

## STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Stage	Performance Descriptor(s)	Ask Student to:
Preproduction	Movement & sound , non-verbal behavior	point/listen choose/watch match/follow draw/directions use/act out number/manipulate
Early Production	Movement, sounds, words, and phrases	name/list label/categorize number/group tell/answer use/manipulate
Expanded Production	Movement, single words, phrases and simple sentences	list/define describe/explain compare/contrast retell/write follow/give steps directions/read words and phrases
Intermediate Fluency	Movement, words phrases, sentences, paragraph-type language	justify/defend opinion/debate examine/analyze create/evaluate complete/describe in detail read short passages Follow written directions
Toward Full Production		

# DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT LANGUAGE\*

## Beginner (Level 1)

### Beginning level

The child is unable to communicate in meaningful words, but may use sounds, gestures and other forms of non-verbal communication to achieve basic needs and wants.

### Higher Level

The child may be able to recite learned material and produce a list of vocabulary words on demand. Although minimal meaningful communication is produced with words, the child may have an expanded repertory of meaningful gestures and sounds. Imitation of peers' and adults' behaviors including words, gestures, intonation and prosody may support communication.

## Primary (Level 2)

### Beginning Level

Expression is restricted to the phrase or sentence level. Communication generally exists as applications of memorized words and phrases in appropriate and meaningful contexts. Expressions relate generally to personal desires, needs, and observations. An understanding of the grammar and the structure of the language is emerging but is not yet well-developed. Past and future tense may be marked by descriptive words rather than correct verb forms. Question asking and answering is beginning to emerge. The child still requires interactive support to produce sustained meaningful communications. Communication may be difficult to understand by someone unaccustomed to interacting with non-native speakers at this level. Gestures continue to be used to support comprehensible communication.

\*Adapted from Fradd, S. H. & P. L. McGee. (in press). Instructional assessment of Non-English language background students. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

## **Higher Level**

Expression is still generally restricted to the sentence level, but there is a clear effort to elaborate on a topic and to create clusters of related phrases and sentences. "What," "who" and "where" questions are asked and answered. Interactions are beginning to occur on a variety of topics, in different contexts. Grammar is still emerging and not at the level of native-speaker age peers (according to age appropriate expectations), in past, present, and future forms. The child continues to need support in sustaining meaningful interactions. An understanding of relationships, characteristics, and sequences emerges here, as the child begins to classify and organize items. Support is required to differentiate important from irrelevant features and characteristics. Coordinating conjunctions and clauses, and frequent use of prepositions appear here. Communication may still be difficult to understand by someone unaccustomed to interacting with non-native speakers. However, the child is beginning to show an awareness of the listener's perspective, and attempts to modify communication and provide listeners with meaning through a variety of forms, including gestures.

## **Intermediate (Level 3)**

### **Beginning Level**

Communication is characterized by a range of responses from words and sentences to paragraph-like products. Narratives with a beginning, middle, and ending emerge here. Multiple sentences are produced to describe events. "What," "who" and "where" questions are asked and answered in more complex forms. Questioning strategies are applied to ask and answer "how," "who" and "when" questions (within age appropriate expectations). Consistent use of past, present and future grammatical structures appear (within age appropriate expectations) with 80% to 90% accuracy. The child may need to be requested or prompted in order to speak in the past or the future. Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions appear to mark clausal relationships. Prepositional phrases are used with 80% accuracy. The child begins to develop elaborate creative fictional stories, to show cause and effect relationships, to infer

meanings and intents, and to predict outcomes. The ability to categorize and group, and to relate items or events in sequence becomes clear. There may still be a need for some support in developing responses involving higher order thinking skills in unfamiliar contexts. This child is usually understood by people unaccustomed to interacting with non-native speakers.

### **Higher Level**

The child does all of the above with greater elaboration and precision than previously. Comprehension of difference between figurative and real expressions is in evidence here. The child demonstrates an ability to produce multiple sentences that are well-developed, grammatically correct and centrally focused on a variety of topics. Appropriate resolution of personal difficulties and the ability to state and defend personal ideas and preferences emerge (within age appropriate expectations). The child demonstrates an understanding of the listener's perspective (within age appropriate expectations). While there may be elements of non-native speaker qualities within the communication (such as accent organization of information), the child is generally understood by people unaccustomed to interacting with non-native speakers. At this level the child is able to participate in academic interactions in a regular classroom setting, but may still require support in mastering concepts involving differences in cultural variations of communications, especially meanings and intents.

### **Advanced (Level 4)**

Academic language on abstract topics is coherent and cohesive, and comparable to similar language from age peers. Elementary and middle school students should be evaluated in a manner that is comparable to their age peers.