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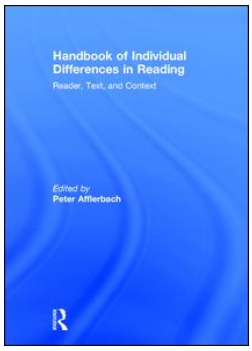

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Reader, Text, and Context

Peter Afflerbach

Language Differences that Influence Reading Development

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17

Language Differences that Influence Reading Development

Instructional Implications of Alternative Interpretations of the Research Evidence

Jim Cummins

Introduction

During the past decade, four major syntheses of research evidence have been published regarding the academic achievement of students whose home language (L1) is different from the dominant language of instruction at school (henceforth termed *linguistically diverse students*). Three of these syntheses have focused primarily on research and policy issues in the United States and one has focused on the performance of immigrant-background students on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The most comprehensive review carried out in the United States context was the report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth entitled *Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners* (August & Shanahan, 2006, 2008a). This report appeared in the same year as a volume edited by Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian (2006) entitled *Educating English Language Learners: A Synthesis of Research Evidence*. More recently, the California Department of Education (2010) published *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches*, which highlighted the instructional implications and applications of the research evidence. Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) addressed similar issues in an adjunct monograph entitled *Redesigning English-Medium Classrooms: Using Research to Enhance English Learner Achievement* published by the California Association for Bilingual Education.

The synthesis of research provided by the OECD's PISA research program differs from those outlined above insofar as the findings derive entirely from the PISA's own dataset, which includes the academic performance of hundreds of thousands of 15-year-old students in countries around the world. The program, which reported initial results in 2000 and several times since then, focusses primarily on reading, mathematics, and science achievement and has identified a number of background and school-based predictors of achievement. PISA is intended to provide member countries with a "report card" on the effectiveness of their educational systems, including the relative success of students from immigrant backgrounds. The findings have highlighted the

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extent of immigrant-background students' underachievement in many affluent countries and also the considerable variability across countries in the extent to which these students succeed academically (Christensen & Segeritz, 2008; Christensen & Stanat, 2007; OECD, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2012; Stanat & Christensen, 2006).

These four syntheses of the empirical research regarding the role of linguistic differences in reading development and other aspects of academic achievement are invaluable in compiling and critically analyzing the research findings. However, all four syntheses (with the exception of the Dolson & Burnham-Massey (2011) monograph) suffer from significant limitations in the ways in which the research has been interpreted and linked to educational policy and classroom instruction. In this chapter, I propose an alternative interpretation of the research relating language differences to reading and highlight a very different set of implications for policy and practice. Briefly stated, the three research syntheses carried out in the United States context acknowledge the legitimacy both of students' L1 as a cognitive resource and bilingual education as a policy option but largely ignore the extensive empirical evidence highlighting the centrality of literacy engagement in the development of reading comprehension. These reports also focus primarily on *linguistic mismatch* as a cause of underachievement that can be addressed by more effective teaching of language and literacy. By focusing on linguistic variables in isolation from the ways in which language differences between home and school intersect with socioeconomic status (SES) and patterns of societal power relations in the wider society, they fail to identify instructional interventions that are of central importance for students' academic achievement.

By contrast, the PISA reports highlight the strong statistical relationship between reading engagement and reading achievement but, for the most part, position students' L1s as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution to the achievement gap experienced by immigrant-background students in many countries. Linguistic mismatch and presumed lack of exposure to the dominant language are posited as independent causal variables in some of the PISA reports despite the fact that we have known for more than 30 years that linguistic mismatch, by itself, cannot explain the empirical data (Cummins, 1979, 1986). None of the major research syntheses (again, with the exception of Dolson & Burnham-Massey (2011)) adequately examines data relating to the role of societal power relations and their manifestation in patterns of teacher–student identity negotiation as factors relevant to understanding patterns of academic outcomes. The alternative interpretation of the data, which I elaborate in this chapter, proposes *literacy engagement* and *identity affirmation* as central components of effective literacy instruction for linguistically diverse students who are learning the language of instruction.

The following sections map out important dimensions of individual differences associated with language and school achievement among linguistically diverse students. These individual differences are not fixed or static; language and literacy development are always nested within social contexts from birth and within educational contexts from the onset of schooling. Children's opportunities for language and literacy development are significantly affected by the interactions they experience with adults within these contexts. Thus, individual differences associated with language and literacy development are in a dynamic relationship with clusters of social variables such as SES and the extent of marginalization/discrimination in the wider society experienced by different communities. Similarly, the extent to which school instruction responds in an evidence-based way to the learning needs of linguistically diverse students will significantly affect their opportunities to learn and succeed academically. Thus, individual differences are not fixed invariant attributes of the individual but are shifting constantly in response to social and educational interactions.

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Dimensions of Difference

The international research literature on "educational disadvantage" typically identifies three categories of students who are at risk of educational difficulties: (1) linguistically diverse students whose L1 is different from the dominant language of school and society, (2) students from low-SES backgrounds, and (3) students from communities that have been marginalized or excluded from educational and social opportunities (often over generations) as a result of discrimination in the wider society. Although these three groups frequently overlap, they are conceptually distinct. Some students may fall into all three categories of potential disadvantage (e.g., Roma students in Europe, many Latino/a students in the United States), others may fall into two categories (e.g., English-L1 low-SES Native American students), while some may be characterized by only one dimension (e.g., Romanian-L1 students from highly educated parents learning English in the United States). Although the major focus of the present chapter is on differences in achievement associated with language, these differences cannot be isolated from potential disadvantages associated with socioeconomic variables and long-term discrimination in the wider society.

It is important to note that, in a similar way to individual differences in general, "disadvantage" is not a fixed or static construct; significant components of the background experiences of the three groups specified above are transformed into actual educational disadvantages only when the school fails to respond appropriately to these background experiences. For example, a home–school language switch becomes an educational disadvantage only when the school fails to provide effective support to enable students to learn the school language (Cummins, 1986, 2001; Dolson & Burnham-Massey, 2011). Effective educational responses can also reduce some of the negative consequences associated with SES (e.g., provision of breakfast programs or free/reduced lunches can at least partially offset nutritional inadequacies at home caused by poverty). Similarly, the effects of racism in the wider society can be significantly ameliorated when the school implements instruction that actively challenges the devaluation of students and communities in the wider society. These forms of instruction build on the "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) within students' communities and have been variously labeled culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995), culturally responsive (Gay, 2010), and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012). Thus, the creation of actual educational disadvantage is not socially determined by the realities outside of school. Rather, it is a dynamic process which is socially constituted within the structures of schooling and the interactions between teachers and students.

The major interpretative problem with the four syntheses of research outlined previously is that they focus on *language* differences between home and school, and students' consequent need to learn the school language, in isolation from the social context within which these language differences are embedded. As a result, their instructional prescriptions focus on more effective ways to develop students' academic language proficiency without integrating these instructional responses with those that are implied by the research on SES and marginalized group status. As noted above, only Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) highlight in a substantive way the relevance of societal power relations to student academic outcomes. They point out that stigmatized minority groups such as Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics have been historically subordinated through forms of violence such as war, slavery, forced relocation, and genocide. These historical realities and their current vestiges must be taken into account in the design of effective instruction for linguistically diverse learners.

The research literature documenting how home–school language difference, family income/educational status, and social marginalization/exclusion intersect with educational variables is summarized in Table 17.1 and in the following sections.

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Table 17.1 Dynamic relationships between dimensions of students' background and educational responses

Student background	*Linguistically diverse*	*Low-SES*	*Marginalized status*
Sources of potential disadvantage	• Failure to understand instruction due to home–school language difference	• Inadequate prenatal care • Inadequate nutrition • Lead exposure • Housing segregation • Lack of cultural and material resources in the home due to poverty • Range of language interaction • Inadequate access to print in home and school • Overall school quality; etc.	• Societal discrimination • Low teacher expectations • Stereotype threat • Identity devaluation
Evidence-based instructional response	• Scaffold comprehension and production of language across the curriculum • Reinforce academic language across the curriculum	• Maximize literacy engagement • Reinforce academic language across the curriculum	• Connect instruction to students' lives • Create contexts of student empowerment and identity affirmation thorough culturally sustaining instruction

The evidence-based instructional responses listed in Table 17.1 are relevant for students from all three categories, as well as for dominant-group students who are native speakers of the school language. However, the specific instructional responses specified for each group are those that respond directly to the causal chain implied by the sources of potential disadvantage.

Literacy Achievement among Linguistically Diverse Students

Patterns of Performance

Labels such as "linguistically diverse," "English learner" (EL), or "English language learner" (ELL) are somewhat misleading because they imply homogeneity within the category based on the fact that students are required to learn the language of instruction in order to succeed academically. In fact, there is major variation both in the life circumstances and academic outcomes of linguistically diverse students both within and across countries.

The variation across countries is illustrated in the performance of first- and second-generation immigrant students in the PISA 2003 and 2006 Reading Literacy measure for Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, and the United States (Table 17.2). First-generation students (and their parents) were born outside the host country while second-generation students are of immigrant background but were born in the host country.

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Table 17.2 PISA Reading scores for 2003 and 2006 assessments*

	PISA 2003 Gen 1	*PISA 2003 Gen 2*	*PISA 2006 Gen 1*	*PISA 2006 Gen 2*
Australia	–12	–4	1	7
Canada	–19	10	–19	0
Denmark	–42	–57	–79	–64
Germany	–86	–96	–70	–83
United States	–50	–22		

* The scores for the five countries are extracted from the broader dataset presented in Christensen and Segeritz (2008); Gen 1 = first-generation students, Gen 2 = second-generation students; negative scores indicate performance below country mean, positive scores indicate performance above country mean. The United States did not participate in the 2006 Reading assessment.

Christensen and Segeritz (2008) highlight as particularly problematic the poor performance of second-generation students in many European countries: "Of particular concern, especially for policy-makers, should be the fact that second-generation immigrant students in many countries continue to lag significantly behind their native peers despite spending all of their schooling in the receiving country" (p. 18). In some cases (Denmark and Germany in 2003; Austria and Germany in 2006) second-generation students who received all their schooling in the host country performed more poorly than first-generation students who arrived as newcomers and would likely have had less time and opportunity to learn the host country language. These data clearly suggest that factors other than simply opportunity to learn the host country language are operating to limit achievement among second-generation students in these countries.

Students' performance tends to be better in countries such as Canada and Australia that have encouraged immigration during the past 40 years and that have a coherent infrastructure designed to integrate immigrants into the society (e.g., free adult language classes, language support services for students in schools, rapid qualification for full citizenship, etc.). Additionally, both Canada and Australia have explicitly endorsed multicultural philosophies at the national level aimed at promoting respect across communities and expediting the integration of newcomers into the broader society. In Canada (2003 assessment) and Australia (2006 assessment), second-generation students performed slightly *better* academically than native speakers of the school language. By contrast, second-generation students tend to perform very poorly in countries that have been characterized by highly negative attitudes towards immigrants (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany).

Some of the positive results for Australia and Canada can be attributed to selective immigration that favors immigrants with strong educational qualifications. In both countries, the educational attainments of adult immigrants are as high, on average, as those of the general population. However, the OECD (2010a) points out that differences in immigrant-background students' reading performance both within and across countries cannot be fully explained by SES.

L2 Learning Trajectories

There is extensive evidence that linguistically diverse students typically require at least four to five years to catch up to native speakers in academic language proficiency (e.g., Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). By contrast, it usually takes only about one to two years for students to become reasonably fluent in everyday conversational language. Some students never catch up academically and become "long term English learners" (Olsen, 2010).

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Data from California after the implementation of Proposition 227 in 1998, which mandated English-only instruction for a large majority of students, show that after three years of English-only instruction, only 12 percent of English learners had acquired sufficient academic English to be redesignated as fluent English-proficient. The probability of being redesignated as English proficient after ten years in California was less than 40 percent (Parrish et al., 2006).

The longer catch-up trajectory for academic as compared to conversational language proficiency reflects both the increased linguistic complexity of academic language and the fact that linguistically diverse learners are attempting to catch up to a moving target. Every year, native speakers of the school language are increasing their literacy and academic language skills and thus L2 learners have to "run faster" in order to catch up to grade expectations. The complexity of academic language reflects (1) the vocabulary in texts that, in English, include many Latin and Greek-origin low-frequency and technical words that we almost never use in everyday conversation (e.g., predict, photosynthesis, sequence, revolution, etc.), and (2) increasingly sophisticated lexical patterns (e.g., nominalization) and grammatical constructions (e.g., passive voice) that again are almost never used in everyday conversation. Students are not only required to read this language, but also to use it use it in an accurate and coherent way in their own writing.

It remains to be seen how the advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the United States will affect the academic catch-up trajectories of English learners. The CCSS include a strong emphasis on building a focus on both task and text complexity into the curriculum from the earliest grades. If schools respond effectively to this challenge, they could potentially accelerate academic language learning among English learners. However, an effective response will require a major reorientation in policy and practice to ensure that *all* teachers are prepared to integrate the teaching of language and content across the curriculum. It will also require an instructional realignment to address causes of underachievement associated with low-SES and marginalized group status in addition to those associated with home–school language differences, as outlined in Table 17.1.

Two Instructional Implications of Academic Language Trajectories

The extended trajectory for academic language catch-up clearly implies that teaching linguistically diverse learners is not the responsibility only of the language specialist teacher. Classroom teachers also need to know how to scaffold instruction to make academic content accessible to students who are still in the process of catching up academically. They also need to see themselves as *language* teachers with the expertise to integrate language objectives with content objectives in their teaching (e.g., California Department of Education, 2010).

A second instructional implication derives from the fact that we find academic language predominantly in two places: classroom discourse and printed texts. Consequently, students who read extensively both inside and outside the school have far greater opportunities to acquire academic language than those whose reading is limited. This logical inference is supported by a wide range of empirical research (e.g., Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007; Guthrie, 2004; Krashen, 2004; Lindsay, 2010; OECD, 2004, 2010b; Sullivan & Brown, 2013), which, unfortunately, has been largely ignored by researchers and policy-makers in the United States. Research carried out specifically with L2 learners is consistent with the overall pattern of strong relationships between literacy engagement and academic language learning. Elley and Mangubhai (1983), for example, demonstrated that fourth- and fifth-grade students in Fiji exposed to a "book flood" program during their 30-minute daily English (L2) class in which they simply read books either alone or with the guidance of their teacher, performed significantly better over a two-year period

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than students taught through more traditional methods. Elley (1991, 2001) similarly documented the superiority of book-based English language teaching programs among elementary school students in a variety of other international contexts.

Students' Use of L1 in the Home: What Role Does it Play in L2 Acquisition?

It is clear from the variation in group performance both within and across countries that far more than simply a home–school language switch is influencing patterns of literacy attainment. However, the PISA data also show that, on average, immigrant-background students who use their L1 at home perform significantly lower in reading than immigrant-background students who use L2 at home. This pattern of findings has led some OECD researchers (e.g., Christensen & Stanat, 2007; OECD, 2012) and others (Esser, 2006) to interpret the negative correlations between L1 use at home and academic performance in L2 as reflecting a causal relationship. Christensen and Stanat (2007), for example, concluded: "These large differences in performance suggest that students have insufficient opportunities to learn the language of instruction" (p. 3). Esser (2006) is more explicit in arguing on the basis of PISA data that "the use of the native language in the family context has a (clearly) negative effect" (p. 64). He further argued that retention of the home language by immigrant children will reduce both motivation and success in learning the host country language (2006, p. 34).

There are persuasive grounds to call into question this interpretation of the PISA data. In the first place, no relationship was found between home language use and achievement in the two countries where immigrant students were most successful (Australia and Canada). If L1 use at home were an independent causal factor, its negative effect should be evident across multiple contexts. Furthermore, the relationship disappeared for a large majority (10 out of 14) of OECD-member countries when socioeconomic status and other background variables (e.g., age on arrival/length of residence) were controlled (Stanat & Christensen, 2006, Table 3.5, pp. 200–202). The disappearance of the relationship in a large majority of countries suggests that language spoken at home does not exert any independent effect on achievement but is rather a proxy for a variety of interacting variables such as SES, marginalized group status, and, for first-generation students, length of residence in the host country. Students who have been in the host country for only a short amount of time (and have consequently had less opportunity to learn L2) are much more likely to use their L1 at home than students who have had all their schooling in L2.

The literature review carried out by Goldenberg, Rueda, and August (2006) as part of the National Literacy Panel report found inconsistent effects associated with students' L1 use at home. They conclude that because of "conflicting and inconclusive findings, no strong practice or policy recommendations are possible with respect to language use at home" (p. 314).

My interpretation of the data is somewhat different. I would argue that the data show clearly that linguistically diverse parents who interact consistently with their children in L1 as a means of promoting bilingualism and biliteracy can do so with no concern that this will impede their children's acquisition of the school language. This interpretation is based on data showing that short-term negative associations between L1 use at home and L2 achievement disappear as students' exposure to L2 increases. Over the short term, there will inevitably be strong associations between exposure to L2 (in the home, preschool, or elementary school) and attainment in that language. A child who is minimally exposed to English at home or at preschool will show considerably less knowledge of English when tested in kindergarten than a child who has had extensive exposure to English. However, the more relevant question relates to

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the longer-term effects of language choice and input in the home. There is considerable evidence with respect to this issue that use of L1 in the home entails no long-term deficits in L2 development (e.g., Bankston & Zhou, 1985; Dolson, 1985; Oller & Eilers, 2002).

Summary

The research shows clearly that linguistically diverse students exhibit considerable variation in academic performance both within and across countries. This variation in performance reflects specific factors related to students' exposure to and opportunity to learn the host country language (e.g., length of residence in the host country) as well as the quality of educational provision they experience in host country schools. The quality of educational provision is also likely to vary according to linguistically diverse students' SES and the extent to which their communities occupy marginalized positions in the wider society. The ways in which SES and societal marginalization intersect with educational provision are examined in the following sections.

Literacy Achievement among Low-SES Students

SES-Related Discrepencies in Achievement

The ways in which SES exerts its negative effects on achievement have been well documented, and the factors listed in Table 17.1 illustrate just some of these effects. Among the SES-related factors that have been highlighted in the United States context as directly affecting students' educational prospects are less access to maternal prenatal care, lower quality nutrition, exposure to lead, less overall linguistic input in the home, less access to books and computers, attendance at schools with (1) less qualified teachers, (2) greater concentrations of low-SES students, and (3) significantly less funding than schools serving more affluent students (Berliner, 2009; Kozol, 2005; Orfield, 2013; Rothstein, 2013). Further evidence of the impact of socioeconomic variables is seen in the fact that interventions to address these factors produce educational benefits. Detailed reviews (e.g., Berliner, 2009) highlight extensive evidence that nonschool interventions such as increasing family income, ensuring adequate nutrition, provision of prenatal and general health care were associated with increased cognitive ability and/or academic achievement among low-income students.

The effects of SES on students' reading performance were also evident in the OECD's PISA studies: "On average across OECD countries, 14% of the differences in student reading performance within each country is associated with differences in students' socio-economic background" (OECD, 2010c, p. 14). However, this report also noted that

> Regardless of their own socio-economic background, students attending schools with a socio-economically advantaged intake tend to perform better than those attending schools with more disadvantaged peers. In the majority of OECD countries, the effect of the school's economic, social and cultural status on students' performance far outweighs the effects of the individual student's socio-economic background.
>
> (2010c, p. 14)

This finding points to the impact of societal factors related to discrimination and exclusion (as manifested, for example, in housing segregation) in determining student outcomes.

The PISA studies also show that the impact of SES on achievement varies widely between countries. For example, the relationship between SES and achievement was much stronger in

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countries such as Germany and the United States than it was in countries such as Canada and Norway. Despite the strong overall relationship between SES and academic performance, some countries do succeed in promoting both equity (low-SES students perform relatively well) and excellence (overall performance is strong). In fact, according to the OECD (2010c), the "best performing school systems manage to provide high-quality education to all students . . . regardless of their own background or the school they attend" (p. 13).

Potential Impact of Evidence-Based Intervention

Some of the sources of potential educational disadvantage associated with SES are beyond the capacity of individual schools to address (e.g. housing segregation) but, as pointed out previously, the potential negative effects of other factors can be ameliorated by school policies and instructional practices. The two sources of potential disadvantage that are most relevant to the present chapter are the limited access to print that many low-SES students experience in their homes (and schools) (Duke, 2000; Neuman & Celano, 2001) and the more limited range of language interaction that has been documented in many low-SES families as compared to more affluent families (e.g., Hart & Risley, 1995). As noted in a previous section, the logical inference that derives from the differences in print access and language interaction characteristic of different SES groups is that in order to address these realities, schools serving low-SES students should (1) immerse them in a print-rich environment in order to promote literacy engagement across the curriculum and (2) focus in a sustained way on how academic language works and enable students to take ownership of academic language by using it for powerful (i.e., identity-affirming) purposes.

The potential impact of addressing these causal factors in an evidence-based way is illustrated in the fact that successive PISA studies have reported a strong relationship between reading engagement and reading achievement among 15-year-old students. The 2000 PISA study (OECD, 2004) reported that the level of a student's reading engagement was a better predictor of literacy performance than his or her SES. The report pointed out that "engagement in reading can be a consequence, as well as a cause, of higher reading skill, but the evidence suggests that these two factors are mutually reinforcing" (OECD, 2004, p. 8). In more recent PISA studies, the OECD (2010b) reported that approximately one-third of the association between reading performance and students' SES was mediated by reading engagement. The implication is that schools can potentially "push back" about one-third of the negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage by ensuring that students have access to a rich print environment and become actively engaged with literacy.

Unfortunately, the roles of print access and literacy engagement were not identified as particularly significant in either the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) or National Literacy Panel (NLP) (August & Shanahan, 2006, 2008a) reports in the United States and consequently these variables have been largely omitted from policy consideration. The problematic nature of this omission is considered in a later section together with a more detailed review of research supporting the central role of literacy engagement in determining literacy outcomes.

Literacy Achievement among Marginalized Group Students

There is extensive research, primarily from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, that documents how societal power relations influence educational achievement (e.g., Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Carter, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ogbu, 1978, 1992). As noted previously, groups that experience long-term educational underachievement have frequently been excluded

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Structural/societal — Structural/educational — Interpersonal

Figure 17.1 Continuum representing the operation of societal power relations in education

from educational and social opportunities over generations. The historical and current operation of these power structures is a direct determinant of the current low SES of many of these groups. Educators who understand how societal power relations operate to limit students' literacy development are in a position, individually and collectively, to institute school policies and instructional practices aimed at challenging this process.

As outlined in Figure 17.1, we can locate the operation of societal power relations that affect marginalized group students' academic achievement along a continuum ranging from *structural/societal*, through *structural/educational*, to *interpersonal*. Structural/societal factors reflect societal policies and social realities over which educators have minimal control. These include unequal funding for schools serving low- and high-income communities and school segregation that derives from patterns of housing segregation (Darling-Hammond, 2010, 2013; Kozol, 2005).

Structural/educational factors include aspects of the organization of schooling such as curriculum standards and textbooks, assessment/accountability provisions, tracking and ability grouping policies, and language-of-instruction mandates. Educators within schools, both individually and collectively, can resist or attempt to mitigate the negative effects of policies that they see as detrimental to their students' academic progress.

Finally, interpersonal factors reflect the ways in which identities are negotiated between teachers and students in schools (Cummins, 2001). As an example, consider the very different messages communicated to linguistically diverse students in a school that prohibits any use of students' L1s in the classrooms or corridors compared to a school that acknowledges students' multilingualism as an intellectual and personal accomplishment and encourages them to use the totality of their linguistic skills as cognitive tools to succeed academically.

Representation of these dimensions along a continuum rather than as totally distinct categories is appropriate because, as Carter (2013) points out, "structured school practices become cultural" (p. 149). She points out that educators transmit messages to children when they categorize by ability and this practice in some schools "is highly correlated to racial and ethnic background" (p. 149).

Obviously, educators have minimal ability to influence most structural/societal dimensions of societal power relations, and only partial influence over structural/educational realities but, in principle, they have considerable control over the ways in which identities are negotiated within their schools and classrooms. The ways in which structural/societal, structural/educational, and interpersonal dimensions of societal power relations influence student engagement and achievement are sketched in the following sections.

Structural/Societal Dimensions

In the United States, one of the most obvious examples of how societal power relations influence the academic achievement of marginalized group students is the re-segregation of schools that has occurred during the past 20 years—what Kozol (2005) has termed *the restoration of apartheid schooling*. Currently, African American and Latino/a students increasingly attend schools with high concentrations of students from similar backgrounds (Berliner, 2009; Orfield, 2013). Neighbourhood schools reflect the prevailing patterns of housing segregation. Orfield (2013) expresses the consequences of these patterns of school segregation as follows:

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> Schools with high concentrations of students needing strong academic support are often staffed largely by inexperienced teachers who are not yet effective educators, and some do not want to be there. The combination of weaker teachers and less-prepared classmates exposes many children in disadvantaged schools to less-challenging instruction . . . The cumulative effect is a profoundly unequal educational experience, even when there is no overt discrimination (p. 41).

Darling-Hammond (2013) summarized the US data regarding differential educational experiences according to income and racial/ethnic background as follows: "By every measure of qualifications—certification, subject matter background, pedagogical training, selectivity of college attended, test scores, or experience—less qualified teachers are found in schools serving greater numbers of low-income and minority students" (p. 87).

These realities reflect what I have termed *coercive relations of power* where power is exercised by a dominant individual, group, or country to the detriment of a subordinated individual, group, or country (Cummins, 2001). A similar pattern of housing, and consequently school, segregation is evident in many European countries, with large numbers of underachieving immigrant-background students (e.g., Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany).

Structural/Educational Dimensions

The influence of these factors can be illustrated with reference to Sleeter's (2002, 2011) documentation of the ways in which societal power relations influence the composition of textbooks and curriculum frameworks. Her analysis of the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools* (California Department of Education 2001) revealed that of the 96 Americans who were named for study, 77 percent were White, 18 percent African American, 4 percent Native American, 1 percent Latino, and 0 percent Asian American. She concluded that "racial and ethnic minorities are added consistently in a 'contributions' fashion to the predominantly Euro-American narrative of textbooks" (2011, p. 3). Her 2012 review of the impact of culturally responsive curricula that attempted to connect instruction to students' lives and cultural backgrounds found a variety of positive outcomes. She interpreted these findings as indicating that when curriculum focuses on the realities of students' lives, including racism and poverty, and gives them tools to understand and act on those realities, they become "insiders" whose background knowledge is valued and constructed as useful for academic learning. Under these conditions, students become intellectually engaged and see themselves as intellectually capable.

In short, the curriculum projects reviewed by Sleeter (2011) illustrate how schools can enhance the academic engagement of students from marginalized social groups by challenging the exclusion of students' languages, cultural histories, and current realities from the curriculum.

Interpersonal Dimensions

Coercive relations of power also operate in the interactions marginalized group students experience with educators at school. Schools generally reflect the societies that fund them and thus devaluation of the language and culture of particular communities in the wider society is likely to be mirrored in many schools serving students from those communities. Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) clearly expressed this relationship in arguing that "[t]he problem that African-American students face is the constant devaluation of their culture both in school and in the larger society" (1995, p. 485). She also expressed the logical implication of this reality: "When students are treated as competent they are likely to demonstrate competence" (1994, p. 123).

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The impact of teacher–student identity negotiation and its relationship to broader patterns of power relationships is illustrated in the research of Bishop and Berryman (2006) who explored patterns of educational engagement among Maori youth in New Zealand. Very different perspectives on causes of students' academic disengagement emerged from interviews with educators, the students themselves, and community members. According to Bishop and Berryman (2006), many teachers explained Maori students' lack of educational achievement in deficit terms, whereas the students themselves and members of their families viewed the issue in terms of relationships and interactions. They point out that this latter perspective highlights the power differentials and imbalances between the various participants in the relationships and puts the focus on how these power differentials can and must be managed better. On the basis of interventions they helped initiate in collaboration with educators, they argue that in order to be effective, instruction must challenge the devaluation of Maori identity in the school and wider society. This type of instruction involves "the teacher creating a culturally appropriate and responsive learning context, where young people can engage in learning by bringing their prior cultural knowledge and experiences to classroom interactions, which legitimate these, instead of ignoring or rejecting them" (pp. 264–265).

The well-documented phenomenon of *stereotype threat* (Steele, 1997) also highlights the relationships between societal power relations, identity negotiation, and task performance. Stereotype threat refers to the deterioration of individuals' task performance in contexts where negative stereotypes about their social group are communicated to them. For example, negative attitudes on the part of teachers towards the variety of English spoken by many low-SES African American students have frequently been communicated to students with predictable results (e.g., Baugh, 1999). A direct implication is that in order to reverse this pattern of underachievement, educators, both individually and collectively, must challenge the devaluation of students' language, culture, and identity in the wider society by implementing instructional strategies that enable students to develop "identities of competence" (Manyak, 2004) in the school context. These instructional strategies will communicate high expectations to students regarding their ability to succeed academically and support them in meeting these academic demands by affirming their identities and connecting curriculum to their lives (i.e., their communities' funds of knowledge).

In summary, much more than language differences between home and school are involved in the underachievement of linguistically diverse students in different educational contexts. Underachievement is observed predominantly among linguistically diverse students who are also experiencing the effects of low-SES and/or marginalized group status in the host country. Thus, in educating linguistically diverse students, schools need to take account of more than simply students' need to learn the host country language. Instruction must also address the sources of potential disadvantage that characterize low-SES and marginalized group students. As documented in the next section, previous syntheses of the research literature on the achievement of linguistically diverse students have largely failed to take account of the broader set of causal factors that determine achievement, and consequently they have also failed to identify crucial components of effective instruction for these students.

A Critique of Previous Research Syntheses and their Instructional Recommendations

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to critique previous syntheses of the research on linguistically diverse learners in detail. A variety of problematic aspects of these reports have been identified elsewhere (e.g., Cummins, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009a). For example, the NRP's

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blanket conclusion that "systematic phonics instruction" promotes reading development ignores the important qualification that after Grade 1, systematic phonics instruction showed no positive impact on reading comprehension among normally achieving and low-achieving students (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001). My focus in this section, however, is on points of consensus in the reports with respect to the implications of the research for educational policies and classroom instruction. Subsequently, I will highlight some omissions and problematic interpretations that have major consequences for policy and practice.

Areas of Consensus

All of the reports agree on the need for schools to modify instruction in order to support students in learning the school language. The most complete elaboration of evidence-based instructional practices for linguistically diverse learners is included in the California Department of Education (2010) research synthesis volume. These can be summarized under four overlapping categories:

- Scaffold instruction to support students' language comprehension and production.
- Activate students' existing background knowledge and build new background knowledge as needed.
- Teach academic language explicitly.
- Enable students to use their L1 as a cognitive resource either through bilingual education programs or within English-medium programs.

Each of these instructional mandates is briefly sketched below.

Scaffold Instruction

The term *scaffolding* refers to the provision of instructional supports that enable learners to carry out tasks and perform academically at a higher level than they would be capable of without these supports. Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) summarize scaffolding (or "sheltered") instructional strategies as follows: "In sheltered settings, teachers make content comprehensible through a variety of techniques that include the use of visual aids, modeling, demonstrations, graphic organizers, vocabulary previews, predictions, adapted texts, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, multicultural content, and native language support" (p. 41). The best-known and most widely used comprehensive instructional system developed for linguistically diverse students is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model (Echevarria & Short, 2010).

Activate and Build Background Knowledge

There is virtually universal agreement among reading and learning theorists that effective instruction for all students activates their background knowledge and builds on it as needed (e.g., Bransford et al., 2000). Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) expressed the centrality of background knowledge as follows: "Every opportunity should be taken to extend and enrich children's background knowledge and understanding in every way possible, for the ultimate significance and memorability of any word or text depends on whether children possess the background knowledge and conceptual sophistication to understand its meaning" (p. 219). Consistent with this perspective, SIOP emphasizes the importance of linking new concepts explicitly to students' background experiences and past learning. Both Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) and Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) interpret background knowledge in relation to the construct of "funds of knowledge" (González et al., 2005), which implies a much broader connection to students' lives and cultural realities than narrower conceptions of

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background knowledge that might focus only on content learned in previous lessons. Obviously, the research (reviewed above) which addresses the academic achievement of marginalized group students supports the instructional relevance of the broader rather than the narrower conception of "background knowledge".

Teach Academic Language Explicitly

All of the research syntheses endorse the necessity of teaching academic language explicitly and consistently across the curriculum. Echevarria and Short (2010), for example, highlight the importance of articulating clearly defined content and language objectives in all subject areas. Dutro and Kinsella (2010) provide detailed strategies for expanding secondary EL students' vocabulary knowledge throughout the school day. The OECD (2010d) has also argued for an explicit and consistent focus on developing students' awareness of how academic language works in the different content areas in order to support struggling learners in catching up academically. This focus is also explicitly built into the recently implemented Common Core State Standards in the United States (see, for example, Wong Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012).

Use Students' L1 as Scaffold and Cognitive Resource

As noted in a previous section, some OECD authors have inappropriately interpreted correlational data as causal and argued that immigrant-background students' use of L1 at home contributes to underachievement. However, other OECD publications have advocated more affirmative (and evidence-based) school policies that would welcome students' L1 as a tool for learning and understanding (OECD, 2010a, p. 49).

The research syntheses carried out in the US consistently endorse both bilingual education as a legitimate program option for linguistically diverse students and the inclusion of students' L1 as an instructional option within the English-medium classroom. Snow and Katz (2010), for example, cite the Lucas and Katz (1994) study which found that, in exemplary programs, a wide variety of L1/primary language uses were observed. Classroom uses included students using L1 to assist and tutor one another, writing in L1, and using bilingual dictionaries. In the larger school context, exemplary schools provided instruction in students' culture and history, libraries maintained multilingual collections, and teachers encouraged parents to read to their children in the L1.

August and Shanahan (2010) also highlight the fact that "effective literacy instruction for English learners is respectful of the home language" (p. 235). As examples of successfully implemented practices, they list (1) providing books in students' L1 during school reading time, (2) preview and review storybook reading in students' L1, (3) allowing students to converse and write in L1 as well as L2, (4) allowing some use of L1 in instructional conversations, (5) providing L1 vocabulary support through targeted translation of passages and individual vocabulary items, including building awareness of cognate connections.

It is clear from these examples that opening up the instructional space to include students' home languages as resources for learning can (1) scaffold both comprehension and production of L2, (2) more effectively activate students' background knowledge, much of which is likely to be encoded in L1, and (3) develop awareness of how academic language operates and how L1 and L2 connect with each other. Showing respect for students' L1 in these ways also clearly communicates a positive message to students and their families with respect to the value of bilingualism in their lives and its legitimacy as a cognitive and personal resource. In addition, these forms of identity affirmation represent an instructional challenge to historical (and current) societal power relations that have devalued marginalized students' cultures and languages.

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Limitations in the Research Syntheses

There are several major limitations in the way the research findings have been interpreted in the three US syntheses. In addition to exaggerating the impact of systematic phonics instruction in the development of reading comprehension, the reports have ignored or largely dismissed the research supporting the roles of (1) print access/literacy engagement and (2) identity affirmation. By contrast, as outlined previously, the OECD PISA studies highlight the central role that reading engagement plays in predicting reading achievement among 15-year-old students in countries around the world. PISA says very little about identity issues, presumably because constructs such as "identity" were not amenable to quantitative measurement. The following sections briefly outline the ways in which research relating to literacy engagement and identity affirmation were interpreted in the NLP report (August & Shanahan, 2006). These issues received minimal consideration in the Genesee et al. (2006) and California Department of Education (2010) publications apart from the endorsement of bilingual education programs and L1-inclusion strategies. In contrast to chapters in the California Department of Education (2010) volume, Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) do include consideration of culturally sustaining pedagogies that focus on identity and social justice issues in their discussion of effective practices for linguistically diverse learners (e.g., the autobiographical writing strategies documented in Ada and Campoy's (2003) *Authors in the Classroom*, and the *Bridging Multiple Worlds* program developed by Bhattacharya, Quiroga, and Olsen (2007)).

Print Access/Literacy Engagement

Print access and literacy engagement are obviously two sides of the same coin since without access to print, literacy engagement is unlikely. Shanahan and Beck's (2006) review of studies that encouraged reading and writing or involved adults reading to children could identify only nine such studies that they deemed worthy of inclusion. By contrast, Lindsay's (2010) meta-analysis of 108 studies of "print access" (a more limited construct) identified 44 "rigorous" studies that employed experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Shanahan and Beck reviewed only one of the nine research studies compiled by Elley (1991, 2001). They focused on the Fiji "book flood" experiment (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Mangubhai, 2001) which Elley (1991) summarized. They largely dismiss the findings because of what they claim are reporting flaws in the study. For example, they claim that it was not possible to tell whether the pre-test was in the students' native language or English and the author (Elley) did not document what was done to account for attrition over the two years of the study (Grades 4 and 5).

These claims suggest that Shanahan and Beck (2006) may not have consulted the original study (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), which they did not reference, or Mangubhai's (2001) later account of it, relying instead on Elley's (1991) summary. It is clear from Elley and Mangubhai (1983) that all testing was carried out in English including the pre-test measures. Mangubhai (2001) is also explicit on this point: "In February, 1980, pupils in Grades 4 and 5 in 15 rural schools were tested using a specially prepared ESL reading test and 12 schools were selected and matched to produce three equivalent groups" (p. 149). Attrition was also not an issue because the study was not a longitudinal study. Grade 4 and 5 classes in 1980 and Grade 5 and 6 classes in 1981 were tested as independent units, and results reported by grade level, with the result that any attrition of students between the 1980 and 1981 assessments would have been irrelevant to the results. In fact, the Elley and Mangubhai study is one of the most robustly designed of all of those considered in the NLP research synthesis. It involved random assignment of schools to treatments, relatively large sample sizes within each treatment, statistical

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controls for Grade 4 pre-test differences that were not resolved through random assignment, and replication of the original Grade 4 and 5 results through a second year of Grade 5 and 6 testing.

More recent findings reinforce the conclusion that engaged reading exerts a significant positive impact on academic achievement. In an ongoing British longitudinal study involving a nationally representative sample of several thousand students, Sullivan and Brown (2013) reported that children who were read to regularly by their parents at age 5 demonstrated significantly stronger performance on vocabulary, spelling, and math tests given at age 16 than those who did not have this early exposure to books. Furthermore, the amount of pleasure reading students reported at age 10 significantly predicted later scores at age 16. The authors were able to demonstrate a causal relationship between reading engagement and reading achievement that was not dependent either on the SES background of the parents or on cognitive or academic ability. Indices of childhood reading accounted for a gain of 14.54 percentage points in vocabulary, 10.0 percentage points in math, and 8.6 percentage points in spelling, far greater than the impact of SES (as reflected in parental educational level) which amounted to 4.4 percentage points for vocabulary, 3.2 percentage points for math, and 1.7 percentage points for spelling. The authors go on to point out that when they

> controlled for the child's test scores at age five and ten, the influence of the child's own reading [at age 16] remained highly significant, suggesting that the positive link between leisure reading and cognitive outcomes is not purely due to more able children being more likely to read a lot, but that reading is actually linked to increased cognitive progress over time (p. 37).

In summary, there is persuasive evidence from multiple sources that engaging students actively in literacy activities, both in school and in out-of-school contexts, promotes literacy attainment. This evidence includes both L1 and L2 contexts. Although most of the research has focused on *reading*, it seems appropriate to broaden the focus from simply *reading engagement* to *literacy engagement* in light of the fact that there is considerable research documenting the role of extensive writing not only in developing writing expertise but also in improving reading comprehension (Graham & Herbert, 2010).

Identity Affirmation

The NLP panel concluded that "there is surprisingly little evidence for the impact of sociocultural variables on literacy learning" (August & Shanahan, 2008b, p. 8). They acknowledged that a significant number of ethnographic and case studies provide examples of teachers giving legitimacy to students' personal, communal, or cultural backgrounds in the classroom but did not find rigorous evidence that sociocultural validation in the school benefited students' literacy outcomes. This conclusion appears to reflect the excessively narrow criteria the NLP adopted with respect to adequacy of research design and the need to isolate variables so that their separate impact could be assessed. This is rarely possible in field research where multiple variables overlap and interact. In order to establish the credibility of different hypotheses, it is necessary to adopt a broader frame of analysis where empirical observations cumulatively contribute to the development of rigorous predictive models (Cummins, 1999, 2007a).

Certainly, many sociologists and anthropologists would take issue with the claim that their disciplines have contributed no credible evidence regarding the sociocultural and educational conditions that influence students' achievement. They might also point to some obvious omissions in the NLP of quantitative studies that point to the influence of sociocultural factors.

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For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) concluded on the basis of their large-scale study of second-generation immigrant students that maintaining links to the home culture and language is associated with higher educational achievement. Bankston and Zhou (1995) similarly point out that "identification with Vietnamese ethnicity, Vietnamese reading and writing abilities, attitudes toward future education, and current study habits all have significant [positive] effects on current educational outcome" (p. 14). In addition, the many experimental studies that have documented the influence of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) have highlighted how societal power relations influence task performance.

It is noteworthy that the conclusions of the NLP in relation to sociocultural factors (Goldenberg et al., 2006) are not even accepted by the policy-makers who coordinated the California Department of Education (2010) volume to which two of the authors contributed. In her Introduction to that volume, Aguila (2010) points to the "substantial and compelling research to support the notion that powerful sociocultural factors strongly influence the outcomes of programs for English learners and other minority students and students of low socioeconomic class" (p. 12). She goes on to endorse culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010) aimed at countering "the racism, prejudice, and discrimination [these students] experience in schools and society" (p. 13). However, as noted above, with the exception of the fact that they endorse the educational legitimacy of students' bilingualism, other chapters in the California Department of Education volume make little attempt to integrate their prescriptions for academic language instruction with culturally responsive pedagogy.

In the following section, the research evidence that has been presented to this point is integrated into a theoretical framework that specifies the major instructional implications of the findings.

The Literacy Engagement Framework

As noted in previous sections, there is virtually universal consensus about the importance of scaffolding instruction, activating/building background knowledge, and extending students' knowledge of academic language across the curriculum as instructional strategies to enable linguistically diverse students to succeed academically. Most researchers also endorse both bilingual education (where feasible) and judicious instructional use of students' L1 as a means of enhancing students' access to the curriculum, activating their background knowledge, and increasing their awareness of how academic language works. However, researchers and policy-makers have been largely silent about the roles of literacy engagement and identity affirmation in promoting academic success for linguistically diverse students. The Literacy Engagement framework (Figure 17.2) integrates all of these components in a way that explicitly acknowledges the fact that a large proportion of linguistically diverse learners in the United States (and in many other countries) come from low-SES backgrounds and are members of socially marginalized communities. Print access/literacy engagement is posited as a direct determinant of literacy achievement. Linguistically diverse students will engage actively with literacy only to the extent that instruction scaffolds meaning, connects to their lives, affirms their identities, and extends their knowledge of academic language.

The distinctions captured in the framework are frequently fused in classroom practice. For example, connecting instruction to students' lives and activating their background knowledge simultaneously affirms the legitimacy of their experience and, by extension, the legitimacy of their identities. Bilingual students' identities are also affirmed when they are encouraged to use their L1 writing abilities as a stepping-stone or scaffold to writing in L2 (see Cummins & Early (2011) for multiple examples). It is important to note that the construct of *identity affirmation* is integrated directly into an analysis of how societal power relations affect academic engagement

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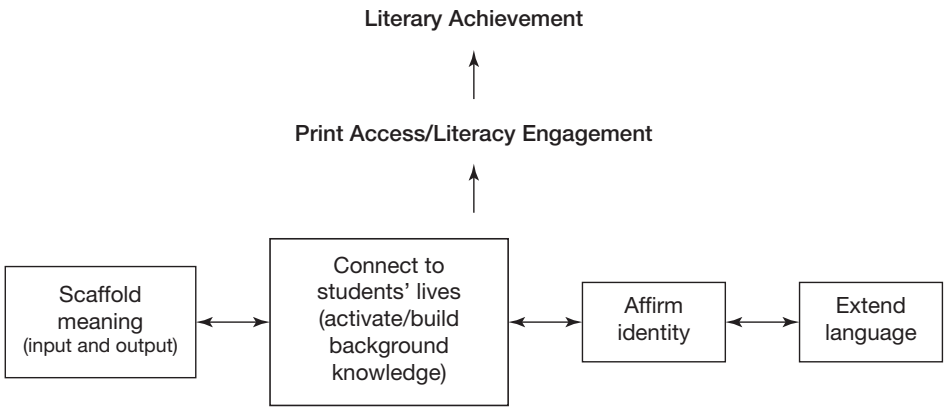

Figure 17.2 The Literacy Engagement Framework

and achievement (Cummins, 1986, 2001; Cummins & Early, 2011). Instructional practices that affirm the identities of marginalized group students and communities are, by definition, challenging coercive power relations in the wider community. This perspective is largely absent from the research syntheses reviewed in this chapter apart from the Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) monograph.

Conclusion

I have argued that current attempts in the United States to synthesize the research regarding effective instruction for linguistically diverse students have only partially accounted for the relevant data. The problematic interpretations of the research that have guided policy initiatives in the areas of reading and the education of linguistically diverse students have had major consequences as illustrated in the failure of the Reading First initiative, implemented under the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation, to show any impact on reading comprehension, reading engagement, or spelling (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). This $6-billion program aimed at low-income students required school systems to implement intensive phonics instruction and refused funding to many proposals that included any vestiges of "balanced" approaches to literacy (e.g., an emphasis on reading children's literature or on authentic writing—see Cummins (2007a) for documentation). This outcome should not have been a surprise to anyone who paid attention to the NRP finding that systematic phonics instruction was unrelated to reading comprehension after Grade 1 for normally achieving and low-achieving students (Ehri et al., 2001). Had literacy engagement been recognized as a powerful determinant of reading comprehension by researchers and policy-makers, a much wider variety of early literacy programs would have been funded and a very different set of outcomes might have been realized.

The failure of researchers and policy-makers to recognize variables related to teacher–student identity negotiation as relevant to linguistically diverse students' academic engagement and achievement has similarly resulted in ineffective policies and sterile instruction that fails to connect to students' lives. The literature is replete with case studies and evaluations that document the potentially powerful impact of culturally sustaining pedagogies that connect with students' lives and affirm their identities (e.g., Cummins, Brown, & Sayers, 2007; Cummins & Early, 2011; Sleeter, 2011). Yet these have been largely ignored in mainstream policies where high-stakes standardized testing has narrowed the curriculum for low-income and socially marginalized

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students (Afflerbach, 2005; Cummins, 2007a). Likewise, instructional prescriptions directed specifically at linguistically diverse students designed to make academic content accessible and extend their command over academic language (e.g., California Department of Education, 2010) have not explicitly recognized that engagement with language and literacy is a prerequisite for the success of these strategies.

The Literacy Engagement framework (Figure 17.2) is intended not just as a broad representation of the research evidence regarding effective instruction for linguistically diverse students but also as a heuristic tool to facilitate discussion at the level of the school in regard to the development of school-based language and literacy policies. Educators who engage in this school-based policy development process are reclaiming agency that (in the United States) has been significantly undermined by top-down mandates in relation to curriculum and assessment that have been largely evidence-free.

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