CHAPTER THREE

Understanding Second-Language Development

In order to use many of the methods presented in the previous and subsequent chapters, it is necessary to have some background in the nature of language acquisition. At the very least, you must have some notion about how children develop second-language abilities. In addition, you will need to have some idea about how long this process usually takes and what you can do to help facilitate language acquisition.

With English learners who are placed in your classroom for all or part of the day, your task becomes twofold: to teach the curriculum required by your school district and to provide language instruction in English. By becoming aware of the principles related to second-language development, you will be able to plan for the integration of content and language skills so that your students will learn to use English as they interact with each other and become involved in the academic experiences you structure for them.

SECOND-LANGUAGE PRINCIPLES

There are a number of principles that operate in the process of learning a second language. Many of these, such as the contextual

nature of words—how their meaning depends on the specific situation—are a part of what teachers already understand. For example, a *party* can refer to a political group organized to promote a political platform and support its candidates, not only to a festive occasion where one eats cake and ice cream. However, other principles that emphasize social and cultural factors are not so readily apparent without some review of the underlying concepts.

Language Learning and Language Acquisition

There is a difference between learning a language and acquiring one (Krashen, 1996). The latter occurs informally as children subconsciously develop language skills by listening to others and becoming aware of language in their surroundings. This "inside-out" process takes place as students participate in their environment.

Language development also occurs in formal settings, such as when people consciously develop language skills by attending school, listening to tapes, or hiring private tutors. This "outside-in" process takes place in structured situations and, as we well know, is considerably less inspiring as an environment for developing fluency.

Because the object of language is meaningful communication, the emphasis today on teaching English to speakers of other languages is to promote second-language development in settings in which students will *acquire* the target language. As such, the goal is to provide social interactions for students in which they will create meaningful communication in English as they develop academically.

As one example, you may recall situations in a strange place in which you absolutely had to communicate in order to find a bathroom or get directions back to your hotel. Under these desperate circumstances, we are often amazed at how quickly we can acquire the necessary verbal (and nonverbal) skills to get our needs met. The object of our educational efforts is to structure just such situations for students, in which they acquire English as a means for survival or in a way that is useful in accomplishing a task, rather than as another in a series of homework assignments.

Developing Vocabulary

Understanding how students *acquire* new vocabulary words may also help to explain the distinction between *acquiring* new words and *learning* them. Broadly defined, vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. Word knowledge comes in two forms, receptive and productive. *Receptive vocabulary* includes words that we recognize when we hear or see them. *Productive vocabulary* includes words that we use when we speak or write. Because many English learners may not read very much in English, they often don't have the opportunity to see and learn very many new English words. This is unfortunate, because when good readers read more, they become better readers, and learn more words.

There is considerable agreement among researchers that all students add approximately 2,000 to 3,500 distinct words to their reading vocabularies each year. Yet how is this possible, since to directly teach students even 3,000 words a year would mean teaching approximately 17 words each school day (e.g., 3,000 words divided by 180 school days)? The answer is *incidental learning*—that is, through exposure to and interaction with increasingly complex and rich oral language and by encountering lots of new words in text, either through their own reading or by being read to (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Developing understandings of word meanings is a long-term process, and involves many encounters with both spoken and written words in varying contexts. For example, when a student first encounters a new word, some information about that word is stored in memory, yet the student by no means "owns" that word. Upon seeing this word over and over—in multiple contexts—the student picks up more information about the word from its use in various settings. Over time, the student acquires many pieces of information about that word. As a result, the student gradually acquires "ownership" of the word.

Teachers who provide students with multiple instructional contexts for learning new words will best enable their students to acquire rich vocabularies. English learners need to encounter key vocabulary words (words that likely appear in many contexts) often. The words are integrated into everyday classroom experiences, and students are provided opportunities to use the words in meaningful ways relating to or applying the content (e.g., not just writing the words 10 times each).

To help students to acquire new words quickly, keep the following acronym in mind: RIM (Repetition, Integration, and Meaningful Context):

- ***R—Repetition.*** Multiple exposures to vocabulary items are crucial if we want students to eventually "own" these words. Students should be presented with words that will likely appear in many contexts.
- ***I—Integration.*** Using the words in multiple contexts is easy to accomplish. For example, use key vocabulary in your daily lessons, create word walls to reinforce these words, and encourage students to use the words in their daily conversations. By integrating the vocabulary into your classroom structures, you are allowing students to acquire new vocabulary as they naturally meet those words in the course of their daily lives as students.
- ***M—Meaningful Context.*** When vocabulary words are derived from content learning materials, the learner will be better equipped to deal with specific reading matter in content areas. Also, when English learners view acquiring new vocabulary as important to them personally, they are more likely to pick up those new words than if they are simply presented with a list of terms that they need to master.

Appropriate Level of Communication

In order to foster development of English, you as the teacher must provide communication that can be understood. This should include words that students already understand, along with new vocabulary that they will be able to figure out from the context in which it is presented. If the student is able to understand what you are trying to communicate, then you have created what Krashen (1996) refers to as *comprehensible input.* For example, a teacher addresses a child as follows: "Maria, I [points to self]—want—you [points to child]—to listen [points to ear]." When the teacher has evidence that Maria understands each of these words so far, she continues, "Please, stand up [gestures with hands and then demonstrates]." Consequently, the teacher must pay attention to (a) delivery—for example, making sure to pronounce words clearly and using real objects and gestures; (b) content—making

sure material is appropriate and familiar; and (c) environment—creating a comfortable atmosphere in which students have positive experiences that are relatively free of anxiety.

Systems of Language

When a person is learning English, he or she is learning not only the sounds of the language (phonology), how words are built (morphology), the meanings of the sounds (semantics), and the rules that govern the structure of the language (syntax), but also the particular situations in which these words would be used. The person also needs to know the social context—when and how to use it. Distinguishing when to use formal and informal expressions is as important as knowing grammatical rules and vocabulary words. For example, one would not use the expression "Wazzup?" (What's up?) in addressing a judge in a courtroom; however, it would be appropriate for saying hello to a friend passing by on a city street.

Students will acquire the language systems by listening to and observing other people, as well as by explanations. It is important to carefully plan lessons that involve students in speaking and writing activities with one another so they will have opportunities to develop purposeful expressions and increase their language ability. They will realize that there is a difference in how one responds depending on whether it is a formal or informal interaction. The language they use with you, the teacher, will be different from the language they use with peers, such as in the cafeteria or on the playground.

LANGUAGE PROCESSES

There are four areas of language proficiency. The two related to oral performance are listening and speaking, with the component parts of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. It is in these areas that students first develop mastery. There is ready stimulation and much social—not to mention survival—motivation to understand speech, to carry on a conversation, and to be able to ask questions. However, it must be noted that for most people who are learning a second language, there is a silent period that takes

place. As students become accustomed to the sounds and meanings of sounds and symbols, they will be in a receptive rather than an initiating mode of behavior. They will speak little, if at all, in the beginning. Remember, this does not mean they are not learning—they are just processing what they hear.

The two areas related to written performance include the ability to read and write. The corresponding component parts are spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. As you have no doubt noticed, these areas take longer to develop. Students who lack proficiency in these areas have trouble in classes that focus on reading, such as history and literature courses. Given that it may take students up to 15,000 hours of exposure to learn a language, teachers must be very patient.

Content-Based Approach

Current research in language development calls for simultaneous development, fostering a balanced language experience without fragmenting the systems into discrete parts. The current school of thought is to teach English using a content-based approach, that is, through subject areas rather than with a focus on grammar. This is precisely the situation faced by the regular classroom teacher. As students are involved in meaningful learning activities that stimulate them on a cognitive level, they will develop the corresponding necessary English language skills. For example, as you introduce a unit on nutrition, the students will learn the terminology and expressions associated with food and health habits that contribute to daily life.

Achieving Competence

A student first develops simple conversational skills. Freeman and Freeman (1998) describe the results of James Cummins' (1981, 1996) research in language acquisition. Conversational language, which Cummins referred to as developing basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) in a second language, often takes one to two years. These skills of social communication are related to the settings in which they occur (school, neighborhood, store). They are characterized as contextual, in that the student gains meaning from clues in the situation—objects, pictures,

gestures, and other aspects of nonverbal communication. Within two years, a student can often participate in face-to-face conversation that is concrete and cognitively undemanding.

Often, when verbal fluency is developed, people assume that the student can perform equally well in reading and writing tasks. A high school teacher explains:

> A Mexican teenager of my acquaintance moved to this country from Mexico City with his two older brothers. He attended high school for a while and then dropped out. I was surprised by his academic difficulties, given that he was verbally expressive. When I asked him why he dropped out of school, he replied matter-of-factly that it was because he couldn't read the textbooks in English.

It may take five to seven years for a student to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which requires literacy. This proficiency is characterized by the ability to understand academic language, which is often abstract, and the ability to function at an advanced cognitive level. Synthesizing information from different sources is an example of CALP.

Therefore, don't be surprised when children placed in regular classrooms are able to converse well and get along with their fellow students, but have trouble mastering the content you present and so receive failing grades on tests. Their reading and writing skills may fall well below the level required for success. They may also lack the cultural experiences needed to achieve immediate success in the classroom and on standardized tests. As teachers, we need to develop activities in which all students can participate and demonstrate achievement. This chapter presents many ideas for your consideration.

DEVELOPING PROFICIENCY

As you well know, learning varies from one individual to the next. In this section, we will look at the factors that affect how children learn during the stages of development as well as assessments used in schools.

Learning Rates

As with anything else about human behavior, there are vast individual differences in learning rates (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Of the social and cultural factors that play a part, none should be taken in isolation.

- For some children, learning English will come easily and effortlessly. It is a goal they eagerly work toward. They will have support at home from their parents.

- For others, learning English may create serious problems as they are caught between two cultures that emphasize different values. Such students may feel torn between the demands of home versus those at school.

- Many students undergo extreme socioeconomic changes when they come to North America. As people move from rural to urban areas or from middle-class to lower-class status, the families face internal adjustment even before language becomes an issue. Regardless of status, culture shock is likely to exert some influence, especially during the first year.

- Some form of racial and ethnic discrimination is a reality of life for many students acquiring English. Many people who are already citizens here feel that new immigrants threaten the economic and social stability of our country. The impact of prejudice and discrimination leads to low self-esteem in students. They feel that less is expected of them, and this is often the case. Their perceptions of themselves will affect their school performance. As teachers, we need to be sensitive to and minimize such practices.

- Age makes a difference, too. Research has substantiated a phenomenon that most people have already observed: Children of certain ages can pick up another language faster than people at other ages. In fact, some studies show that children between the ages of 8 and 12 acquire a second language faster than children between the ages of 4 and 7 and those older than 12. Thus adolescents especially may be subjected to risky situations when they are placed in the regular classroom. They are expected to do grade-level academic work and are graded accordingly when they have not achieved proficiency in English. There is also great discussion on the appropriateness of requiring English learners to take

standardized tests and high-stakes/proficiency tests when they are not fluent in English.

- Change in teaching styles. Many students come from countries that are highly teacher-centered rather than student-centered. Students used to classes of lecture, note-taking, and memorization need time to adjust to student-centered classes where they are asked to be actively involved in discussion using critical thinking skills, such as in inquiry-based learning or project-based learning.

Proficiency Levels

Language development is usually divided into several levels of increasing complexity. School districts vary in the number of levels they use to determine the proficiency of students. In one sample district (Clark County, Nevada), the following stages are delineated:

1. Preproduction Stage

At this level, very basic communication, if any, can be expected, with simple oral and written responses. Students may be hesitant to speak and tend to use a lot of nonverbal communication, such as pantomime, pointing to objects, and nodding the head to indicate "yes" or "no" in response to questions. Such individuals can show agreement or disagreement with "thumbs up" and "thumbs down" gestures. Another technique is to provide students with numbered sticks, then ask them a multiple-choice question and have them hold up the number that corresponds to their answer. Students can also draw pictures to demonstrate understanding and are comfortable matching words to pictures or objects.

At this beginning stage, teachers—and other students—need to do a lot of modeling for beginning students. Students will rely heavily on the teacher's body language, so gestures play a key role in developing understanding. It is important to use as many visual references as possible with pictures and artifacts. Providing opportunities for lessons that use art and music will be critical.

2. Early Production Stage

At the advanced beginning level, students add extended vocabulary and more complex grammar and focus on more complex reading and writing skills. Comprehension increases, and

students begin to speak. Students will be able to identify people and objects. They may understand the main idea of a presentation or a story but will not be able to understand each word or phrase. Students will be able to do short sentence-completion tasks. They will be able to repeat common expressions and begin to use common phrases on their own. There may be some mispronunciation as they begin to develop speaking skills, but there is no need to make corrections unless the meaning is unclear. Teachers can begin to ask simple yes-or-no, who, what, where, when, and why questions. The introduction of new vocabulary is important. "Think alouds" are helpful strategies for students. Rich learning environments that stimulate all the senses are needed.

3. Speech-Emergent Stage

At the beginning intermediate level, students begin to use descriptive terms in relating events. Pronunciation and intonation improve. Vocabulary increases. Students begin to initiate conversation. Comparisons and contrasts can be accomplished, as students can handle academic concepts. Students are able to categorize and summarize information.

Teachers can ask open-ended questions and encourage students to respond. Support material in the form of visual aids and graphic organizers continues to be important. It remains important for teachers to model, reinforce, and emphasize student language.

4. Intermediate Fluency Stage

Student comprehension has improved considerably. At this stage, students speak with few grammatical errors. They are able to share experiences, generate ideas, and give opinions. They begin to think in English rather than translate from their native language. Their language skills include debating, persuading, and negotiating with others. They can demonstrate higher-order thinking skills of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.

Teachers need to provide opportunities for student interaction. Cooperative learning groups enable students to work on a task where speech is needed, but correct grammar is not crucial. Teachers can provide more complex academic work. Students can make use of print and online reference material to create projects. Teachers can introduce colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions.

Providing opportunities to publish student work or give presentations will motivate students.

5. Fluency Stage

At this level students have near-perfect speech. They have no trouble interacting with native English speakers, and read English with high levels of comprehension. Students may need help understanding abstract concepts. They continue to learn new vocabulary. Their reading and writing abilities will be comparable to that of students their age who are native English speakers.

Teachers can expect students to give oral presentations, engage in role-play situations, and debate ideas. They can complete research projects with full reports. Support may be needed for abstract ideas. Providing sheltered English and cooperative learning strategies will continue to be important.

At the highest levels, students apply language skills to increasingly abstract thought as well as to highly technical material. Students continue vocabulary and grammar development as oral and written communication skills are further strengthened.

These stages are consistent with the work of Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell (1983), which identified stages of language production and showed that teachers can promote students' responses by providing appropriate input, waiting for students to be ready to speak and write, and allow errors as long as they do not interfere with communication in a positive environment. Hill and Flynn (2006) point out that with careful prompting teachers can facilitate progress as students use the proficiency they have developed and move into the next level.

ASSESSING FLUENCY LEVELS

Most school districts use a battery of standardized tests, such as the CTB/McGraw-Hill Language Assessment Scales (LAS) developed by Sharon E. Duncan and Edward A. De Avila. The LAS Reading/Writing, for example, is available at three levels: Grades 2–3, Grades 4–6, and Grades 7–9+. The test items include vocabulary (synonyms and antonyms, language fluency, reading for information, mechanics, and usage) and ask students to do a writing sample. There are two forms available at each level for pre-post

purposes, used with the LAS Oral to determine levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The LAS were developed to measure English language proficiency and are used to classify and place limited-English students in classes. The Pre LAS is for younger children in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. If your students have been assessed and you have access to their records, their scores will give you an indication of their skills.

A second test is the Idea Proficiency Test, which also measures vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and functional use of language. Students are asked to distinguish between minimal pairs, identify objects, listen to a story, and answer questions.

Another common test is the Bilingual Syntax Measure, in which students are shown cartoonlike pictures and are asked to respond to questions. This test measures whether students respond appropriately based on their grammatical expressions. It does not measure reading and writing ability. It is used to place students in classes.

There are other commercial tests as well. Many states have now developed their own assessments, such as the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) in Nevada, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) in California, or the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).

A warning: The tests are often given when students first come to school, a time that can be overwhelming as they try to make sense of the new environment. Taking a placement test may create additional anxiety. The purpose of the test may not be clear; therefore, students may not understand the importance of the test. Also, the items on the test may not have any meaning for the students, so the scores may not give a true picture of students' capabilities. Use the information that is helpful, but remember that assessment needs to be an ongoing activity.

Most classroom teachers begin with assessing oral proficiency by talking to students and noticing responses. Your personal observations of behavior will also provide information on your students. You can take notes on conversations, or record conversations and listen to them later to evaluate oral language development. These observations can be compared with your state framework or a commercially prepared checklist (Houk, 2005). Although this method is more time consuming, the data can be used immediately in planning.

HIGH-STAKES TESTING

One of the greatest challenges for children who are English learners, even those who are fluent, is taking standardized tests. As states are adopting and implementing standards, they are incorporating assessments for high-stakes testing. Olson (2001) reports that the American Educational Research Association and the National Research Council support the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing conclusion that high-stakes decisions, such as those for promotion or graduation, should not be based on a single test. However, what other demonstrations of student achievement—such as course grades and portfolios—should be included have not yet been established.

It is interesting to note that states are taking different approaches to high-stakes testing, such as proficiency tests linked with high school diplomas. Some districts are taking into account multiple measures, such as substitution of end-of-course exams. There is much variation from state to state. Olson (2001) describes the alternative New Jersey offers for its students. This state has a series of open-ended tasks that students do during the school year, called the Special Review Assessment. Indiana offers a waiver process to students who fail. Discussion on how to assess students will continue in the future.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001, high-stakes testing became of crucial importance to educators of English learners. The NCLB Act of 2001 established the following goals related to English learners:

- All students, including English learners, will attain "proficiency" in mathematics by 2014.
- All English learners will become proficient in English.

Schools are accountable for improvements each year in both English learner academic (reading and mathematics) performance and English proficiency. The act mandates annual English proficiency testing, interventions for failing schools, monitoring and reporting of English learner performance on English proficiency and academic standards, and reporting of dropout and graduation rates of English learners. Under the act's firm accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close

the achievement gap and make sure that all students—regardless of English proficiency—achieve academic proficiency. With high-stakes testing, schools will need to adhere to strict state and federal accountability standards—even as some students arrive with limited English proficiency skills.

FIRST- TO SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNING

Positive Transfer

Students will not be learning English independent of their first language. Some skills developed in the student's native language will transfer to English. For this reason, there is strong support for bilingual education, which allows students to continue cognitive development in their first language while learning English at the same time.

Positive transfer from one's native language to English takes many forms. Students who can read in one language know that the reason for reading is to acquire meaning. Students know that print is speech in written form. English learners have already developed concepts in their native language and have given them names. These concepts do not have to be relearned in English; they merely need English labels. Such students have a foundation on which to build; they will look for the rules underlying the English language. Many will have developed the appropriate spatial orientation—reading from left to right and from top to bottom. Some will be familiar with the letters of the alphabet; others will have to be introduced to new symbols used in reading and writing. Reading comprehension skills—such as sequencing, inferring, and drawing conclusions—will transfer to English.

Cognates

There may be *cognates,* or words that are similar because they are derived from the same origin, that the student will be able to recognize in English. Some words, such as *color*, *radio*, and *terrible,* are spelled alike in Spanish and English, although they are pronounced differently. Other words may have different spellings but will still be recognized, such as *excellent* (*excelente*) and *dentist* (*dentista*). The cognates quickly widen the student's vocabulary.

One student, who had previously been quite frustrated with her progress in learning English, had a major breakthrough when she recognized the number of English words that end in *tion*. She started rattling off a list of examples she had recently heard—sta*tion*, men*tion*, selec*tion*, func*tion*—giggling all the while. Finally, she recognized an underlying order to this "crazy language" when she was able to associate the ending with her native *cion*, as in selec*cion* or fun*cion*.

Similarly, listening skills transfer from a first to a second language. Students will be sensitive to repetitious sounds and patterns in the language. They may need help with pronunciation and syntax, however, when they are ready to speak.

By pointing out the attributes of the student's first language that transfer to English, you can help the student feel less overwhelmed. This will also help him or her develop a positive attitude toward learning.

Negative Transfer

Students will also run into situations in which previous language learning will interfere with learning English. Teachers can make students aware of such instances of negative transfer. Common mistakes in pronunciation occur when students assume a letter in their native language makes the same sound in English. The *i* in English is pronounced as the word *eye* and not as the letter *e*, which is its sound in Spanish. Grammatical rules in the native language may not apply in English—such as the double negative. False cognates—words that appear to have similar meanings but don't—can cause students to make mistakes. *Assist* does not mean "to attend," as in Spanish, but "to help." With practice, the students will avoid these mistakes. Teachers can make lists of these words that might cause confusion for students.

Errors

Mistakes are to be expected. Unless the error interferes with communication, the best way to proceed is to use the correct form in your response. It is more effective to rephrase and model the appropriate expression than to correct it. Emphasizing parts of speech and grammar drills is not an effective use of time.

Despite changing conceptions of language and new knowledge of how English learners develop their language skills, prescriptive notions of language still flourish in many classrooms today. This is especially relevant when it comes to student writing. Once students see marks emphasizing the formal features of the paper, they quite naturally come to see that what matters in school-based writing is not what they say but how they say it. The commonly accepted practice of emphasizing the formal features of language holds that grammar worksheets, spelling tests, and punctuation rules can develop these skills. However, a long tradition of research has certainly shown that methods of teaching focusing on grammar instruction are suspect (Andrews et al., 2006; Bamberg, 1978; Krashen, 1984; Mayher, 1970).

Even when students have mastered elements presented in formal instruction, they are not able to use them fluently in real communication situations inside or outside the classroom. Those who learned Spanish back in the 1960s and 1970s with the audiolingual method can tell you today, "Pablo está bien pero Luisa tiene catarro." (Pablo is fine, but Luisa has a cold.) But no one has ever asked any of us how Pablo and Luisa are doing! Language cannot be isolated into bits and pieces. The best advice comes from a teacher who says, "Model, model, model. The more the students can actually see and hear what is expected of them, instead of just listen to instruction, the better the students can internalize what is being taught to them."

Code-Switching

At times, students will resort to using both their native language and English, sometimes in the same sentence. This is known as *code-switching*. Sometimes speakers will forget a word or will lack the necessary vocabulary. However, code-switching can be a conscious effort on the part of the speaker for expression in the most effective way (depending on the audience) rather than an inability to use either language correctly. There can be several reasons for using both languages, such as to emphasize a point or to show a personal connection. Scarcella (1990) remarks that code-switching can be a sign of advanced proficiency in both languages.

Language development is a gradual process. By setting reasonable expectations, utilizing positive transfer when possible, and assessing development throughout the year, you will lead your students down the path to becoming proficient communicators.

Guidelines for structuring your personal means of communication, implementing practical teaching strategies, and making effective presentations follow in Chapter 4.

The Silent Period

As we mentioned previously, students developing skills in English will often go through a silent period in which they will not initiate very much speech. During this time, children will be observing and listening to communication. They watch for body language and listen for intonation, pronunciation, and register (appropriate language for the situation). They observe social rules (how to begin and end a conversation, when to raise a hand). At the same time, they are building up confidence and proficiency to speak. Some students may say very little, except for routine phrases, during this time.

The silent period can be very frustrating, especially for the teacher. This stage may last only a few weeks for younger children, but it may last longer for older children. It is difficult to know how much children understand. You will also have some students at the end of their silent period, whereas others will be in the beginning. You must have great patience in allowing the children to have the time they need to feel comfortable to speak. The more you work with English learners, the easier this will be.

It may be helpful for you to summarize what you know about the language development of the English learners in your classes. Table 3.1 provides an example of such a form.

Table 3.1 English Learners and Their Language Development

Student's Name	*Home Language(s)*	*Positive Transfer*	*Cognates*	*Level of English Proficiency*	*Student Characteristics/ English Language Abilities*

In this chapter, we looked at language development principles, proficiency levels, assessing fluency, and first- to second-language learning. In Chapter 4, we will look at strategies for teaching English learners.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Interview adults who, at one time, had limited English proficiency. Find out what their experiences were like trying to learn their new language. What did teachers do that was most and least helpful to them?
2. Tape-record a conversation between you and a student learning English. Evaluate your responses. Determine whether you are modeling correct expressions or giving mini-grammar lessons to the student.
3. Make a list of the native languages of your students. Chart the similarities between the first languages and English.
4. Watch a foreign-language television station or movie. Describe how you try to figure out what is happening. List the supporting devices, such as dress, mannerisms, gestures, context, and other cues that help you figure out what might be going on. At which proficiency level are you operating?
5. Explain the difference between *acquiring* and *learning* a second language to a friend. Use examples from both second-language acquisition and from vocabulary acquisition to help make your points. Use your friend's follow-up questions to help you to sharpen the distinction between acquisition and learning in your own mind.