CALLA – Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach
Developed by Chamot and O’Malley

Background Information
The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach was originally developed as an instructional model to meet the academic needs of students learning English as a second language in American schools. Influenced by Cognitive Theory, the approach utilizes content and language learning strategies as tools for language development. The CALLA method is appropriate for students who:

- have developed social communicative skills through engagement in beginning ESL classes, and
- have already acquired basic academic language skills and are ready for metacognitive activities.

Basic Components of CALLA - The approach incorporates three basic components, which include:

1. **Content Topics** – topics that are not a repetition of the regular classroom material, but enhanced topics for better understanding which sparks the interest of students.

2. **Academic Language Skills** – including all four communicative skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language is used as a tool for academic learning as students are required to analyze and evaluate information as well as their own learning preferences.

3. **Language Learning Strategy Instruction** – Explicit instruction in language learning strategies assists students in becoming active learners who mentally analyze and reflect on their learning. Through the use of language learning strategies, students are able to learn and apply the strategies to all types of learning situations. The three types of language learning strategies include those that target metacognitive processes, those that deal with cognitive aspects of learning, and those that address social and affective skills.

The CALLA approach incorporates *Cummins’s Framework to Classify Language Activities*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context Embedded</th>
<th>Context Reduced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitively Undemanding</td>
<td>Cognitively Demanding</td>
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CALLA Content Area Instruction

- Provides hands-on experiences
- Links lesson topic to prior knowledge
- Enables students to use technical language
- Addresses different learning styles
- Provides a general overview
- Shows students how to ask and answer higher-level questions
- Allows teacher to monitor student comprehension
- Enables students to utilize graphic organizers
- Provides resources for students to use

Academic Language and ESL

What is Academic Language?
- More difficult and takes longer to learn than social language
- Consists primarily of the language functions needed for authentic academic content
- Requires the use of lower and higher-order thinking skills

Why Teach Academic Language?
- Command of academic language is key to success in grade-level classes
- Academic language is not usually learned outside the classroom
- Content teachers may assume that students already possess the skills
- Academic language promotes critical thinking

Selecting Academic Language
- Observe and record language used in content classrooms
- Analyze language included in texts
- Select authentic language tasks
- Have students use a variety of language skills to utilize the vocabulary
- Allow students options in selecting academic language to practice

Guidelines for Teaching
- Model the use of content vocabulary
- Have students identify new words
- Provide practice in listening for academic vocabulary
- Create opportunities for use
- Teach language learning strategies