

Figure 2.18. General Progression of the CA ELD Standards ELD Continuum

ELD Continuum				
Native Language	→ Emerging → Expanding → Bridging →			Lifelong Language Learners
ELs come to school with a wide range of knowledge and competencies in their primary language, which they draw upon to develop English.	ELs at this level typically progress very quickly, learning to use English for immediate needs as well as beginning to understand and use academic vocabulary and other features of academic language.	ELs at this level increase their English knowledge, skills, and abilities in more contexts. They learn to apply a greater variety of academic vocabulary, grammatical structures, and discourse practices in more sophisticated ways, appropriate to their age and grade level.	ELs at this level continue to learn and apply a range of advanced English language knowledge, skills, and abilities in a wide variety of contexts, including comprehension and production of highly complex texts. The “bridge” alluded to is the transition to full engagement in grade-level academic tasks and activities in a variety of content areas without the need for specialized instruction.	Students who have reached full proficiency in the English language, as determined by state and/or local criteria, continue to build increasing breadth, depth, and complexity in comprehending and communicating in English in a wide variety of contexts.

The proficiency level descriptors and grade-level and grade-span standards in the CA ELD Standards (CDE 2014a) offer additional information on these stages.

While guidance on the general stages of English language development is provided, the complex and multilayered process of learning English as an additional language does not necessarily occur in a linear fashion. An EL, at any given point along his or her trajectory of English learning, may exhibit some abilities (e.g., speaking skills) at a higher proficiency level, while at the same time exhibiting other abilities (e.g., writing skills) at a lower proficiency level (Gottlieb, 2006). Similarly, a student may understand much more than she or he can speak. Additionally, a student may successfully perform a particular skill at a lower proficiency level (e.g., reading and analyzing an informational text) and, at the next higher proficiency level, need review in the same reading and analysis skills when presented with a new or more complex type of informational text.

Cross-Language Relationships

Research has demonstrated that the knowledge, skills, and abilities students have developed in their primary language can *transfer* to their development of English language and literacy. For example, phonological awareness, syntactic awareness, and alphabetic knowledge transfer across languages, meaning that ELs who have already learned these skills in their primary languages do not need to relearn them in English. This transfer works differently, however, depending on similarities