

BICS and CALP: Jim Cummins

Bilingual tasks

Cummins has devised a model which helps categorise tasks in both the Bilingual and Language classroom along a spectrum of difficulty.

Four different types of tasks:

A context embedded <i>Cognitively undemanding</i>	C context embedded <i>Cognitively demanding</i>
B <i>cognitively undemanding</i> Context reduced	D <i>cognitively demanding</i> Context reduced

What does this mean?

In a context embedded task (A and C) the student has access to other clues and support to help her understand the task - eg pictures, charts, maps, etc.

However, in A the task is so embedded in the context that the student doesn't have to think. (cognitively undemanding)

For example

- 1 Match the picture to the heading/sentence
- 2 Look at the map and write in the chart where people from each country migrated to in the 18th and 19th centuries

In C the task provides context clues but still allows the student to work things out. (cognitively demanding)

For example

- 1 Use the information in Figure 2 to draw a pie chart to show the origin of migrant workers in Germany

In a context reduced task (B and D) the student has only the text - ie listening to a lecture without visuals or reading a dense text without visual support/clues. In B the student has a task s/he can perform by copying or guessing.

For example

- 1 Copy these descriptions under the headings
- 2 Read the text and answer the true/false questions
- 3 Listen to the CD and fill in the chart

In D the student has no visual clues to do a cognitively demanding task

- 1 Answer these questions without looking at the text
- 2 Make a list of things that can make farming a risky business

In Bilingual and ELT classes the majority of tasks should be cognitively demanding and context embedded

