

Glossary of Key Terms for Supporting English Language Learners in French–Language Schools



Below are key terms used throughout this resource. They are listed in alphabetical order to help you find and understand important concepts quickly.



Term	Definition
Academic Language	The formal language used in textbooks, tests and school assignments. It includes subject-specific vocabulary and sentence structures.
Affective Filter	A theory that students learn language better when they feel safe, confident and not anxious. High stress can block learning. (Krashen)
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills—the everyday social English used in casual conversation. Often learned within 1-2 years. (Cummins)
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency: the complex language needed for academic success. It takes 5-7 years to fully develop. (Cummins)
Code Switching	The practice of switching between two or more languages in conversation. It can help with understanding and self-expression.
Comprehensible Input	Language that is just a little above the learner's current level, but still understandable with support. Helps build new language skills. (Krashen)
Differentiated Instruction	Teaching approach that adapts content, process or product based on student needs, interests and readiness. (Tomlinson)
English Language Learners with Prior Literacy	English Language Learners with Prior Literacy are students who have developed literacy skills in at least one language (often French or another home language) and are now acquiring English as an additional language. These students can draw on their existing literacy knowledge to support their learning of English.

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English Language Learners Developing Foundational Literacy	English Language Learners Developing Foundational Literacy are students who are developing foundational literacy skills while also acquiring English as an additional language. These learners benefit from explicit instruction in both language and early literacy concepts.
First Language (L1)	The language a person learned first or speaks most comfortably at home.
Formative Assessment	Ongoing checks during learning that help the teacher adjust instruction. Includes exit tickets, discussions or short tasks.
Multilingual Learner	A student who uses more than one language in their daily life. Many ELLs are multilingual.
Scaffolding	Support given to students while they are learning a new concept. Supports are slowly removed as independence grows. (Gibbons)
Sheltered Instruction	A teaching approach that combines language goals and content goals. It helps ELLs understand academic subjects while learning English.
Translanguaging	A teaching strategy where students use their full language resources (first and additional languages) to learn and show what they know.
UDL (Universal Design for Learning)	A teaching approach that gives students multiple ways to learn, express ideas and stay engaged. Designed to support all learners.

