

or sometime during the first year of life (simultaneous bilingualism).

Structure of This Domain: A Developmental Progression

The continuum of “beginning,” “middle,” and “later” levels provides a framework for understanding children’s second-language development in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The first and second stages of sequential bilingual language development are combined in the “beginning” level in this domain. Young English learners may demonstrate uneven development across these foundations and may show higher levels of mastery in certain areas than in others. For example, while children may be able to understand certain words in the reading and writing areas, their productive control over grammar, pronunciation, and articulation in speaking may develop last. Related to this developmental variability across particular foundation domains is the rate of progression through the continuum of “beginning,” “middle,” and “later.” Progression through the continuum is highly contingent on the quantity and quality of language experience in both the home and the classroom. Research on the quality of preschool environments has found that learning is influenced by a number of important classroom factors (Pianta and others 2005). Chief among them are the amount and type of verbal input provided by teachers of young children (Peisner-Feinberg and others 2001). Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000) point out that children need direct and frequent interaction with individuals who know the second language very well and can provide the English learner accurate feedback.

Beginning Level

This is when typically developing children will have acquired age-appropriate language skills in their home language and, once introduced to English, will begin to develop receptive English abilities. Children at this level are actively processing the features of the English language, including vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and pragmatics. Most children speak little during this stage. They may be able to listen, point, match, move, draw, copy, mime, act out, choose, respond with gestures, and follow predictable routines. They will begin to develop an understanding of English based on their home language. Frequently, children will spontaneously use their home language even when not understood.

Middle Level

Expressive language marks the middle level of early speech production in English. Children may repeat familiar phrases that have been functionally effective, such as “lookit” or “I want” throughout the day. It is expected that vocabulary use increases and that children will begin to combine words and phrases in English. Comprehension will continue to develop, and children will likely use telegraphic and formulaic speech in English. At the same time, they may continue to use their home language and may insert words from their home language into English-language utterances; this is known as code-switching and is a normal part of second-language acquisition. This period is analogous to the third stage of sequential bilingualism.



Later Level

Children at the later level in the continuum will have much stronger comprehension skills. Children will begin to use English to learn different concepts across the curriculum. Their use of age-appropriate English grammar improves. They use their first and second languages to acquire new knowledge at home and at school. Although children are improving during this period, it should not be assumed that they have complete age-appropriate mastery of English; they are, however, able to engage in a majority of classroom activities in English. Errors in English usage are common at this point because children are continuing to experiment with the new language and are still learning its rules and structure.

Categories of English-Language Development

The preschool learning foundations in English-language development describe a typical developmental progression for preschool English learners in four general categories: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These foundations illustrate a developmental progression for children who come to preschool knowing very little, if any, English. As children move through this progression, they are developing the underlying linguistic knowledge needed to learn from a curriculum that is taught in a language they are just learning, English. As such, these foundations—especially the examples following each foundation—are intended to provide guidance to adults who are working to help preschool English learners gain the knowledge and skills necessary in all domains of the

California preschool learning foundations. The foundations are not meant to be assessment items or a checklist of behavioral indicators of the knowledge and skills that must be observed before a teacher can decide that the competency is present. Children are different from one another and will vary in the extent to which they demonstrate the behaviors described in the examples.

Listening

Children's language development is based on active listening. For example, children's receptive control precedes their productive control of language. That is, they understand more than they can produce at the onset of language learning in both their home language (or languages) and English. When children understand, they exhibit gestures, behaviors, and nonverbal responses that indicate they understand what they have heard. Listening and understanding in English will depend on children's receptive comprehension in their home language. In other words, children's listening strategies in their home language will be applied to their strategies for learning English (Bialystok 2001). Overall, the development of early literacy foundations is built on the development of active listening, the social uses of language, and nonverbal communication (Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow 2005).

Speaking

Within the classroom environment, daily routines and classroom rituals, such as organized circle time or peer-to-peer interaction on the playground, provide opportunities for English learners to use oral language in both

