

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 non-verbal 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



the home language and English (Genishi, Stires, and Yung-Chan 2001). Initially, children may use telegraphic and formulaic speech in English along with gestures, nonverbal behavior, and turn-taking. Then, the use of nonverbal communication, in combination with elaborated verbal communication, will mark their progress in learning a second language. When speaking, children may code-switch; that is, combine English with their home language to make themselves understood. In fact, the vast majority of instances of code-switching are systematic and follow the grammatical rules of the two languages (Allen and others 2002; Genesee and Sauve 2000; Köppe [in press]; Lanza 1997; Meisel 1994; Paradis, Nicoladis, and Genesee 2000; Vihman 1998).

Asking questions, responding to complex grammatical patterns, and making commentaries are indicators of later development. The creative use of language and creative expression through narrative also indicate a growing sophistication of formal language use. Research has found that narrative skills developed in the first language transfer to the second language (Miller and others 2006; Pearson 2002; Uccelli and Paez 2007). Young English learners can distinguish between their home language and the language used in the classroom, and this may be demonstrated by the children's use of either the home language or English when responding to their peers and teachers. It should be noted that the development of grammatical sequences varies among the different language populations, and this may influence their development of grammar in English (*Childhood Bilingualism* 2006; Huang and Hatch 1978; Yoshida

1978). For example, in Chinese there are no words that end with “-ing” as compared to English. In Spanish, the descriptive adjective is placed after the noun, whereas in English the adjective is placed before the noun. Furthermore, the development of oral language skills in a second language is closely tied to vocabulary expansion (Saunders and O'Brien 2006). In turn, English vocabulary development plays an important role in supporting later English literacy development (August and others 2005). The productive vocabulary of English learners is typically composed of nouns; as time passes, the vocabulary incorporates a wider variety of words, such as action verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (Jia and others 2006).

It is important to note that different languages possess different social conventions, or rules of how and when to use language, that reflect a culture's orientation toward the role of adults and children as conversational partners. In addition, social conventions guide a culture's use of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies (Rogoff 2003). Therefore, social conventions influence such things as a child's expectations to initiate during conversation, the amount of talk considered appropriate, and when and how to ask questions or interrupt during conversation (*Cultural Diversity and Early Education* 1994; Genishi, Stires, and Yung-Chan 2001). In addition, the narrative structure of discourse may vary in different cultures and language groups. In U.S. classrooms, narrative discourse focuses primarily on the communication of information; in other cultures and language groups, oral narrative stresses social engagement and the importance



of family interaction (Greenfield 1994; Heath 1983).

Reading

Reading in the preschool classroom often begins as a social act that engages children in a meaningful language exchange. Reading is learned on the basis of need, purpose, and function. Children come to know the complexity of the act of reading by being read to, by reading with others, and by reading by themselves (Espinosa and Burns 2003; Halliday 2006). This culture is rich with environmental print, such as newspapers, books, and magazines; television; and home products, brand names, signs, and billboards. Increasingly, children may have access to print in their home language and in English. Thus, children may enter preschool with some knowledge of the written symbol system of their home language and its associations with real life. Children's oral language in both their home language and English will facilitate their ability to tell and retell stories. As their oral language develops, one of the first steps in reading is the development of an appreciation and enjoyment of reading. As children demonstrate an awareness that print carries meaning, they may begin to show progress in their knowledge of the alphabet in English, phonological awareness, and aspects of book handling and book reading (*Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners* 2006; *Handbook of Early Literacy Research* 2006). Parents can assist their children on the path to competency in reading by reading to their children in their home language as well as by providing appropriate reading experiences in English (Hammer, Miccio, and Wagstaff 2003; Tabors and Snow 2001).

According to Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2005), early learning foundations in literacy should include book awareness and story sense, literature awareness and comprehension, and phonological and alphabetic awareness.

Writing

Children come to know written language from their perspectives, and their conceptual interpretations are developmental in nature (Clay 2001; Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982). For example, children initially will begin to distinguish drawing from writing. Next they will progress to using facsimiles, or imitations, of letter shapes and will eventually use the symbols from their home language to represent meaning. Then they begin to use letters to represent meaning. These strings of letters are the beginning of the alphabetic principles that govern alphabetic languages, such as English and Spanish. Children's knowledge of the written language is facilitated by their engagement with letters and practice in writing their names on their own or with help from others (*Handbook of Early Literacy Research* 2006). Children will come to know that writing is used for different functions, that it is associated with oral language, that it names objects in their environments, that it is used to communicate ideas, and that it is used creatively to express their feelings, experiences, and needs. In the early childhood practice, the development of early literacy in writing begins with children understanding that the writing process is a mechanism to communicate their ideas, express themselves, and name objects in their world (Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow 2005).



Overall, the teacher plays a crucial role, providing opportunities for children to develop their oral language and literacy skills. For example, the teacher can foster development in the area of listening and speaking through the use of questioning strategies, language elaboration and feedback (Cazden 1988; Lyster and Ranta 1997), and the facilitation of informal peer interactions with monolingual English-speaking peers (Tabors 1997). Those

opportunities will support children's literacy development as well. The teacher can also engage children in storybook reading, create a print-rich environment, structure opportunities to use writing for a variety of purposes, and provide other activities to further enhance literacy development (Dickinson and Tabors 2002; Espinosa and Burns 2003; Genishi, Stires, and Yung-Chan 2001).

