

Language Development Stages: Sample Behaviors in the Classroom

Stage	Sample Student Behaviors	Sample Teacher Behaviors	Questioning Techniques
Pre-production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are totally new to English Generally lasts 1-3 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points to or provides other non-verbal responses Actively listens Responds to commands May be reluctant to speak Understands more than can produce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gestures Language focuses on conveying meanings and vocabulary development Repetition Does not force student to speak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point to... Find the... Put the ___ next to the ___. Do you have the ___? Is this a ___? Who wants the ___? Who has the ___?
Early Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are "low beginners" Generally lasts several weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One or two word utterances Short phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks questions that can be answered by yes/no and either/or responses Models correct responses Ensures a supportive, low anxiety environment Does not overtly call attention to grammar errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes/no (Is the trouble light on?) Either/or (Is this a screwdriver or a hammer?) One word response (What utensil am I holding in my hand?) General questions which encourage lists of words (What do you see on the tool board?) Two-word response (Where did he go? To work.)
Speech Emergence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are "beginners" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in small group activities Demonstrates comprehension in a variety of ways Speaks in short phrases and sentences Begins to use language more freely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses content on key concepts Provides frequent comprehension checks Uses performance-based assessment Uses expanded vocabulary Asks open-ended questions that stimulate language production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why? How? How is this like that? Tell me about... Talk about... Describe How would you change this part?
Intermediate Fluency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are "high beginners, intermediate or advanced" May require several years to achieve native-like fluency in academic settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in reading and writing activities to acquire new information May experience difficulties in abstract, cognitively demanding subjects at school, especially when a high degree of literacy is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fosters conceptual development and expanded literacy through content Continues to make lessons comprehensible and interactive Teaches thinking and study skills Continues to be alert to individual differences in language and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would you recommend/suggest? How do you think this story will end? What is the story mainly about? What is your opinion on this matter? Describe/compare... How are these similar/different? What would happen if...? Which do you prefer? Why? Create.

Source: Adapted from *Empowering ESOL teachers: An overview*. (No date). Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education, pp. 93-95.