**Questioning and Requesting Strategies and Language Proficiency Levels**

**Beginning Level**

Students at the beginning levels of learning a new language can show that they understand you by following your directions, pointing, answering yes/no questions and agree/disagree questions, or role-playing.  They can also label parts of drawings, illustrations, graphs and diagrams.  Because their language production is more limited than their comprehension, they most easily respond to questions that elicit a nonverbal response or a one or two word response.  Concrete objects and gestures (as well as drawings, illustrations, graphs, and diagrams) can help them understand their teachers’ questions.

Questions for beginning students can be accompanied by physical or pictorial models.  They can include but are not limited to the following forms:

- Is this a square?  (yes/no)

- Is this a circle or a triangle? (either/or question)

- Which is a circle? (Identification question)

- Which is the blue circle? Point to it. (identification question)

- Where is the biggest circle? Point to it. (identification request)

- Point to the biggest circle. (Identification request)

- What is that? (wh- identification question eliciting a single word response)

- What do we call this shape?  It is a triangle. (Wh- question that elicits a complete sentence)

- Tell me about this shape.  *The triangles is red.  The triangle has three corners*.  (instead of *vertices*)

Students at this level are not cognitively deficient and can participate in tasks requiring a high level of cognition and complex analysis.  They are capable of responding to a variety of question types.  They are limited in the types of questions they can understand.  They need to be taught simple question types (like What? Who?).  As they advance in English proficiency, beginning level students will be able to use short, simple sentences.  Although they may make many grammatical errors in speech, they will be able to reproduce familiar phrases, use grammatical features, and write sentences with math words, expressing main ideas.  Choral and individual repetition of question and request forms help them remember and learn the forms. They also benefit from scaffolding and the instruction of simple question types.

**Intermediate Level**

Students with an intermediate level of proficiency are often fluent.  They can communicate most of their social needs in fluent English.  They can produce lengthy sentences with many errors.  Often they delete word endings and use function words (e.g., articles and prepositions) incorrectly or delete them.  Intermediate-level students benefit from the instruction of question formation and feedback.  Students at the intermediate level also need many opportunities to practice using questions correctly. Question “frames” and sentence “frames” help them to produce questions and respond to them accurately. The following types of questions and requests are appropriate for students of the intermediate level:

- Now that we have studied triangles, how can we compare them to another polygon?

- What are three important characteristics of a polygon?

- Why do you believe that a triangle is a good shape for a building?

- Tell me four true things about your pattern.

- How did you make your pattern?

- Do you agree? Why or why not?

- What information/facts do you have?

- What strategies are you going to use?

- Do you see a pattern? Can you explain it?

- What are the key points in this lesson?

-What are four true things about your polygonal train? Write them down.

It is important to ask intermediate learners how and why questions as well as other open ended question types.  They should be encouraged to expand on these questions.  Scaffolding (such as note-taking, learner dictionaries, word banks, graphic organizers, and sentence frames) helps intermediate students understand their teachers’ questions and answer them.  Modeling and instruction helps intermediate-level students formulate their own questions.

**Advanced Level**

In the early stages of advanced proficiency, students are continuing to develop academic vocabulary.  They may have difficult using the words of math.  They are approaching grade level reading proficiency.  Their social language appears to be well developed.

Questioning strategies at this level may include the those that elicit the highest order of cognition.  Students with an advanced level of proficiency can respond readily to questions that pertain to constructing arguments and elaborating on ideas.  They still require scaffolding (including the use of note-taking, graphic organizers, word banks, and sentence frames) to benefit from instruction.

Students at this level should be formulating their own questions based on instruction and modeling from the instructor and classmates who are proficient in English.  They benefit from the instruction of question formation and are ready to learn complicated question formations, complex sentence structures, and academic words.  They also benefit from the instruction of collocations in questions.  (How does your idea build UPON \_\_\_\_\_’s idea?)

At this level, it is important to continue to ask open-ended questions and questions that require higher order thinking.   Students can also understand lengthy questions with complicated grammatical structures (e.g., including the passive construction), especially if the questions are taken apart for the students and explained. Typical question types that a student with advanced proficiency in English can produce include the following:

- What can you predict from the information that you have been given in the text?

- How can you find the solution to the problem?

- How is your answer similar to \_\_\_\_\_’s answer?

- How is your answer different from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s answer?

- What can you tell me about your analysis of all the variables in the problem?

- What have you discovered about the problem?

- How does your idea build on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s idea?

- How can you convince the rest of us that your answer is correct?

- Why did you decide to organize the results like that?

Directions: Complete the graphic organizer below.

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| Proficiency Levels | Description of Language Abilities | Description of Instructional Techniques Benefiting the Learners |
| Beginning Level |  |  |
| Intermediate Level |  |  |
| Advanced Level |  |  |