

**From: Patterns of Learning, CLPE 1990**

## **Stages of English Learning**

The following scale describes aspects of bilingual children's development through English which teachers might find helpful. It is important to remember that children may move into English in very individual ways, and that the experience for an older child will be different from that of a young child. The scales emphasise the social aspects of learning as well as the linguistic. Obviously attitudes in the school to children and the languages they speak will influence their confidence in using both their first and second languages.

### **Stage 1 - new to English**

Makes contact with another child in the class. Joins in activities with other children, but may not speak. Uses non-verbal gestures to indicate meaning-particularly needs, likes and dislikes. Watches carefully what other children are doing, and often imitates them. Listens carefully and often 'echoes' words and phrases of other children and adults. Needs opportunities for listening to the sounds, rhythms and tunes of English through songs, rhymes, stories and conversations. If young may join in repeating refrain of a story. Beginning to label objects in the classroom, and personal things. Beginning to put words together into holistic phrases (e.g. no come here, where find it, no eating that). May be involved in classroom learning activities in the first language with children who speak the same first language. May choose to use first language only in most contexts. May be willing to write in the first language (if s/he can), and if invited to. May be reticent with unknown adults. May be very aware of negative attitudes by peer group to the first language. May choose to move into English through story and reading, rather than speaking.

### **Stage 2 - becoming familiar with English**

Growing confidence in using the English s/he is acquiring. Growing ability to move between the languages, and to hold conversations in English with peer groups. Simple holistic phrases may be combined or expanded to communicate new ideas. Beginning to sort out small details (e.g. 'he' and 'she' distinction) but more interested in communicating meaning than in 'correctness'. Increasing control of the English tense system in particular contexts, such as story-telling, reporting events and activities that s/he has been involved in, and from book language. Understands more English than s/he can use. Growing vocabulary for naming objects and events, and beginning to describe in more detail (e.g. colour, size, quantity) and use simple adverbs. Increasingly confident in taking part in activities with other children through English. Beginning to write simple stories, often modelled on those s/he has heard read aloud. Beginning to write simple accounts of activities s/he has been involved in, but may need support from adults and other children in her/his first language if s/he needs to. Continuing to reply on support of her friends.

### **Stage 3 - becoming confident as a user of English**

Shows great confidence in using English in most social situations. This confidence may mask the need for support in taking on other registers (e.g. in science investigation, in historical research.) Growing command of the grammatical system of English - including complex verbal meanings (relationships of time, expressing tentativeness and subtle intention with might, could etc....) and more complex sentence structure. Developing an understanding of metaphor and pun. Pronunciation may be very native-speaker like, especially that of young children. Widening vocabulary from reading a story, poems and information books and from being involved in maths, and science investigations, and other curriculum areas. May choose to explore complex ideas (e.g. in drama/role play) in the first language with children who share the same first language.

### **Stage 4 - a very fluent user of English in most social and learning contexts.**

A very experienced user of English, and exceptionally fluent in many contexts. May continue to need support in understanding subtle nuances of metaphor, and in anglo-centric cultural content in poems and literature. Confident in exchanges and collaboration with English-speaking peers. Writing confidently in English with a growing competence over different genres. Continuing and new development in English drawn from own reading and books read aloud. New developments often revealed in own writing. Will move with ease between English and the first language depending on the contexts s/he finds herself in, what s/he judges appropriate, and the encouragement of the school.

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