

## LANGUAGE ACQUISITION STAGE 5

### Fluency

Stage five is the final stage of language acquisition and is known as the “Fluency” or “Proficient” stage. It takes about 5-7 years to achieve this level of proficiency, and it usually signals the end of supplemental instruction. However, because the demands of academic language are ongoing and difficult, it is important to monitor this student for continued achievement. The stage five student’s vocabulary is above 5000 words and the equivalent WELPA level is “Transitional” which meets mastery and requires that he/she exit from the State Transitional Bilingual Program services.

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During stage five, the student’s communication seems as proficient as that of a native English speaker. The student is able to joke and tease quite easily in English and may be indistinguishable from native English speaking peers. The student’s cognitive academic language continues to develop, as it does throughout lifelong learning. The student reads with expression and uses strategies flexibly to find the meaning of unfamiliar words. The student is able to skim text to find specific information and distinguishes between significant and minor details. The student is able to organize content area information in outline form and write extended length pieces.

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Because of the high level of proficiency at stage five, the student needs less direct instruction and more facilitation of learning. At this stage, the content can be more student-driven and the teacher's expectations of output (writing and speaking) can match that of a native English speaker. However, because academic demand can still be difficult even at stage five, the student may thrive even more with a teacher who implements effective teaching strategies that we know support all students. Strategies such as having clear objectives that are understood by the students; tying the learning to the student's backgrounds and lives; providing ample opportunity for student discourse and interaction; providing time for metacognition; including sense-making activities with time to practice what is learned and apply it to new situations; modeling processes and having clear expectations for tasks (rubrics); using visuals and graphics that support learning; teaching learning strategies including how/when to use them. All of these will help all students succeed, but are essential for the English language learner even at stage five.



Because stage five students have nearly native communication, the teacher can have the same expectations for performance as native English speakers. Answers to levels of questions will be native-like such as:

EVALUATION: "Recommend a different environment for a mother duck to raise her ducklings. Defend your choice."

SYNTHESIS: "How would you protect the wildlife in a forest where hiking was very popular?"

ANALYSIS: "Why do you think a bear hibernates in winter?"

APPLICATION: "How would a deer camouflage itself in the forest in the winter? In the desert?"

COMPREHENSION: "Why do fish need gills to live in the water?" "How do gills work?"

KNOWLEDGE: "Tell me everything you know about a clam."

