

Illustration of Dr. Jim Cummins' Grid (4 Quadrants)

Cognitively Undemanding (BICS)

Initial levels ESL?T.P.R. Following Directions Face-to-Face Conversation Getting Absence Excuse Buying popcorn Oral Presentations Content Classes (Art,Music)	A	C	Telephone Conversation Note on the Refrigerator Written Directions, Instructions (No diagrams or illustrations)
Context Embedded			Context Reduced
B		D	
Demonstrations, Experiments A-V Assisted Lessons Basic Math Computations Plane Geometry Projects and Activities Health Instruction Social Studies Science Experiments			Standardized Tests CTBS, SAT 9, CAP Reading / Writing Math Concepts and Applications Explanations of New Abstract Concepts Lecture with few Illustrations Social Science Texts Mainstream English Texts Most Content Classes

Cognitively Demanding (CALP)

All of the activities above the solid black line (included in quadrants A and C) fall into the category that Dr. Cummins calls Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills or BICS. As you can see the activities in quadrant A are context rich (as indicated by being left of the dotted line). In quadrant A you receive context clues to help with understanding. In quadrant C, you receive less or none of the context clues to help you (as indicated by being right of the dotted line). However none of the activities in either A or C are cognitively demanding.

When you go to the activities below the solid black line, you find activities which are cognitively demanding. The activities in quadrant B are cognitively demanding but they are also context embedded. You receive context clues to help you with understanding. To the contrary, the activities found in quadrant D are context reduced meaning that you won't have context clues to assist with understanding.

The ultimate goal is to take students from quadrant A, where they have conversational skills but still need context clues to comprehend well, to quadrant D where they will have success with cognitively demanding tasks without context clues.

How do you do that?

The answer lies in quadrant B where students receive instruction in cognitively demanding grade level tasks but still have the support from specially designed instruction to assist them with understanding. This is why SDAIE instruction is so important for the student who is limited in English, and why teachers must provide context rich instruction.

Also, it is important to understand that a student may exhibit language which appears fluent in general conversational settings, but who may still have difficulty in academic settings. He may have the basic fluency to be successful with cognitively undemanding tasks but may lack the literacy required for academically and cognitively demanding activities. The teacher needs to be aware of the needs of the English Language Learner in order to design the instruction with all of the supports needed. With that support in place the student will eventually be able to move into quadrant D activities with great success.