Linguistic Interdependence Theory

The Bilingualism and Literacy article presents the idea of how to acquire and use two languages. The prevailing theory of thought is linguistic interdependence theory. This posits that bilingual programs provide students with greater and easier access to curricular content and higher levels of literacy. The common underlying proficiency that students have in language1 (L1--ASL), will allow them to learn and master a second-language (L2--English or any other written language). There are numerous models, strategies and practices that can be applied to provide Deaf students with the opportunity to gain mastery of written language by exploiting the common underlying themes, functions and laws between L1 and L2. The strategies exploit both L1 and L2 dominance and hybrids of both in order to increase exposure, acquisition and mastery by the students.

Cummins and Linguistic Interdependence

The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis as developed by Cummins (1978) argues that certain first language (L1) knowledge can be positively transferred during the process of second language (L2) acquisition. The L1 linguistic knowledge and skills that a child possesses can be extremely instrumental to the development of corresponding abilities in the L2. An integral component of these facilitative aspects of language influence is that the L1 be sufficiently developed prior to the extensive exposure to the L2 as would be found, for example, in an educational environment. An additional theoretical framework that has motivated this study incorporates principles of Universal Grammar, namely, that there are innate properties of language shared by the human species, and that language acquisition is the result of the interaction between these biologically determined aspects of language with the learner's linguistic environment.