

# TESOL LEVELS: An Understanding

## PRE-CONVERSATIONAL/BEGINNERS

**Pre-conversational:** (0-6 months in regular classroom with ESL support)

- Tries to distinguish one word from another in spoken English
- Silently observes surroundings
- Mentally fatigued from unfamiliar environment
- Uses body language to comprehend and communicate; gestures, facial expressions, pointing, etc.
- Relies on background and prior knowledge, both cultural and personal
- Initiates communication for personal needs
- Repeats utterances and words
- Requires visual aids and repetition
- Unaware of errors made
- Struggles with writing English alphabet if native language alphabet differs

**Beginners:** (6 months up to 2 years in regular classroom with ESL support)

- Speaks in single words or simple sentences
- Uses mostly present tense words
- Often omits words or parts of words
- Has a limited vocabulary
- Understands more than can say
- Unaware of errors made unless indicated by native speaker
- Requires visual aids and repetition
- Comprehends single words and short phrases
- Produces single words or patterned sentences in written form – no free expression
- Relies on background and prior knowledge, both cultural and personal

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## Teaching Strategies & Activities

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| -Modeling language | -Selecting                                   |
| -Mimicking         | -Drawing, “Pictionary”                       |
| -Choral reading    | -Think-pair-share                            |
| -Echo reading      | -Rhymes, songs                               |
| -Object labels     | -Repetition                                  |
| -Word banks        | -Non-verbal role-play                        |
| -Visual aids       | -Circling                                    |
| -Pointing          | -Total Physical Response (TPR), “Simon Says” |

# TESOL LEVELS: An Understanding

## INTERMEDIATE

**Intermediate:** (2 years up to 5 years in regular classroom with ESL support)

- ◆ Uses more complex sentence patterns
- ◆ Aware of some mistakes made, correction needs help and guidance
- ◆ Understands more than speaks
- ◆ Broader vocabulary, both receptive and expressive
- ◆ Confused by idioms and local expressions
- ◆ Understands classroom discussions with visual aids and/repetition
- ◆ Initiates communication more readily
- ◆ Has gaps in knowledge of language and culture
- ◆ Self-conscious about using the new language in front of class
- ◆ Expresses opinions and needs more easily
- ◆ Writes complex sentences and compositions with numerous errors
- ◆ Reads aloud familiar passages only
- ◆ Struggles with written English pronunciation and spelling
- ◆ More comfortable in social setting
- ◆ Conversational English more proficient than academic English
- ◆ Relies on prior knowledge of English as well as increased understanding of new culture
- ◆ Has an increased understanding of the English grammar system
- ◆ Gets confused and frustrated without clearly defined instructions for activities and tests

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### Teaching Strategies & Activities

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|----------------------|--|
| -Retelling Stories   | -Verbal/non-verbal role-play                 |
| -Mimicking           | -Sequencing                                  |
| -Choral reading      | -Silent reading                              |
| -Echo reading        | -Journaling in simple English                |
| -Object labels       | -Writing process and short essays            |
| -Word banks          | -Discussions and dialogues                   |
| -Visual aids         | -Drawing, "Pictionary"                       |
| -Think-pair-share    | -Editing and correction with guidance        |
| -Rhymes, songs       | -Total Physical Response (TPR), "Simon Says" |
| -Repetition          | -Simplify vocabulary in note taking          |
| -Describe and define | -Explain grammar as needed                   |
| -Drawing             | -Summarize                                   |

# TESOL LEVELS: An Understanding

## ADVANCED

**Advanced:** (5 years to 7 years in regular classroom with little ESL support)

- ◆ Uses more complex sentence patterns
- ◆ Aware of mistakes made
- ◆ Self-corrects with little guidance
- ◆ Understands more than speaks
- ◆ Very broad vocabulary, both receptive and expressive
- ◆ Confused by some idioms and local expressions
- ◆ Understands classroom discussions with little trouble
- ◆ Initiates communication
- ◆ Continues to have some gaps in knowledge of language and culture
- ◆ Less self-conscious about using the new language in front of class
- ◆ Expresses opinions and needs easily
- ◆ Writes complex sentences and compositions with few errors
- ◆ Reads aloud with relative ease
- ◆ Struggles with written English pronunciation and spelling at times
- ◆ Comfortable in most social settings
- ◆ Conversational English and academic English about same proficiency
- ◆ Relies on prior knowledge of English as well as increased understanding of new culture
- ◆ Has a good grasp of the English grammar system

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### Teaching Strategies & Activities

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|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| -Retelling Stories | -Verbal and non-verbal role-play |
| -Essays            | -Journaling in simple English    |
| -Analyzing         | -Debate                          |
| -Silent reading    | -Discussions and dialogues       |
| -Writing process   | -Summarize                       |
| -Think-pair-share  | -Justify and defend              |
| -Word banks        | -Critique                        |
| -Visual aids       |                                  |
| -Note-taking       |                                  |
| -Editing           |                                  |
| -Drawing           |                                  |