

Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Stage of Second Language Acquisition	What Happens at This Stage At this stage, the learner can ...	This stage typically occurs _____ from time of initial L2 exposure
Pre-production	<p>This phase is often referred to as the Silent Period because learners may not speak at all. It is a receptive phase where learners are, for the most part, absorbing the language.</p> <p>Learners may repeat what is being said (parroting) and may have up to 500 words in their receptive vocabulary. In addition to parroting, they can offer non-verbal responses to questions and, sometimes, responses with high-frequency words (Yes/No). They are not generating their own spontaneous language.</p>	0 to 6 months
Early Production	<p>Learners continue to add to their receptive language and are more regularly offering one- and two-word responses to questions. They are able to identify key words and ideas in the language.</p> <p>During this stage, learners have the ability to produce a limited number of words. They use familiar phrases that may or may not have been memorized. They generally use the present verb tense when communicating. Learners in the early production stage have a vocabulary of about 1000 words.</p>	6 to 12 months
Speech Emergence	<p>Learners are more actively balancing their receptive and expressive language. Students can follow the general gist of texts and can identify certain details within those texts. Spontaneous language production is becoming easier, but still may require teacher prompting.</p> <p>Learners in this stage can use short sentences and can produce questions. They have also expanded their receptive and expressive vocabulary to roughly 3000 words. They make errors when communicating, but the errors generally do not interfere with comprehension.</p>	1 to 3 years

Stage of Second Language Acquisition	What Happens at This Stage At this stage, the learner can ...	This stage typically occurs _____ from time of initial L2 exposure
Intermediate Fluency	<p>Learners are working with more complex dimensions of language, grammatically, in terms of vocabulary, and in meaning. Their spoken language is increasingly smooth, and they can attend to big ideas and details within a text.</p> <p>These learners use more complex sentences when communicating. They are also able to think in the target language and have a working vocabulary (receptive and expressive) of about 6000 words.</p>	3 to 5 years
Advanced Fluency	<p>To a large degree, these learners resemble students who have been using the target language as a first language.</p> <p>Advanced language learners can navigate with ease a variety of social and academic situations. They are comfortable communicating in the target language. They may have errors in some aspects of language, particularly with less common structures and words.</p>	5 to 7 years

NOTE: The information about the stages of second language acquisition presented above synthesizes the initial work of Krashen and Terrell (1983) with others (e.g., Coelho, 2004; Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010; Hill and Flynn, 2008).

Sources: Coelho, E. (2004). *Adding English: A guide to teaching in multilingual classrooms* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Pippin; Fairbairn, S. B., & Jones-Vo, S. (2010). *Differentiating instruction and assessment for English learners: A guide for K–12 teachers*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon; Hill, J. D., & Flynn, K. (2008). Asking the right questions: Teachers' questions can build students' English skills. *Journal of Staff Development*, 29(1), 46–52. Retrieved from www.nsd.org; Krashen, S., & Terrell, T. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.