

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Stages: Characteristics and Teaching Strategies

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples	Teaching Strategies*	Notes & Examples
Preproduction or Silent Period	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes in the new language but does not speak it yet. (Although some may “parrot” what the teacher says.) • Understands general ideas; focuses on general ideas and key words. • Uses clues from context to infer meaning (familiarity of the topic or situation, visual supports, tone of voice, etc.) • Starts developing listening skills (which will later become the basis for speaking and reading). • Begins to associate new sounds with meanings. • Gives mostly non-verbal responses. 	<p>My learners...</p>	<p>The teacher should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize listening comprehension by using read-alouds, music and other sources with audio. • Provide as much visual support as possible (pictures, realia, gestures, mime, video, etc.) and have students point to pictures or act out vocabulary. • Use cognates. • Speak slowly and use shorter words, but still in correct English phrasing. • Repeat key vocabulary in a systematic way. • Model "survival" language by saying and showing the meaning. For example, say, "Open your book," and then open a book while the student observes. • Ask yes/no questions. • Use TPR (Total Physical Response) techniques. • Allow and plan for non-verbal responses. • Avoid excessive error correction. Reinforce learning by modeling correct language usage when students make mistakes. • Accept and praise learners' responses and attempts to speak English. 	<p>As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples	Teaching Strategies*	Notes & Examples
Early Production	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to speak using short words and sentences, but the emphasis is still on listening and absorbing the new language. • Still has limited comprehension. • Produces one- or two-word responses; mostly key words and familiar phrases. • Uses only present-tense verbs. • Makes many errors. 	<p>My learners...</p>	<p>The teacher should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the strategies from the previous stage, but add opportunities for students to produce simple language. • Ask students to point to pictures and say the new words or phrases • Ask yes/no, choice and short answer questions • Ask learners to repeat words and phrases, but always in context • small groups to discuss a problem. Have literate students write short sentences or words in graphic organizers. • Model a phrase and have the student repeat it and add modifications. Teacher says "This crayon is blue" The student repeats it and says, "This crayon is red." Continue with as many modifications as possible. • Avoid excessive error correction. Reinforce learning by modeling correct usage. • Accept and encourage learners' efforts when they begin to produce, and expand on them. 	<p>As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples	Teaching Strategies*	Notes & Examples
Speech Emergence	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has good comprehension, but still relies heavily on context clues and familiar topics. • Understands longer teacher explanations and instructions. • Vocabulary continues to increase. • Begins producing the language more frequently, especially that of familiar communicative situations. • Can communicate with simple phrases and sentences. • Begins asking simple questions and initiating conversations. • Can respond to open-ended questions that relate to here and now situations. 	<p>My learners...</p>	<p>The teacher should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use strategies from the previous stage, but with more complex language forms. • Introduce and model the use of more specific language (academic or else) and skills by using the same techniques listed above but beginning to use a broader vocabulary. • Continue to provide visual support and make connections with student's background knowledge as much as possible. • Ask clear, literal questions that require a short answer. • Encourage students to use more language by asking simple open-ended questions. • Always have students repeat and use the phrases in context. • Have students re-tell facts, stories, experiences, descriptions, etc. • Have students write down what the teacher or other students re-tell. • Have students make short, simple presentations, providing them with the key language they will need and giving them chances to prepare and rehearse before presenting. 	<p>As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples	Notes	Notes & Examples
Speech Emergence	<p>(continues from above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes frequent grammar and pronunciation errors, but those related to common and repeated interactions begin to decrease. Understands some details and not just general ideas. Doesn't understand most language jokes yet. 	<p>(continues from above)</p> <p>My learners...</p>	<p>(continues from above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide tasks with graphic organizers or questions that focus learners' attention main ideas and some details. Provide minimal error correction, focusing mainly on correction that directly interferes with meaning. Reinforce learning by modeling correct usage. 	<p>(continues from above)</p> <p>As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples	Teaching Strategies*	Notes / Examples
Intermediate Fluency	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a very good level of comprehension. • Can relate details of an event or story, identify main ideas, and summarize a plot. • Is a lot less hesitant to speak. • Can communicate fairly fluently in social situations or about familiar topics, and with few grammatical errors. • Struggles to express himself in new contexts and academic topics, mainly due to specific gaps in vocabulary and appropriate phrases. • Will be able to offer opinions or explain his ideas producing more with less need for prompts. 	<p>My learners...</p>	<p>The teacher should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide visual support and vocabulary development. • Involve students in more linguistically demanding tasks that require extensive understanding and production. • Use and model more complex forms of language, and then engage students in doing the same. • Have students repeat and use the phrases in context. • Ask questions that require a full response with explanation. • When a student's answer is not clear, ask the student for clarification by paraphrasing and asking the student if you heard them correctly. • Challenge the student to add more. • Ask questions that require making inferences and justifying the answer. • Ask students if they agree or disagree with a statement and why. • Re-phrase incorrect statements in correct English, or ask the student if they know another way to say it. • Give more correction/feedback, even on errors that do not directly affect meaning. 	<p>(continues from above) As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples (continues from above)	Teaching Strategies*	Notes & Examples (continues from above)
Intermediate Fluency		<p>My learners...</p>	<p>(continues from above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students make short presentations, providing them with the phrases and language used in presentations ("Today I will be talking about") and giving them opportunities to practice the presentation with partners before getting in front of the class. • Provide tasks with graphic organizers or questions that focus learners' attention on main ideas and details. • Help students identify connections between new vocabulary and familiar words (e.g. synonyms, word roots, prefixes, suffixes, etc.) 	<p>As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.

Stage	Characteristics	Notes & Examples	Teaching Strategies	Notes & Examples
Advanced Fluency	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates fluently in (almost) all contexts. Can interact successfully and comfortably in new contexts, situations and topics (academic or else). 	<p>My learners...</p>	<p>The teacher should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to help learners develop language skills as gaps arise by using the strategies listed above. Continue to provide visual support, build on background knowledge, pre-teach vocabulary and help students making connections between different contexts and content areas. Offer challenging activities to expand the student's vocabulary knowledge such as identifying antonyms, synonyms and the use of a thesaurus and dictionary. Offer error correction aimed at fine-tuning learners' oral and written language skills. 	<p>As a teacher I...</p>

* May also be used to introduce new topics and vocabulary at later SLA stages.