

*Understanding Second Language Acquisition* by Lourdes Ortega

**Discussion Questions for Chapter 6: Development of Learner Language**

1. Describe the assumptions that underlie an interlanguage (IL) approach to the study of learner language. In other words, how would researchers who study language from an IL perspective answer these four questions: (a) How does the mind process language? (b) What are the roles of competence and development? (c) What does “IL” refer to exactly? (d) And how is IL best measured?
2. Keeping these assumptions in mind, conduct your own IL analysis using either the sample of IL speech provided or a sample of speech or writing of your choosing. First, choose one or two features to examine (in the case of the provided sample, you could examine subject pronouns, morphology, negation, articles, or word order). Which of these features is the most systematic? Which is the most variable? What criteria do you use to define what is ‘systematic’ or ‘variable’?
3. Next, consider the data in light of any relevant principles discussed in chapter 6, such as the four IL processes discussed by Ortega on pages 116-118 and the concept of fossilization as discussed on pages 133-136.
4. Finally, keeping in mind the controversies about instruction that Ortega discusses on pages 136-140, suggest how instruction may lead to further IL development for the sampled learner(s).