Bridging Content and Language

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Planning with a Focus on Language Objectives
by Nancy Lawrence, with APS teachers from College of Santa Fe, Spring '03: 462/562

Often people say that sheltered instruction is simply "good teaching." A powerful element that sets effective sheltered instruction apart is a clearly developed focus on language. Although this is a hallmark of best practices in instruction for English language learners, it is also vital for the development of good literacy and communication skills for all learners. Planning around language objectives and standards benefits both students and teachers in many ways. Explicit language objectives clarify content standards, topics, and teaching/learning activities. These objectives can:

- support acquisition of language in a variety of registers from informal to formal, both oral and written, for academic and social settings in the classroom and at school;
- accelerate content learning across disciplines by focusing on the specific, essential vocabulary and structures of content-area discourse as well as vocabulary common across curriculum;
- serve as a lens to organize and assess the daily lesson as far as planning and implementing instruction and measuring student progress;
- enhance teacher growth in the areas of language acquisition, communication, and professional knowledge through focused awareness of precise academic language in the school setting; and
- promote a positive classroom culture by providing accurate language models which are new to all students (or not yet internalized) and which all students can acquire and "own."

Laura Hidalgo-Castillo, Elise Williamson, Maribel Rodríguez, and José M. Robles, Eugene Field Elementary, identify language objectives through a se⟶quenc⟶ing activity.

Language objectives include three components:
1)functions—uses and purposes of language appropriate for the task and topic;
2)structures—syntax, grammar, phrases, and expressions which are needed for the purpose, task, and topic; and
3)key vocabulary—words and terms which are essential to the content and context.

Naming language objectives as we plan helps us keep language alive and focused in every phase of instruction. The objectives do not limit language use in the classroom. Rather, they form the core of a rich language setting which encourages students and teachers to extend their capabilities. A step-by-step pattern for planning a topic of study might look like this:

⟹ Determine the standard to be addressed and the essential question or "big idea" for the topic.

⟹ Decide what learning activities with student outcomes will help students attain the standards.

⟹ Plan daily instruction with explicit teaching and guided and independent student tasks.

⟹ Gather/create resources, supplies, and materials for the lesson(s).

⟹ Identify the function or purpose of the language required of the students for each activity.

⟹ Predict the structures to be modeled and used by students for the tasks.

⟹ Choose 3 to 5 essential words or phrases of concept vocabulary that the students should internalize.

Once language objectives are developed for the various instructional activities of the daily lesson, the teacher can broaden the focus throughout the unit according to the needs of every student, providing targeted practice for students who are less proficient and enrichment activities for those who are advancing. For example, students may develop an illustrated word wall, or perhaps a personal dictionary or word bank to highlight the language necessary for the unit.

Handout 1

REVISED Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs

Definitions	I. Remembering	II. Understanding	III. Applying	IV. Analyzing	V. Evaluating	VI. Creating
Bloom's Definition	Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.	Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.	Solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.	Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.	Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas, or quality of work based on a set of criteria.	Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.
Verbs	• Choose • Define • Find • How • Label • List • Match • Name • Omit • Recall • Relate • Select • Show • Spell • Tell • What • When • Where • Which • Who • Why	• Classify • Compare • Contrast • Demonstrate • Explain • Extend • Illustrate • Infer • Interpret • Outline • Relate • Rephrase • Show • Summarize • Translate	• Apply • Build • Choose • Construct • Develop • Experiment with • Identify • Interview • Make use of • Model • Organize • Plan • Select • Solve • Utilize	• Analyze • Assume • Categorize • Classify • Compare • Conclusion • Contrast • Discover • Dissect • Distinguish • Divide • Examine • Function • Inference • Inspect • List • Motive • Relationships • Simplify • Survey • Take part in • Test for • Theme	• Agree • Appraise • Assess • Award • Choose • Compare • Conclude • Criteria • Criticize • Decide • Deduct • Defend • Determine • Disprove • Estimate • Evaluate • Explain • Importance • Influence • Interpret • Judge • Justify • Mark • Measure • Opinion • Perceive • Prioritize • Prove • Rate • Recommend • Rule on • Select • Support • Value	• Adapt • Build • Change • Choose • Combine • Compile • Compose • Construct • Create • Delete • Design • Develop • Discuss • Elaborate • Estimate • Formulate • Happen • Imagine • Improve • Invent • Make up • Maximize • Minimize • Modify • Original • Originate • Plan • Predict • Propose • Solution • Solve • Suppose • Test • Theory

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing, Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Handout 2

Language Functions and Examples of Forms

Language Function	Examples of Language Forms
Expressing needs and likes	Indirect direct object, subject verb agreement, pronouns
Describing people, places, and things	Nouns, pronouns, adjectives
Describing spatial and temporal relations	Prepositional phrases
Describing actions	Present progressive tense, adverbs
Retelling relating past events	Past tense verbs, perfect aspect (present and past)
Making predictions	Verbs: future tense, conditional mode
Asking Informational Questions	Verbs and verb phrases in questions
Asking Clarifying Questions	Questions with increasing specificity
Expressing and Supporting Opinions	Sentence structure, modals (will, can, may, shall)
Comparing	Adjectives and conjunctions, comparatives, superlatives, adverbs
Contrasting	Comparative adjectives
Summarizing	Increasingly complex sentences with increasingly specific vocabulary
Persuading	Verb forms
Literary Analysis	Sentence structure, specific vocabulary
Cause and Effect	Verb forms
Drawing Conclusions	Comparative adjective
Defining	Nouns, abstract nouns, pronouns, and adjectives
Explaining	Verb forms, indicative verb, declarative sentences, complex sentences, adverbs of manner
Generalizing	Common, collective and abstract nouns, verb forms, nominalizations
Evaluating	Complex sentences: increasing specificity of nouns, verbs, and adjectives: correlative conjunctions
Interpreting	Language of propaganda, complex sentences, nominalizations
Sequencing	Adverbs of time, relative clauses, subordinate conjunctions
Hypothesizing and speculating	Modals (would, could, might), compound tenses (would have been)
Summarizing	Modals (would, could, might), compound tenses (would have been)

Handout 3

Activity- Circle the Language Functions and Underline the Forms

- Orally express an opinion using persuasive language (should, must, need, etc.) in complete sentences.

- Use compound sentences to compare and contrast A and B.

- Predict the next three items in the pattern using future tense verbs.

- Write a description of the physical characteristics using sensory adjectives.

- Develop a hypothesis using the conditional tense and the structure, "If…, then…."

Linguistic Scaffolds for Writing Effective Language Objectives

An effectively written language objective:

- Stems form the linguistic demands of a standards-based lesson task
- Focuses on high-leverage language that will serve students in other contexts
- Uses active verbs to name functions/purposes for using language in a specific student task
- Specifies target language necessary to complete the task
- Emphasizes development of expressive language skills, speaking and writing, without neglecting listening and reading

Sample language objectives:

Students will **articulate** main idea and details using **target vocabulary: topic, main idea, detail**.
Students will **describe** a character's emotions using **precise adjectives**.
Students will **revise** a paragraph using correct **present tense and conditional verbs**.
Students will **report** a group consensus using **past tense citation verbs: determined, concluded**.
Students will use **present tense persuasive verbs** to **defend** a position: **maintain, contend**.

Language Objective Frames:

Students will ___(function: active verb phrase)_ using ___(language target)___ .

Students will use ___(language target)_ to ___(function: active verb phrase)_ .

Active Verb Bank to Name Functions for Expressive Language Tasks

articulate	defend	express	narrate	share
ask	define	identify	predict	state
compose	describe	justify	react to	summarize
compare	discuss	label	read	rephrase
contrast	elaborate	list	recite	revise
debate	explain	name	respond	write

Language objectives are most effectively communicated with verb phrases such as the following:

Students will **point out similarities between**...   Students will **express agreement**...
Students will **articulate events in sequence**...   Students will **state opinions about**....

Sample Noun Phrases Specifying Language Targets

academic vocabulary	complete sentences	subject verb agreement
precise adjectives	complex sentences	personal pronouns
citation verbs	clarifying questions	past-tense verbs
noun phrases	prepositional phrases	gerunds (verb + ing)

Language Objectives with Expressive Verbs and Specified Language Targets

Related to Reading Standards:

Students will...
- make predictions using future tense, and text feature vocabulary (e.g. headings, captions).
- formulate pre-reading questions using appropriate question structure.
- articulate main idea and details using key vocabulary: main idea, detail.
- prioritize arguments in a text using target adjectives: important, essential, significant.
- specify bias in a text by identifying adjectives and opinions.
- articulate cause and effect relationships within a thinking map using subordinating conjunctions: since, because, when.
- describe a character's emotions using precise adjectives.
- retell a narrative story using past tense verbs and adverbs of time (e.g. the next day, later that week)
- read text passages containing target vocabulary with prosody
- ask and answer "how" questions about main events using the past-tense.
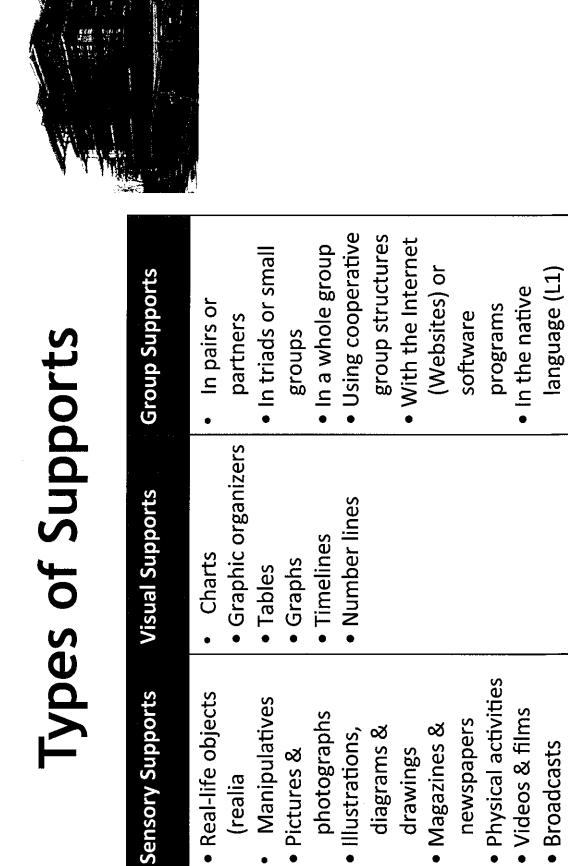
Related to Writing Standards:

Students will...
- express an opinion in a topic sentence for a persuasive paragraph using strong verbs.
- write a persuasive paragraph using correct present and conditional verb tenses.
- articulate a position using strong present tense verbs: support, maintain, contend, believe.
- qualify a position using adverbs: agree/disagree...somewhat, entirely, absolutely, completely
- justify a position using relevant details and complete sentences.
- develop a supporting detail using complete and varied sentences.
- replace everyday vocabulary with precise word choices.
- write a personal narrative using regular and irregular past-tense verbs.
- provide anecdotes to support a point using regular and irregular past-tense verbs.
- summarize a non-fiction text using general present tense and citation verbs.
- revise sentence fragments into complex sentences.
- write habitual present tense sentences about a classmate's routines using correct pronouns and subject verb agreement.
- provide cohesion between sentences in exposition with appropriate transitional expressions.
- compose complex and simple sentences to support points in expository and persuasive writing.
- utilize precise word choices to convey actions, feelings, descriptors in narrative writing.
- utilize vocabulary, syntax and grammar reflective of academic register within writing.
- edit final drafts of sentences and paragraphs for appropriate tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference, fragments and run-on sentences.

Related to Classroom Discussion (Listening and Speaking):

Students will...
- restate a partner's response using paraphrasing expressions (e.g. so what you are saying is)
- listen for and point out similarities in ideas using target language: My idea is similar to/builds upon.
- report a group consensus using past-tense citation verbs: determined, concluded.
- articulate a perspective using strong present tense verbs: believe, agree/disagree, support
- analyze word parts to determine meaning using precise terms: prefix, suffix, root word
- define the unit concept stereotype using complete sentences and target vocabulary.
- listen for and record precise adjectives used by classmates to describe a character's reactions.

Types of Supports

Sensory Supports	Visual Supports	Group Supports
• Real-life objects (realia • Manipulatives • Pictures & photographs • Illustrations, diagrams & drawings • Magazines & newspapers • Physical activities • Videos & films • Broadcasts • Models & figures	• Charts • Graphic organizers • Tables • Graphs • Timelines • Number lines	• In pairs or partners • In triads or small groups • In a whole group • Using cooperative group structures • With the Internet (Websites) or software programs • In the native language (L1) • With mentors