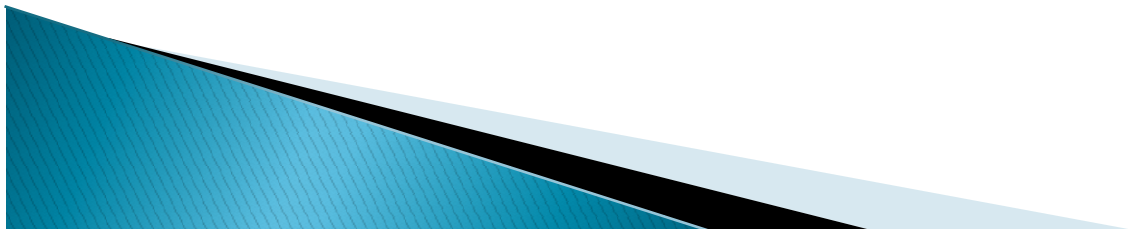


One size fits all?

Dr Philida Schellekens

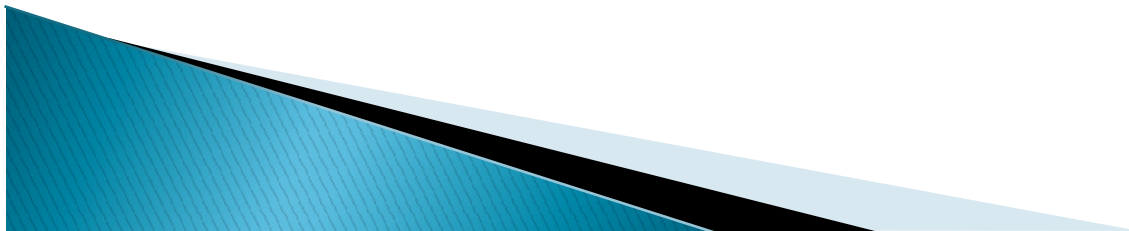
Cambridge Assessment

22 May 2012



Objective

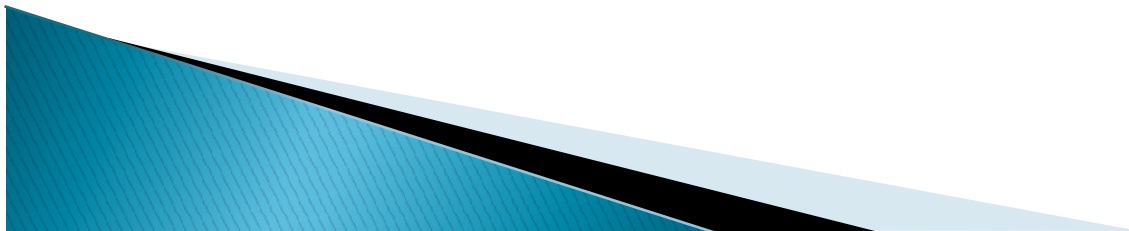
- ▶ EAL learners as they progress to further education and employment
- ▶ Research findings
- ▶ Explore implications for learning English



No handout but

- ▶ Email for a copy of my slides

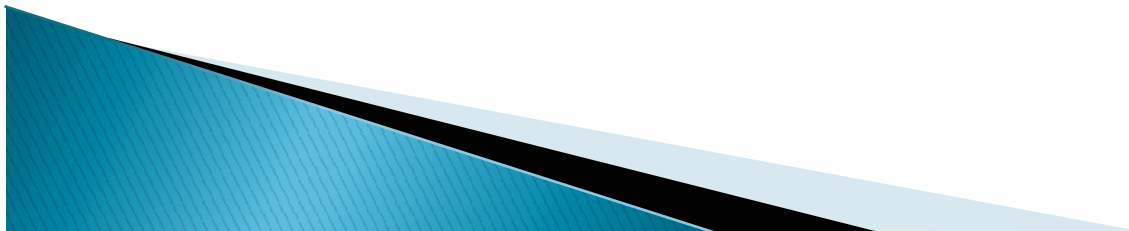
philida@schellekens.co.uk



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



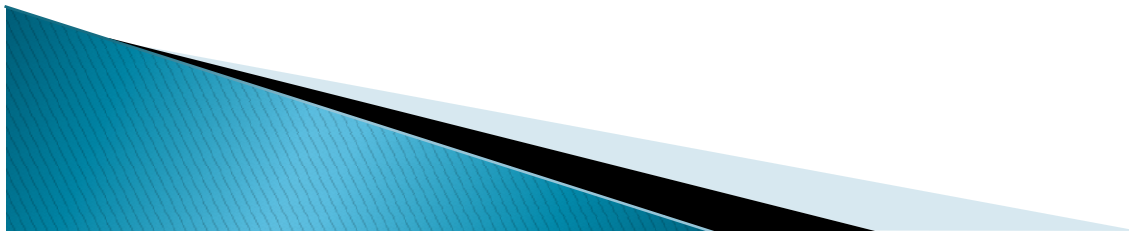
What happens to EAL learners once they leave school?

- ▶ 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

CALP

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Jim Cummins 1979 onwards



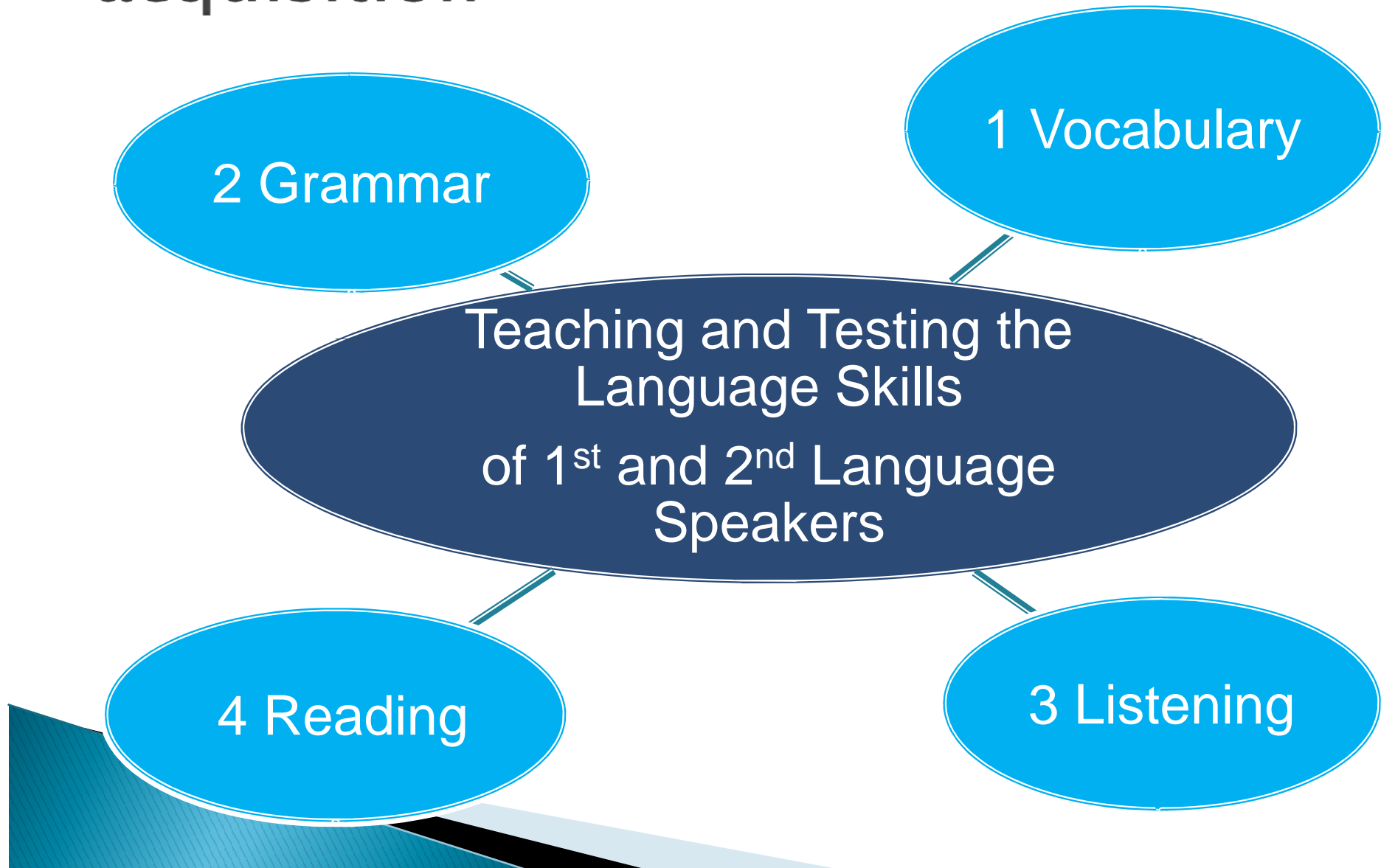
Same goal –different learning journey

- ▶ 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>

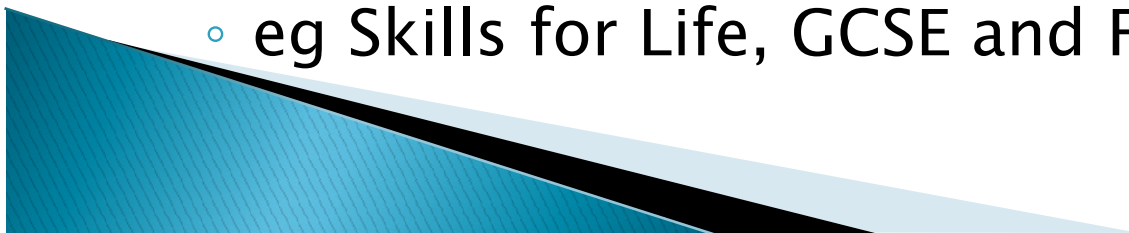


Aspects of second language acquisition



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.

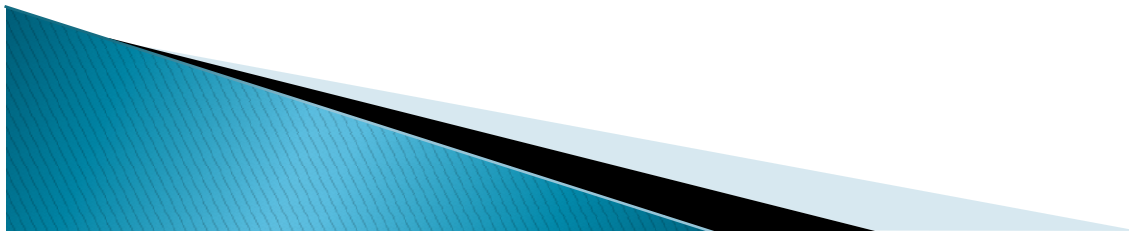
Koda (2005)



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)



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.
- 

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 reviews on other aspects of language learning?



▶ Proper initial teacher training and CPD