Two essentially different linguistic skills are involved in the mastery of a second foreign language. Stephen Krashen differentiates these two abilities through the labels acquisition and learning. Krashen (1982:10) maintains that "adults have two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language." The first way is through acquisition, which parallels first language acquisition in the child. Acquisition is a subconscious process, using language for communication. The second way is through learning. This is the conscious knowledge of language rules. In this paper I will explore the implications of this dichotomy, that is, the difference between communicative and cognitive language proficiency, for testing in the second language classroom.

Krashen's (1982) claims for acquisition and learning are closely related to his Monitor Hypothesis. The Monitor Hypothesis proposes that acquisition and learning are used in different ways. Acquisition initiates utterances in a second language and is responsible for fluency. In contrast, learning is used as a monitor or editor.

Others have likewise distinguished two separate areas of language proficiency. Hernandez-Chavez et al. (1978) point out the difference between natural communication and linguistic manipulation. Similarly, Brown (1980) refers to two types of learning, correlated with field dependence and field independence. He notes that

one kind of learning implies natural, face-to-face communication, the kind of communication that occurs too rarely in the average language classroom. The second kind of learning involves the familiar classroom activities: drills, exercises, tests, and so forth. (Brown 1980:92)

A similar dichotomy of language proficiency has been proposed by Jim Cummins (1980:175), who claims that

a dimension of cognitive/academic language proficiency can be empirically distinguished from interpersonal communicative skills such as accent, oral fluency and sociolinguistic competence in both first and second languages (L1 and L2), and that cognitive/academic proficiencies in both L1 and L2 are manifestations of the same underlying dimension.
Cummins (1980) maintains that cognitive language ability is related to both general cognitive skills and academic achievement and that it can be assessed by a variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking tests. However, while cognitive language proficiency is closely related to IQ and other aspects of academic achievement, Cummins (1980) claims that communicative skills are not. He points out that "with the exception of severely retarded and autistic children, everybody acquires basic interpersonal communicative skills in a first language regardless of IQ or academic attitude" (Cummins 1980:176).

This claim does not, however, hold true for second or foreign language learning. Unlike cognitive language skills, which Cummins (1980) maintains are easily transferrable from the native to the target language, communicative skills in the native language are no guarantee of communicative ability in the target language. Proficiency in basic communicative skills may be outside the reach of the language student, particularly in the foreign language classroom.

Traditionally, the classroom has been the accepted domain for the development of cognitive processes. Learning is associated with the formal environment, with those abilities related to IQ and academic attitude. In contrast, communicative skills, both in the first and target language, have for the most part been acquired in an informal, natural setting. Thus in the acquisition of a foreign language, there is the danger that communicative skills will be neglected almost entirely, since the informal setting does not provide the necessary exposure to the target language.

Unless there is adequate exposure to the target language, communicative skills cannot be acquired. Krashen (1982) further qualifies exposure, claiming that the input must be comprehensible. Recent methodology in second and foreign language teaching has recognized the need to provide comprehensible input in order to develop communicative skills, and few language teachers would deny the importance of these skills. Nevertheless, current work in Proficiency-based language teaching has reemphasized the role of cognitive grammatical skills, to some extent at the expense of communication.1 Omaggio (1986:49) justifies this position by claiming that "native speakers' reactions to learners' errors revealed that lexical and grammatical errors are the most obstructive to communication." She also cites Ensz' (1982) study, which found communication without grammatical accuracy to be less acceptable than less communicative, grammatically accurate production.

Higgs and Clifford (1982) likewise support an emphasis on cognitive grammatical skills over communicative skills, claiming that emphasizing communicative activities too early will cause fossilization in the speaker at lower levels of communication (2 to 2+ on the Foreign Service Institute interview rating scale). They warn that

there appears to be a real danger of leading the students too rapidly into the "creative aspects of language use," in that if successful communication is encouraged and rewarded for its own sake, the effect seems to be one of rewarding at the same time the incorrect communication strategies seized upon in attempting to deal with the communication situations presented. (Higgs and Clifford 1982: 74)

Higgs and Clifford (1982) maintain that if students are to reach level 3 on the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) exam, then cognitive grammatical skills must be an important part of the curriculum, with pronunciation

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1 See notes on page 151.