

Language Acquisition Chart

This chart was designed to help teachers better understand the process of second language acquisition. Please use this chart as a resource for learning more about the way people learn a new language in general, not as an indicator of the way all students should progress. Since curriculum gets continuously more difficult in each grade, a student may move in and out of these stages and not necessarily progress linearly.

Many factors will influence how quickly students acquire a second language, including the following:

- Age and time of entry into second language learning environment
- Attitude and motivation to learn second language
- Personality and learning style
- Language abilities in first language
- Similarity of first and second language
- Previous educational background
- Physical and emotional health
- Parental involvement in student's education
- Natural talent or ear for learning second language
- Previous exposure to second language and culture
- Maintenance of first language skills
- Supportive learning environment
- Teachers' use of ESL methods and appropriate strategies
- Amount of acceptance towards new culture

Adapted from The English Connection Newsletter

DPI Level 1- Entering Stage	
Other Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer • Pre-Production • Silent Period Stage
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student does not understand or speak English with the exception of a few isolated words or expressions • The student is listening and absorbing language • The student is adjusting to U.S. culture • 0-500 receptive word vocabulary
Typical Student Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has minimal receptive vocabulary and only comprehends key words • May not produce speech for many months • Will try to make sense out of messages • Is working to gain familiarity with the sounds, rhythm and patterns of English • Responds to commands • May participate in shared readings • Relies heavily on context and picture cues for comprehension • Student indicates comprehension non-verbally (pointing, nodding, etc.) <p>ABLE TO: observe, locate, label, match, show, classify, categorize,</p>
Teaching Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use gestures, manipulatives, visuals, props, realia (real things) • Create climate of acceptance/respect that supports acculturation • Give one and two-step directions in English supported by modeling, visuals, demonstrations, etc. • Provide materials or support staff in student's first language • Use buddies and cooperative grouping • Provide safe opportunities for student to attempt language production (i.e. chants, songs and poems) • Display print to support oral language • Use hands-on activities • Repeat directions and vocabulary • Model directions for student • Modify your speech: speak softly, slowly, emphasize key words, and simplify grammar and vocabulary • Do not talk more loudly or out of context • Use physical response to check for understanding • Ask yes/no questions • Ask students to point/draw/show • Teach content area vocabulary • Label classroom items using both languages • Be animated and enthusiastic
Relative Time Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-6 months in K-12 U.S. School System • Often can be a whole calendar year

DPI Level 2 - Beginning Stage	
Other Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Production • Beginning Level of Reading • Social Language Stage
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student understands and speaks conversational and academic English with hesitancy and difficulty • The student understands parts of lessons and directions • The student is at a pre-emergent or emergent level of reading and writing in English, significantly below grade level • The student communicates with one and two word utterances • Very limited comprehension and vocabulary • The student is still adjusting to U.S. culture
Typical Student Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces words in isolation • Verbalizes key words • Responds with one/two word answers or short phrases • Mispronunciation and grammar errors common • Identifies people, places and objects • Able to repeat and listen with greater understanding <p>ABLE TO: Name, recall, draw, list, record, point out, underline, organize</p>
Teaching Strategies	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Continue Stage 1 Strategies PLUS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify language/not content • Design lessons to motivate students to talk • Ask questions requiring simple responses, such as, yes/no?, who?, what?, which one?, how many?, etc. • Expose students to a variety of experiences with understandable texts, such as patterned or predictable books • Introduce interactive dialog journals • Introduce a student dictionary or word wall for new vocabulary words • Expand student responses by modeling more elaborated language. For example, if student says "boat," you could say, "yes, those sailors are on a boat." • Do not overly correct grammatical errors, but do model appropriate language • Use shared and paired reading to encourage oral production of speech
Relative Time Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months-2 years in K-12 U.S. School System

DPI Level 3 - Developing Stage	
Other Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate/Speech Emergence • Short phrases/Simple sentences • Social Language
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student understands and speaks conventional and academic English with decreasing hesitancy and difficulty • The student is post-emergent, developing reading comprehension and writing skills in English • The student possesses some English literacy skills that allow the student to demonstrate academic knowledge in content areas with assistance • The student still makes grammatical, word order and usage errors and is still limited in vocabulary development and comprehension of texts and spoken English • Up to 7,000 receptive/active word vocabulary
Typical Student Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will speak with less hesitation and demonstrate increased understanding • Produces longer phrases or sentences with grammatical inaccuracy • Uses newly acquired receptive vocabulary to experiment with English • Participates more fully in discussions, including those with academic content • Functions at a social level • Depends heavily on context • Studies "big ideas" and key concepts in content areas • Engages in independent reading based on oral fluency and prior experiences with print, still uses limited vocabulary • Demonstrates comprehension by responding orally and in written form (charts, graphs, diagrams) <p>ABLE TO: tell, describe, restate, compare, summarize, question, map, dramatize</p>
Teaching Strategies	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Continue Stage 1 and 2 Strategies PLUS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List and review instructions step by step • Build on student's prior knowledge • Incorporate more reading and writing • Explicitly teach writing skills • Ask students to describe personal experiences • Focus on communication in meaningful contexts, where students can express themselves in speech and print • Use semantic mapping and content webbing to develop vocabulary • Provide content-area texts, newspapers, trade books, magazines, etc. that are rich in visuals to promote conceptual development • Encourage drama, art, music and other forms of creative expression to represent meaning • Use performance based assessments • Ask open-ended questions that stimulate language production
Relative Time Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 years in K-12 U.S. School System

DPI Level 4 - Expanding Stage	
Other Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High/Advanced Intermediate • Academic Language Stage
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student understand and speaks conversational English without apparent difficulty, but understands and speaks academic English with some hesitancy • The student continues to acquire reading and writing skills in content areas needed to achieve grade level expectations with assistance • The student can communicate thoughts more completely, can participate in every day conversations without highly contextualized support • Up to 12,000 receptive/active word vocabulary
Typical Student Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in and produces connected English speech • Shows good comprehension • Demonstrates increased levels of accuracy and correctness • Uses expanded vocabulary and higher-order language usage (persuade, evaluate, etc.) • Reads a wider range of narrative genre and content texts with increasing comprehension • Makes complex grammatical errors • Functions fairly well with academic concepts • Conducts research projects • Still needs support for complex language and concepts <p>ABLE TO: Imagine, create, appraise, contrast, predict, express, report, estimate, evaluate, explain</p>
Teaching Strategies	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Continue Stage 1-3 Strategies PLUS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce more academic language and vocabulary both oral and written • Ask questions soliciting opinions, judgement, explanation (more why and how questions) • Have students brainstorm, list, web, use graphic organizers • Structure group discussions • Guide use of reference materials • Facilitate more advanced literature studies • Provide for a variety of realistic writing experiences • Publish student-authored stories, newsletter, bulletins, etc.
Relative Time Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-5 years in K-12 U.S. School System

DPI Level 5 - Bridging Stage	
Other Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced • Near Fluent • Academic Language Stage
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student understands and speaks conversational and academic English well • The student is near proficient in reading, writing, and content area skills needed to meet grade level expectations • The student requires occasional support • Beyond 12,000 receptive/active word vocabulary
Typical Student Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has advanced skills in cognitive/academic language • Participates on an academic level with age/grade peers • Maintains two-way advanced conversations around academic content • Uses more complex grammatical structures • Demonstrates comprehension in decontextualized situations • Uses enriched vocabulary • Produces language comparable to native English speakers peers <p>ABLE TO: relate, infer, hypothesize, outline, revise, suppose, verify, rewrite, assess, justify, critique, summarize, illustrate, judge, demonstrate</p>
Teaching Strategies	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Continue Stage 1-4 Strategies PLUS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate note-taking skills • Teach study skills • Teach test-taking skills • Demonstrate how to verify answers (oral and written) • Expand figurative language (idioms) • Continue on-going language development through integrated language arts and content-area activities
Relative Time Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-7 years in K-12 U.S. School System

DPI Level 6 - Full English Proficiency	
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student was formerly limited-English proficient and is now fully English proficient. • The student reads, writes, speaks and comprehends English within academic classroom settings

Adapted from various sources, including information from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, definitions pulled from Wisconsin DPI