong affective component. Students show high interest in the unusual and the extremes in the real world.

Myriam describes the middle school age in loving terms:

> They have not yet become disaffected with school; they wear their hearts on their sleeves as long as it doesn't show too much; they are winnable if what you want from them doesn't interfere with their friendships or humiliate them in any way. They want to succeed in school, they enjoy mastery ("hey, we really learned a lot today"), and they'll do just about anything so long as the expectations are clear and within the range of their abilities. I love their complexity and their struggles. I dislike their pettiness (squabbles over what seem to adults to be silly issues), their defensiveness ("She started it!"), and their occasional thoughtless cruelty to each other (especially among seventh grade girls). I find that the hardest thing to keep in mind is that they are children. As their teacher, I can become so identified with them that I forget that they are still at the beginning of their lives as learners and developing human beings.

> Content-based units with a definite culminating product work very well with all these groups. In every case, students must have something to show at the end of their unit of study: a book, a skit, a video presentation, a poster, or a mural.

Grade Six

Alan: What motivates a sixth grader? Extremes, things that are really outrageous or gross. Hearing stories about real life and real problems. Personal tales of challenge and triumph, especially from

the teacher's own life. The safety of working and presenting with others. Integrating elements from television, pop culture, and general teen *angst* into the curriculum in some way. Don't assume they are adults when giving directions and tasks, but remember they love to be treated as if they are grown up. They need and want someone to lead, to look up to, even if they don't act that way at times. They love challenges, to beat a certain score, time, or amount of something—make this attainable and you'll get more out of them. Pets, music, and team sports are good topics from which to draw activity ideas, especially helpful when trying to connect with students who are frequently disengaged.

Give them opportunities to assess their own learning. Have them grade their own rubric before finishing a project or task, then verify. This will yield valuable information on the students' perceptions of themselves and the clarity with which you communicated expectations.

Provide them structure—they need it. Partner tasks work well. We often assume they can do more than they are able to, and we tend to get frustrated when they don't understand things in which we should provide them more guidance. Yet within this structure, they have the freedom to create, to share their funny, creative, outrageous, and unpredictable side. They'll typically share experiences of a painful injury, a "disgusting" thing they did, or sometimes will show a part of themselves which reveals wisdom and reflection beyond their years. These unpredictable behaviors, their ups and downs of every day living, and their outward expression of these feelings makes teaching young people of this age eternally fresh and interesting.

Hal: Sixth graders want to know the "weirdities" in their own culture, as well as in others. They love to compare and contrast. Venn diagrams work extremely well, and prove to be beneficial at proving similarities. They love to research other cultures and find the "strange" points of interest. They also like to determine what would be "strange" to others about American cultures.

They like partner work, but still want to work with same-sex groups. They don't seem to mind when partners switch every two to three minutes, such as with interviews, however. Activities are always timed. When I give them less time than I think they will need to complete an activity, it becomes more of a challenge for them and it keeps them on task. If they're working and on task, I extend their time.

The teacher is a "monitor." The students must be given information to use. Once they have enough, they need the opportunity to be creative with it and explore their world. They don't want "peer" teachers—teachers who act like they do. They do want teachers who can relate to them and understand their vocabulary and interests. The adult role is extremely important.

Learners at this age level love to create new things and show them off. They especially like making menus and doing projects that can be displayed. They love supplemental language that doesn't appear in books and that "only they" know.

Vicki: Sixth graders are willing to take chances and try out new language and cultural experiences, but at the same time they need the security of regular classroom routines and well-established procedures. They can be very empathetic toward others, which makes them willing to accept and appreciate cultural differences. They are very social, so I provide frequent and meaningful partner and small group activities. They like games, not so much for the competition as for the opportunity to try out the language while they play. Sixth graders are eager to participate when tasks are based on real-life situations, such as expressing and supporting their personal opinions in creating a "Best and Worst of" brochure to introduce visitors to business in their community.

Grade Seven

Hal: They are interested in what kids their own ages are doing in the target culture, and the vocabulary they use in everyday speech. They're more willing to work in mixed partner activities, depending on the time of year.

This age student is a bit more self-absorbed than sixth grade students. As with sixth graders, however, all language learning must have a purpose. These students aren't concerned with register, the grammar, or whether or not the language is totally correct. Their concern is using the language and having others use it with them in return.

Myriam: The common assumption is that seventh graders are ready to look at language as a system, but this is the case for only a very few. I try to teach the language before I get students to analyze it, and I make grammar fun with all sorts of approaches, balls thrown in the air, magical sentences, etc. But in the end, I have concluded—teach grammar if you must, but don't expect it to stick!

Kate: Seventh graders are both playful and intellectual. They need to be motivated by doing something that has meaning for them. They appreciate routine and clear guidelines, e.g., where the homework is every day. They need to have the teacher say things over and over again. When you have 20+ kids, they're not all hearing you at the same time. They really do like to learn, even though they put on this persona that maybe it's not cool, or pretend they're not smart.

Grade Eight

Hal: The "real" world starts rearing its head in the eighth grade. As with seventh grade, these students like to use the language in realistic situations, such as giving and taking direction, asking and denying information. This age still likes to explore, but a little more outside their "safe" world. This is where technology makes teaching profitable. They're curious about what they don't understand, but are hesitant (at times) to pursue it without guidance. An abundance of vocabulary, especially slang, is a must. Most cultures are interested in music, and modern music plays a vital role at this age level.

This age student wants more direct answers. They also want to learn things and share with their peers in an "informal" setting. Partner work is much easier at this age level (in comparison to sixth grade). Activities must change about every twenty minutes, depending on interest level.

Hildegard: They need to feel grown up and almost equal to the teacher, respected—their opinion has to count. They like to do their own things their own way. They become self-motivated (some). They are interested in justice, global awareness, world peace, religion(s), and they are out to better the world. The teacher needs to tell students what needs to be done, give them strategies to accomplish the task, and then give them time to do it independently. Give clear descriptors of expectations and grading procedures; rubrics worked best for me. Unfortunately, many students come to our classes with loads of problems, so be gentle with their feelings.

Myriam: My eighth graders keep journals. They must write 12 sentences in French every week. I respond to their entries, commenting and keeping a conversation going. I also point out simple errors and I may include information that is not in the curriculum but which can be useful to the writer. I do not correct all grammatical errors since this journal writing is about self-expression and experimenting with language and not about being grammatically correct. Some students like to share their journals with friends or with the whole class, and some want to write continuing stories. These are collected and become class books that everyone can read.

Kate: Eighth graders are more receptive and more socially aware. They are finding out about themselves; they can be reflective and see their own growth. When even one or two have political or social savvy, they can lead the class into a great place—sharing opinions, asking questions. Like seventh graders, they are very curious and very vulnerable, despite the façade.

Summary

- Second-language acquisition theory, sociocultural theory, learning styles, multiple intelligences, brain research, cognitive psychology, and information about cognitive and educational development all contribute to a greater understanding of languages and learners.

- Information in these areas is always evolving and is subject to new questions and interpretations as our understanding of human development and the mind continues to change and grow.

For Practice and Further Learning

1. Choose a topic or a lesson (such as animals, foods, geography) that could be of interest to children at several age levels and explain how you would approach it differently at each of three different levels:

   a. kindergarten
   b. grade three
   c. grade six or grade seven

   Next, explain the type of assistance you would provide and how it would differ across the three levels of instruction.

2. First, think of the types of meditational tools that are used during language instruction (social, material, and symbolic, e.g., use of teacher language). After identifying a few of these tools, explain why some tools may work better toward supporting learning and development and why others may not. Second, think of time when, as a teacher, you used one tool to assist learning only to discover that the tool was not the most appropriate for the job. What happened? Did you change the tool and, if so, how? What was the result?

3. Explain your understanding of the difference between scaffolding and mediation.

4. Teaching is interactive work requiring responsive assistance from the teacher. What does this statement mean to you?

5. The term "concept" is used so frequently in education that we often fail to examine the meaning of conceptual development (versus simply learning a fact or being able to complete a task). In your view, how do you understand the concept of "concept"? Can you think of a situation that exemplifies learning to perform a task versus developing a concept? Are learning to perform particular tasks and developing conceptual understanding mutually exclusive? Finally, do you think this is an important distinction to make? Why or why not?

6. Imagine a teacher has just been introduced to the concept of learning styles and multiple intelligences. This teacher has decided that, from now on, she would prepare activities that each child would be required to complete using a particular style and mode of learning. What might you say to this teacher?

7. Think of a routine instructional practice that is not supported by discoveries from brain-based research. Next, prepare an activity that reflects what we know from brain-based research. Explain how the activity supports how our brains process information, how learning would be facilitated, and how it differs from the routine instructional practice you identified in the first part of this task.

For Further Reading

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Stages of Healthy Adolescent Development
http://*www.icyd.org/YD_toolbox/files/Adolescent_development_chart.pdf*
Iowa collaboration for youth development

2 Planning for Curriculum, Unit, and Lesson Design

How does my planning of learning experiences prepare for student learning?

Establishing Overarching Proficiency Targets

- I can establish learning and proficiency targets for each level that I am teaching.

Process of Planning for Curriculum Development from National Standards to Individual Lessons and Activities

- I can follow a process for developing a curriculum that starts with standards and ends at the individual activity level.

Designing Instructional Pathways That Will Lead Students to Reach the Proficiency Targets: Thematic Planning and Assessments

- I can plan a thematic unit that integrates language, culture, and content.

Designing Instructional Pathways That Will Lead Students to Reach the Proficiency Targets: Lesson Planning

- I can plan daily lessons that meet the diverse needs of students and incorporate performance targets and formative assessments.

Establishing Overarching Performance Targets

According to Greg Duncan, national world language consultant (2013), the most effective language programs focus on three processes:

1. Establishing overarching proficiency targets (in all four skills) for each year of instruction.
2. Designing instructional pathways that will lead students to reach the proficiency targets.
3. Assessing both internally and externally to determine if the targets are being achieved.

These three processes are the basis for the organization of this chapter and are reflected in the curriculum graphic in Figure 2.1. Assessment is addressed in great detail in Chapter 9.

As we approach the task of planning for language programs that provide students with the experiences they need to be fully functioning global citizens, it is important to take into account the entire process from beginning to end. Each day's lesson fits into a larger framework of planning that encompasses long-range learning goals; unified, sequenced learning targets; and a formative and summative assessment process that makes sure that the targets have been achieved. The curriculum development process starts with standards and communicative principles that mandate experiences for students that enable them to function effectively in a variety of situations and modes of communication. This goal of the Standards is expressed in the introduction to the Standards document as enabling our students to "know how, when, and why to say what to whom" (ACTFL 2006, 11).
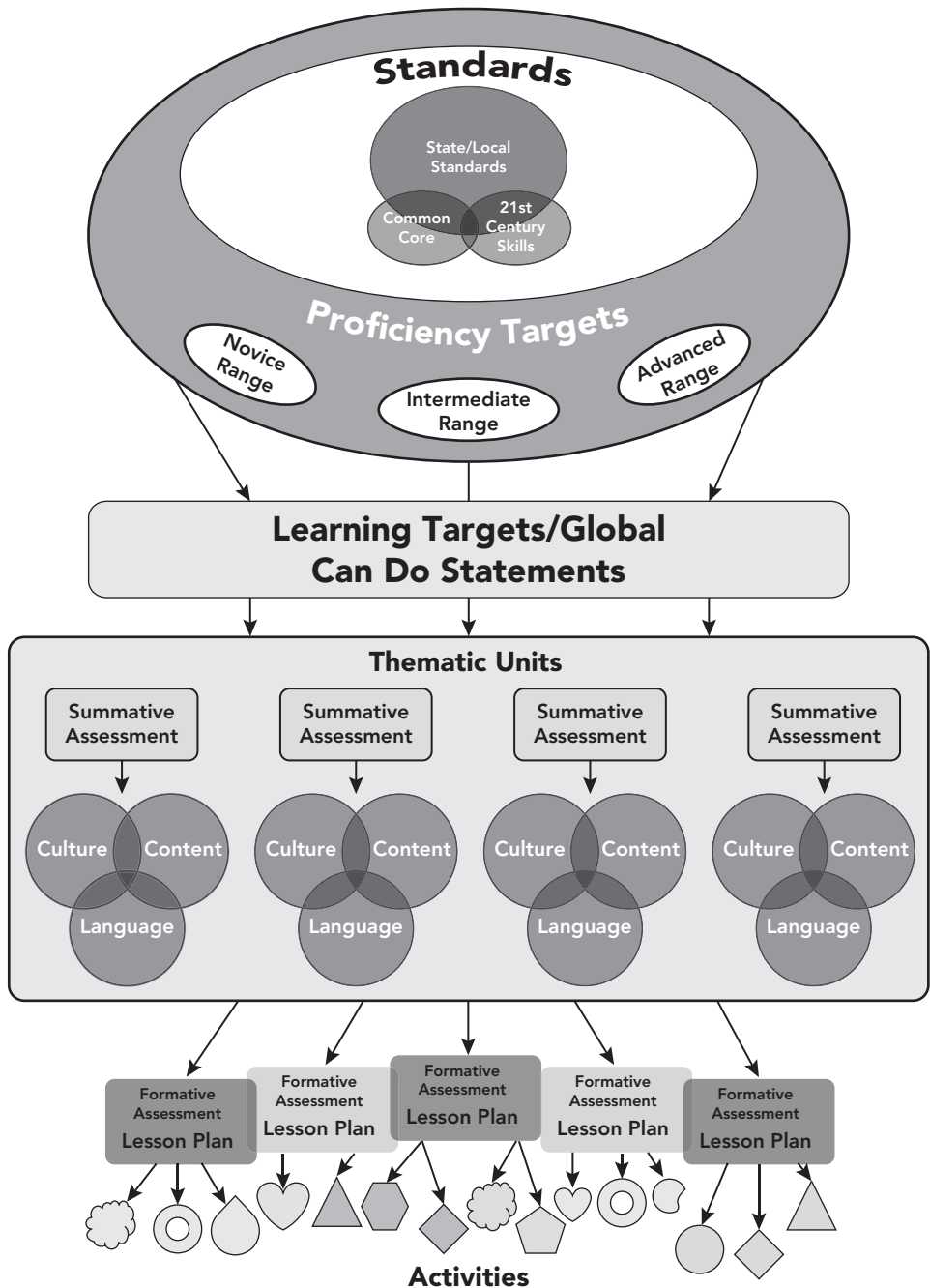
The process continues by setting proficiency targets for each level in the program and by attaching global benchmarks in the form of Can-do statements to each of those levels. The benchmarks will be correlated to the amount of instructional time that is available for each program. Once the proficiency targets and benchmarks have been established, instructional units and lessons must be found or created to help students achieve the targets. Formative and summative assessments are an integral part of each lesson and unit, and external assessments that serve as validation of internal teacher-developed assessments are an important part of making sure that the curriculum helps students meet the targets that have been set.

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the components that must be included in the planning process and the various steps that are needed from beginning to end in order to move from standards to daily lesson plans and activities. **The figure shows the process that takes place at each level of the program.** What follows is a brief explanation of this process.

We must always remember that the characteristics of the learner guide and constrain all curriculum decisions. All elements of curriculum planning and evaluation must take into account the developmental level and individual differences among learners. Previous language learning and the experiential background of the learners also has significant influence in curriculum planning. The urban student who encounters public transportation, museums, and street vendors on a daily basis will likely be motivated by somewhat different themes and activities from those that are successful with rural students, whose world is very different.

Teacher characteristics are also significant factors in curriculum planning. The teacher's language skills and experiences with the target culture will influence all aspects of instruction. The classroom should be a comfortable place for the teacher, as well as for the student. Teachers are most effective if they teach according to their strengths and interests. The teacher who has spent several years in Quebec, for example, and who loves French-Canadian music and history, will probably—and appropriately—design a curriculum that reflects those interests. The teacher who loves to sing will infuse the curriculum with music.

Figure 2.1　Curriculum Development Process

Standards

State/Local Standards

Common Core

21st Century Skills

Proficiency Targets

Novice Range

Intermediate Range

Advanced Range

Learning Targets/Global Can Do Statements

Thematic Units

Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment

Culture　Content

Language

Culture　Content

Language

Culture　Content

Language

Culture　Content

Language

Formative Assessment **Lesson Plan**

Formative Assessment **Lesson Plan**

Formative Assessment **Lesson Plan**

Formative Assessment **Lesson Plan**

Formative Assessment **Lesson Plan**

Activities

Process of Planning for Curriculum Development from National Standards to Individual Lessons and Activities

World Readiness Standards for Learning Language

The national standards set the overarching direction for language learning within the United States context and contain broad statements that identify the knowledge and skills that students should acquire. The five goal areas embed eleven standards that guide the conceptualization and design of learning experiences. These goals and standards should form the backbone of all planning that is done by foreign language professionals. (See Chapter 3 Figure 3.1.) These standards require a system of supports, which include information about the language skills and the knowledge that students will acquire and information about how those skills will be assessed.

In addition to the national foreign language standards, two other important projects have numerous points of intersection with the standards. They are the Common Core State Standards and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.

Common Core State Standards and 21st Century Skills

The Common Core State Standards for language arts and mathematics are designed to establish a unified direction for learning for all American students. The goal is that all American students will be on par with their international counterparts. The Common Core State Standards demand that students have engaging, meaningful, and challenging learning experiences, something that is equally important for language learning. Even students in the Novice proficiency range will benefit from challenging learning experiences that require high order thinking skills.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has defined the skills and dispositions that American students need to possess for productive living in the 21st century. These skills serve as an overarching context for the development of learning experiences in all disciplines. They derive from the notion that it is difficult to imagine what students will need to know, and that we must therefore equip them with the skills and dispositions needed to manage new content. Language teachers should be aware of how these initiatives interface with national standards (available at http://www.actfl.org) and how the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards align with 21st century skills (available at http://www.p21.org).

Proficiency Targets

The next section of the top level of the planning graphic refers to Proficiency Targets. Extensive descriptions of proficiency levels are found in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (http://www .actfl.org). The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* describe broad, general language proficiency without regard to the setting in which the language is acquired.

Further helpful information can be found in the *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (available at http://www.actfl.org). The Performance Descriptors are specifically designed to describe language performance for learners in a K-16 school setting. See Chapter 3 for a general discussion of language proficiency.

It is important to establish proficiency targets for each level of the program and to communicate and explain the targets to all stakeholders. Setting proficiency and global can-do benchmarks implies that teachers plan courses, units, and lessons that provide instructional

experiences that aim to reach those targets. Setting such targets also implies that assessment is aligned with learning targets so that there is a focus on what students can actively *do* with the language and not simply on the grammar and vocabulary that they *know.* In this process teachers provide descriptive feedback to students and assume the role of coach as they involve students in determining how they can improve and reach higher levels of proficiency.

See Figure 2.2 for the proficiency targets set by the Catalina Foothills School District in Tuscon, AZ. Figure 2.2 shows the expectations of this organization for the performance that will be expected from students at each level. This chart make it clear to the teachers that they must organize their instruction to provide the type of proficiency-based learning experiences that will help students reach the designated language proficiency level.

Student Learning Targets and Global Can-Do Statements

It is important to note that there are many labels that are used to signify what we want students to be able to do as a result of learning experiences. Some of these labels are called: goals, objectives, outcome statements, benchmarks, learning indictors, progress indicators, and so on. In this book, we tend to focus on learning targets and Can-Do statements but also use some of the other terms. When developing curriculum it is important to indicate the hierarchy level of whatever term is being used. Some will be global statements and some will be more specific unit and lesson–based statements, sometimes referred to as "unpacked" statements.

The next level of the graphic is meant to show the global student learning benchmarks that are to be achieved by the end of the designated level. Once the general proficiency targets for the level have been established, the NCSSFL-ACTFL Global Can-Do Benchmarks can function as an effective source for learning targets (http://www.actfl.org). There is an online interactive version of the Can-Do Benchmarks and also a downloadable version. Especially helpful in the PDF document found on pages 4 and 5 is the chart containing a complete overview of the proficiency levels and modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) with descriptors for each level and mode from Novice to Distinguished.

The NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements were designed as self-assessment checklists to be used by language learners to assess what they "can do" with language in the Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes of communication. The Can-Do Statements can serve two functions, one for programs and the other for student self-assessment. For programs, they provide learning targets for curriculum and unit design and can serve as progress indicators. For student self-assessment the Can-Do statements help students to chart their progress through incremental steps. A sample of the Novice High Can-Do statements for interpersonal communication and presentational speaking are found in Figure 2.3.

For program use, the NCSSFL-ACTFL Global Can-Do Benchmarks are a powerful resource for identifying appropriate Can-Do learning targets but they are not intended to be all-encompassing. They function well as a guide and as a starting point for establishing learning targets. Some are more specific than others. Most of the global Can-Do targets can be broken down and "unpacked" at the unit level, and then unpacked again at the lesson level. For example: in the list below "I can describe the weather in each season." might be a unit Can-Do statement, and the statements below it are unpacked statements that would function at the lesson level.

Figure 2.2   **Proficiency Targets Catalina Foothills School District, Tucson, Arizona**

World Languages Program Articulation Chart													
Elementary School						Middle School			High School				Targets
									Grade 9 HS1 Novice High	Grade 10 HS2 Inter. Low to Inter. Mid	Grade 11 HS3 Inter. Mid	Grade 12 HS4 Inter. Mid to Inter. High	Inter. Mid to Inter. High
						Grade 6 MS1-A Novice High	Grade 7 MS1-B Inter. Low	Grade 8 MS2-A Inter. Mid	Grade 9 HS2 Inter. Mid	Grade 10 HS3 Inter. Mid	Grade 11 HS4 Inter. Mid to Inter. High	Grade 12 HS5 Inter. High to Adv. Low	Inter. High/ Adv. Low
Kinder. EK Novice Low	Grade 1 E1 Novice Mid	Grade 2 E2 Novice Mid	Grade 3 E3 Novice High	Grade 4 E4 Novice High	Grade 5 E5 Novice High	Grade 6 MS1-B Inter. Low	Grade 7 MS2-A Inter. Mid	Grade 8 MS2-B Inter. Mid	Grade 9 HS 3 Inter. Mid to Inter. High	Grade 10 HS4 Inter. Mid to Inter. High	Grade 11 HS5 Inter. High to Adv. Low	Grade 12 HS6 Adv. Low to Adv. Mid	Adv. Low to Adv. Mid
3–4 × per week. Total: 120 minutes, 2 hrs. per week 72 hours per year*						5 × per wk. Total: 270 minutes, 4.5 hrs. per week 162 hours per year*			5 × per week. Total: 207 minutes, 3.45 hrs. per week 124.2 hours per year*				

*based on 36 weeks per year.

The articulation chart for World Languages is intended to provide guidance on the typical pathways (1, 2, 3) for students. At some grades/levels there is a range of proficiency due to length of study and communicative ability in the language. Although proficiency targets may be the same at some grades/levels, there are increased curriculum expectations from year to year.

Figure 2.3 **Excerpt from NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements**

Interpersonal Communication

NOVICE HIGH

I can communicate and exchange information about familiar topics using phrases and simple sentences, sometimes supported by memorized language. I can usually handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering simple questions.

I can exchange some personal information.

☐ I can ask and say a home address and e-mail address.

☐ I can ask and say someone's nationality.

☐ I can ask and talk about family members and their characteristics.

☐ I can ask and talk about friends, classmates, teachers, or co-workers.

☐ I can _____

I can ask for and give simple directions.

☐ I can ask for directions to a place.

☐ I can tell someone how to get from one place to another, such as go straight, turn left, or turn right.

☐ I can tell someone where something is located, such as next to, across from, or in the middle of.

☐ I can _____

Presentational Speaking

NOVICE HIGH

I can present basic information on familiar topics using language I have practiced using phrases and simple sentences.

I can tell about a familiar experience or event using phrases and simple sentences.

☐ I can tell what I do in class or at work.

☐ I can tell about what I do during the weekend.

☐ I can tell about what happens after school or work.

☐ I can _____

I can give basic instructions on how to make or do something using phrases and simple sentences.

☐ I can tell how to prepare something simple to eat.

☐ I can describe a simple routine, like getting lunch in the cafeteria.

☐ I can give simple directions to a nearby location or to an online resource.

☐ I can _____

I can describe the weather in each season.

- I can name the different seasons.
- I can describe today's weather.
- I can describe weather in spring.
- I can describe weather in fall.
- I can describe weather in winter.
- I can describe weather in summer.
- I can tell what weather I like.
- I can tell what weather I don't like.

Chappuis, Chappuis, and Stiggins (2009) outline four types of learning targets.

Knowledge Targets—facts and concepts we want students to know

Reasoning Targets—require students to use their knowledge to reason and problem solve

>Performance Skill Targets—ask students to use knowledge to perform and demonstrate a specific skill
>
>Product Targets—specify that the students will create something

Performance skill targets are the ones most often used in the language classroom. The question we need to ask when establishing learning targets and Can-Do statments is what do we want the students to be able to do? Learning targets should have clear and achievable goals, be task specific, and be in student friendly language. Once learning targets have been established, teachers can provide individual and class feedback so that students know if they are progressing toward their goals. Figure 2.4 shows an example of a learning target document for a thematic unit from the early language learning programs in Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish in the Shelby County (Memphis, TN) schools.

Designing Instructional Pathways That Will Lead Students to Reach the Proficiency Targets: Creating Units of Instruction with Thematic Planning and Assessments

In the curriculum development graphic in Figure 2.1, the next part of the process focuses on thematic units, lessons, and activities. Once the overarching proficiency targets and the global Can-Do learning targets have been established, the next step is to divide up the global learning targets among various units of instruction and then to create units of instruction with accompanying assessments, lessons, and activities that will enable students to reach the targets that have been set. Summative assessment of learning takes place with interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational assessments in each unit. **Formative assessment is embedded at the lesson plan level**.

It is important that students build knowledge through content-rich activities that go beyond the vocabulary and functions of the language itself. One way to ensure that activities are content-rich is to organize instruction around thematic units. The remainder of this chapter addresses thematic planning and lesson planning in detail.

Since our standards orientation calls for integrated learning, and for using the language to make connections to other content areas, thematic planning and instruction are important elements of an effective language program. Growing insight about brain-compatible learning supports thematic instruction, as well. As we teach new languages our focus is making meaning, rather than making accurate new sounds or grammatically correct sentences (important though these may be). Eric Jensen (2005, 96) suggests that for meaning-making to take place, we should evoke three important ingredients in our general practice: emotion, relevance, and context and patterns. A carefully designed theme can incorporate *emotion,* one of the most powerful channels for learning; *relevance,* a critical motivator for language learning; and *rich context,* an element that brings language learning to life and activates the pattern-making functions of the brain.

One of the important features of the World Readiness Standards for Learning is their emphasis on working toward a goal, and focusing on the "big picture"—or the "big idea." A German teacher who helped pilot the Standards commented that with the Standards orientation, she was planning in bigger "chunks"—essentially, developing themes that worked toward an important goal over a longer period of time. Many of the scenarios found in the Standards document are also examples of integrated thematic units.