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Foreword

Several years ago, while researching various ways to improve students' academic language development, Frey and Fisher (2011)

> While there is ample research on the importance of talk in the classroom, the reality is that students do not engage in academic conversations without guidance. A simple command to "turn to your partner" is just as likely to result in an exchange about social matters as it is to be focused on making a prediction about the main character in the book being discussed or summarizing the process used to solve a linear equation. The rich and meaningful talk teachers hope for may or may not transpire in the hum of a busy classroom. (p. 15)

This is a problem. If students spend their interaction time focused on social language, their formal language registers will not develop. Researchers and practitioners know that student-to-student interactions are critical to developing language, especially academic language (Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg, 2008). Simply said, students do not learn a new language from listening to a language, they learn a language when they produce a language. This means that teachers have to ensure that students have ample opportunities to talk and interact, and that this talk is academic in nature.

Importantly, there is also evidence that students' oral academic language development facilitates their written academic language development (Frey, Fisher, & Nelson, 2013). When students know how to express their thinking in academic ways through talk, they can more easily read the academic language of others and produce sophisticated writing that allows them to influence the understanding of others. James Britton (1983) puts it more elegantly: "Reading and writing float on a sea of talk" (p. 11). The question is, how do teachers create an environment in which academic language is featured prominently? My answer has four parts. First, they

need to use language fluidly and expressively in front of their students. In other words, they need to model. Second, they need to provide scaffolds for students to apprentice academic language. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, such as through the use of sentence frames. Third, they need to provide time in class every day when students can interact. As part of this time, teachers need to establish their expectations and support students in interacting. And fourth, they need high-quality instructional materials that encourage academic language development.

TEACHER TALK: MODELING AND PURPOSE

Every day, in every class, teachers should model their thinking using academic language. Confirmed by both behavioral science and neuroscience, humans are very adept at mimicking other humans (Frey & Fisher, 2010). In other words, we learn when we observe other people performing a task or explaining a process. This is obvious when we observe others engage in a motor task, but is less obvious when considering a cognitive task. After all, thinking is invisible. As Duffy (2003) notes, "The only way to model thinking is to talk about how to do it. That is, we provide a verbal description of the thinking one does or, more accurately, an *approximation* of the thinking involved" (p. 11). And these verbal descriptions must be filled with rich, descriptive, academic language.

In addition to modeling, students need to know what they're expected to learn. Our profession has known for decades that having a clear objective, learning target, or purpose positively impacts student learning (Marzano, 2009). For anyone learning academic language, not just English language learners, the purpose should include both the content to be learned as well as the language to be developed or practiced. The language purpose is critical for focusing attention on vocabulary, language structure, and language functions (Fisher & Frey, 2010). For example, a classroom focused on composing a compare and contrast essay might have the following purposes:

- Students will compare and contrast two texts using their knowledge of text structure, author's purpose, and content covered.
- Students will use signal words appropriate for comparing and contrasting.

The first provides students with information about what they will do and what learning they need to demonstrate. The second focuses on the specific academic language, in this case language structure, that the teacher expects them to use.

SCAFFOLDS FOR STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Without language support, students are unlikely to engage in academic language usage with their peers. Although there are a number of ways to provide scaffolding, such as peer language brokers, word banks, and teacher modeling (Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg, 2008), one resource commonly used is sentence frames. College composition experts Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (2006) recommend the use of sentence and paragraph frames (they call them templates) as an effective way for developing students' academic writing skills. They defend the use of frames or templates by noting

> After all, even the most creative forms of expression depend on established patterns and structures. Most songwriters, for instance, rely on a time-honored verse-chorus-verse pattern, and few people would call Shakespeare uncreative because he didn't invent the sonnet or dramatic forms that he used to such dazzling effect. [. . .] Ultimately, then, creativity and originality lie not in the avoidance of established forms, but in the imaginative use of them. (pp. 10–11)

For example, a teacher might provide students the following frames for their peer interactions during math:

- Another way to solve this would be ____.
- In order to solve this problem, I need to know ____.
- Why did you choose that operation? (clarification) I chose that operation because _____. (justifying the solution)
- The strategy I used to solve this problem is ____ based on ____.
- Another strategy to solve this problem is ____.
- The key words ____ helped me to solve the problem using ____.

These frames provide students with support such that they begin to think this way when they interact with others, and when they write about their experiences.

DEDICATED INTERACTION TIME

This seems so obvious to say that students need, no deserve, time to interact using academic language every day (Pianta, Belsky, Houts, & Morrison,

2007), but too many classrooms are devoid of student talk so I'm going to have to say it again. Perhaps louder and slower this time? Give students time to talk! Of course, they need to know what they're supposed to talk about and have some scaffolding to do so, but they need to practice using academic language if they are going to get good at it. There are excellent resources for facilitating student talk in the classroom, which brings me to the materials teachers need to develop students' academic language.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

I'm always on the lookout for ways to provide my students with the most important gift I can think of: language. I recognize that it's not as simple as a teacher giving students a gift, and that learning is socially constructed, but when I see the face of a student who has mastered a new language, it sure looks like a gift. Every one of us, teachers all over the world, knows the look on a learner's face to show understanding of a new language. It makes us proud. It makes us happy. And it makes us realize why we do what we do.

So I scour instructional materials looking for better ways to provide students with the highest quality language instruction that I can. I read widely, looking at pages and pages of text, hoping to find one new idea that I can use to facilitate language learning for students. Sadly, most of what I find isn't very useful. More often than not, I read recycled ideas and recommendations that have little to no basis in the research evidence much less practical application. In this book, I'm happy to say that I found more than one idea; I've found tons of ideas. Ideas that are grounded in evidence, and perhaps even more important, grounded in practicality.

The book starts with a discussion of academic language. It's clear that the authors deeply understand the meaning of academic language and the nuances of the concept behind the label. They provide a reasoned and rational discussion of the term, while connecting it with the professional literature based that has informed generations of teachers. They stretched my thinking, pushing on the edges of my understanding, helping expand my concept of the ways in which academic language can, and should, be taught.

And quite frankly, that would have been enough for me to highly recommend this book. I'll say it again, the explanation and examples of academic language and the ways in which this information is presented is worth the price of the text. But lucky for me, there's even more to this text. There are numerous examples of lessons that develop students' linguistic prowess. I'm fortunate because I received an advance copy of this text and

was able to try out many of the lessons in my own work. I say that I'm fortunate because I was able to implement the ideas earlier than most. Now, it's time for everyone to implement the lessons ideas contained herein.

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Preface

Academic language seems to permeate the halls of schools these days. With this the new norm, a major question becomes: "How can we enhance students' opportunities for success in our diverse classrooms?" This volume is the last in a series of three books devoted to highlighting academic language use in the design, implementation, and reflection of standards-referenced English language arts units in Grades 6 through 8. It represents the voices of teachers as well as their students and is primarily geared to fellow teachers—sometimes working single-handedly, often with a partner or as members of a professional learning community—who face a changing student demographic.

While we accentuate the value of linguistic and cultural diversity in these exemplary classrooms, the issues that teachers and school leaders face are universal:

- What is the academic language embedded in student standards?
- What is the academic language of instructional materials?
- How can multiple texts and voices contribute to the teaching and learning of academic language?
- How can we incorporate academic language into instructional units?
- What is the evidence that teachers have used academic language in their instruction and that students have integrated academic language into their learning?

We begin our exploration into the complexities of academic language in Chapter 1, with series editors Margo Gottlieb and Gisela Ernst-Slavit. Here it becomes apparent that not only are there distinct dimensions of academic language, but communication is also influenced by metalinguistic, metacognitive, and sociocultural awareness of the

participants. Delving a bit further, Gottlieb and Ernst-Slavit examine the often blurred distinction between the Common Core State Standards and English language proficiency/development standards. The last section of the chapter introduces the Curricular Framework—the organizing tool for standards-referenced instruction and assessment throughout the series and the backdrop for promoting content and language learning.

An extension of the first chapter presents a series of charts of the major text types from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts with examples of text features, and language structures for each language domain, Grades K through 8. As is emphasized in the CCSS, we want to ensure that all students are pre-pared to collaborate in speaking and listening, engage in complex text, and use evidence in their writing. As each of the other chapters is an in-depth case study of a grade-level classroom, this fuller spectrum of the scope of English language arts as envisioned in the CCSS should be useful.

In Chapter 2, Emily Y. Lam, Marylin Low, and Ruta' Tauiliili-Mahuka allow a glimpse at a sixth grade language arts team in action as they skillfully integrate content and language. Tulsi and Sina, the language arts teachers, partner to create a dynamic, multidisciplinary unit around the theme of legends and life—one that is sensitive, relevant, and reflective of the sociocultural context of their lives in the Pacific. This teacher team carefully crafts the integration of science and language concepts, moti-vated by the use of multiple sets of standards, to intentionally couple with the text features of argumentation across the four language domains. Students plunge into project-based learning around the issue of whether shark fishing should be banned and evoke the help of Talking Chief Tautai from the community along with technology, relying on the Internet and the interactive whiteboard in their room. Investigating expository and narrative texts provides students with different perspectives as they collaboratively prepare for the culminating class debate through oral dis-cussion and writing.

In Chapter 3, Darina Walsh and Diane Staehr Fenner relate the activities of Karen Jordan and her seventh grade collaborative learning team as they explore the many facets of research, a new genre for these middle school students. As the enduring understanding for the research unit is for the students to become critical and ethical readers and writ-ers, much of the six weeks is devoted to sensitizing the class to the use of technology in gathering, analyzing, and evaluating information in literary and informational texts. First, the students generate research

questions from texts they are reading in their literature circles and then work on their specificity until the questions are "just right." Next, the class delves into evaluating research sources for their reliability and authenticity. Karen devotes the next part of the unit to teaching students how to paraphrase and effectively use quotations in their research. Ultimately, through the careful scaffolding of content and academic language, individual students produce a research product of their own choosing.

The last chapter, by Liliana Minaya-Rowe, describes an engaging unit on Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Cask of Amontillado." In this exploration of gothic literature, Alberto and his twenty-one eighth grade students discuss horror literature and film, view video clips of Poe's life and work, engage in conversations about the textual characteristics of gothic stories, read and act Poe's short story, and write their own short stories. Throughout this five-week unit, readers witness how the teacher is continually assessing his students' progress and making adjustments accordingly. The use of exit cards, careful reviews of students' graphic organizers, and ongoing observations are examples of the tools Alberto uses to closely monitor his students' progress. One remarkable factor that contributes to the success of this unit is the deliberate connection made between current horror films and literature with the work of Poe and other Victorian gothic literature.

In school, English language arts is a content area in and of itself, but when coupled with other disciplines, it often becomes richer and stronger. Such is the case in *Academic Language in Diverse Classrooms* where throughout the series, the integration of the teaching and learning is evident among English language arts and mathematics, the students' home languages, science, and social studies in exemplary units from kindergarten through Grade 8. The intermingling of these disciplines also reflects in the teachers' selection of an assortment of content and language standards—including but not limited to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, the Next Generation Science Standards, and English language proficiency/development standards—that anchor their planning, implementation, and reflection on their instructional and assessment practices.

Along with the foundation book, *Academic Language in Diverse Classrooms: Definitions and Contexts* (2014) by Margo Gottlieb and Gisela Ernst-Slavit, each of the three volumes for mathematics and language arts represents a grade-level cluster. Below are the contributors and their content topics for the K–8 English language arts series.

The K–8 English Language Arts Series

Volume	Contributor	Grade Level	Content Topic
1	Grabriela Cardenas Barbara Jones Olivia Lozano	K	Reading and Oral Language Development: My Family and Community
	Eugenia Mora-Flores	1	Using Informational Texts and Writing Across the Curriculum
	Sandra Mercuri Alma D. Rodríguez	2	Developing Academic Language Through Ecosystems
2	Terrel A. Young Nancy L. Hadaway	3	Informational and Narrative Texts: Our Changing Environment
	Penny Silvers Mary Shorey Patricia Eliopoulis Heather Akiyoshi	4	Biographies, Civil Rights, and the Southeast Region
	Mary Lou McCloskey Linda New Levine	5	Literature and Ocean Ecology
3	Emily Y. Lam Marylin Low Ruta' Tauliili-Mahuka	6	Argumentation: Legends and Life
	Darina Walsh Diane Staehr Fenner	7	Research to Build and Present Knowledge
	Liliana Minaya-Rowe	8	A Gothic Story: "The Cask of Amontillado"