

# One size fits all?

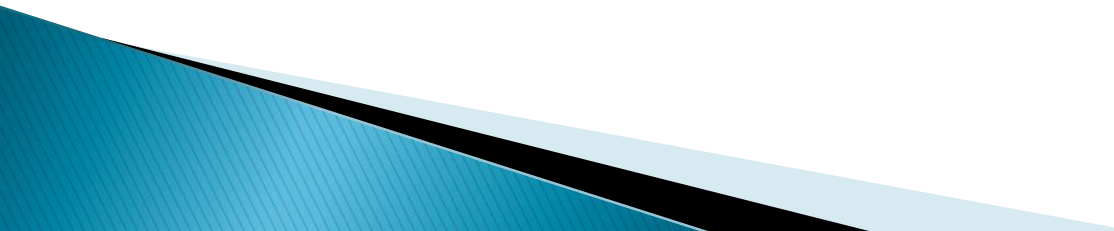
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Cambridge Assessment

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# Objective

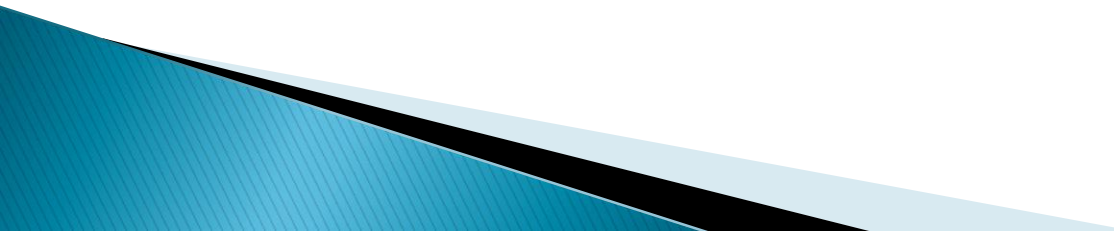
- ▶ EAL learners as they progress to further education and employment
  - ▶ Research findings
  - ▶ Explore implications for learning English
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# No handout but .....

- ▶ Email for a copy of my slides

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# Full-on English study (2005)

- ▶ Study of 14–21 year-old Birmingham students
  - ▶ All second or third generation migrants
  - ▶ Interviewed students and teachers
  - ▶ Observed lessons
  - ▶ Recorded and analysed spoken language
  - ▶ Analysed written work
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# What happens to EAL learners once they leave school?

- ▶ Despite best intentions and effort

A less than sure command of English holds many second language speakers back

Some of the learners realised

Their tutors knew it and were concerned



# FE vocational tutors

If we ask them to get information from a manual, they struggle to get it. They can't digest it.

They find it difficult to follow instructions. They can't listen and take notes at the same time, which means they cannot revise.

It really holds them back. They start with quite a disadvantage and they do learn once they go to school. The problem is that they never make up the distance.

# Tutor concerns

Learners from this group are much less likely to get work placements or training on the job.

As a result, they lack the advantages that their English-speaking peers have in the labour market

# Two definitions of language proficiency

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
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CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
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Jim Cummins 1979 onwards





# Same goal –different learning journey

- ▶ We assume the same goals for first and second language learners:
  - To use English which is appropriate for the occasion, accurately and fluently
- ▶ But their learning paths and needs are not identical
  - Evidence in the classroom
  - Research evidence

<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/about/news/2011/first-second-lang-learners.html>

# Aspects of second language acquisition



# Reading: the sub-skills approach

- ▶ The dissection of reading skills into sub-skills such as:
  - skim
  - scan
  - read for gist
  - read for meaning
- ▶ The sub-skills approach is a defining feature of standard setting and examination in England and Wales
  - eg Skills for Life, GCSE and Functional Skills


# Relevance of sub-skills for language learning?

- ▶ Skills which skilled readers deploy

Khalifa and Weir 2009

- ▶ Is this a good way to teach reading?
- ▶ Can language learners skim, scan, read for gist and meaning?
- ▶ Unskilled readers are unable to adjust processing mode, i.e. they read word-for-word, regardless of the purpose for which they read a text.

Koda (2005)




# Read for meaning, skim etc

- ▶ Learners with a lower–intermediate level of English:
  - fully occupied with decoding at word and sentence level
  - little spare working memory capacity to process meaning
- ▶ Little evidence that teaching these skills promotes effective reading development
- ▶ Strong evidence that the command of the new language is the key to reading in it

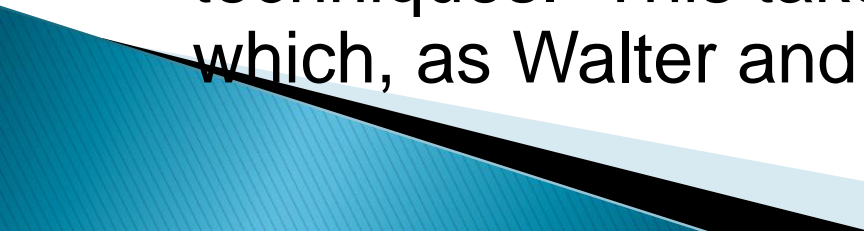
Walter and Swan (2009)



# More evidence of reading research

- ▶ Learners transfer some skills from their first language into their second: pragmatic, phonological and word-decoding knowledge Grabe (2009)
  - ▶ A well-developed knowledge of syntax, vocabulary, oral proficiency and listening comprehension in the **second** language is key to the development of reading skills in L2. Verhoeven, Geva (2006)
  - ▶ Second language proficiency must be developed before first language reading skills can be transferred. Grabe (2009)
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# Washback effect

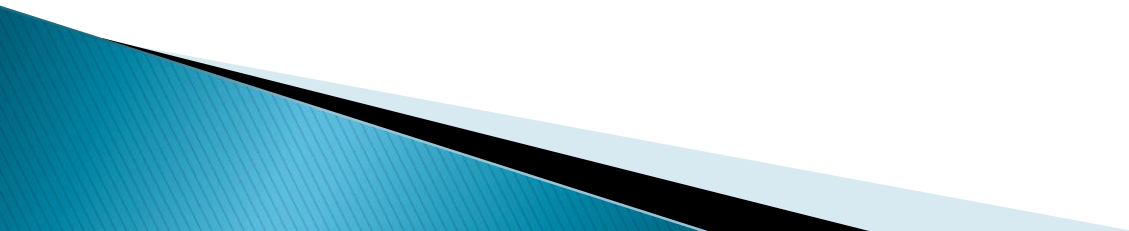
- ▶ Standards and test questions to assess the ability to skim, scan etc are not the best way of establishing how well the language learner can read
  - ▶ Significant negative washback on teaching and learning
  - ▶ Much time taken to train students in these techniques. This takes up valuable learning time which, as Walter and Swan say, is not productive.
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# What do we need?

- ▶ Appropriate attention to the development of language skills, especially with older EAL learners
  - eg explicit feedback (Ellis), helping the learners notice features of English (Schmidt), vocabulary development (Nation)
- ▶ Better alignment of research, policy and provision
  - If the Rose review can do it, why not on other aspects of language learning?
- ▶ Proper initial teacher training and CPD



# The end



## Good Reader

367 200 434 200  
makes the short wave enthusiast resort to the

267 100 200 233 166  
study of such seemingly unrelated subjects as

333 267 267 100  
geography, chronology, topography and even

267 566 200 134  
meteorology. A knowledge of these factors is

233 200 300 367 200  
decidedly helpful in logging foreign stations.

## Poor Reader

400 500 267 700 733 762 533 267 134  
makes the short wave enthusiast resort to the

400 267 433 367 667 999 600 200  
study of such seemingly unrelated subjects as

1,067 1,134 2,065 233 367  
geography, chronology, topography and even

500 6,367 134 866 166 567 367 466 233  
meteorology. A knowledge of these factors is

600 467 166 500 700 500 800  
decidedly helpful in logging foreign stations.

# Are we doing enough to promote effective language learning?

- ▶ We need to have a clear focus on learning
  - ▶ Implications for delayed development of language skills on learning academic content
  - ▶ Strategies that may work in classes with low numbers of EAL are problematic in EAL dominant classes
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