



LANGUAGE POWER

Building English Language Proficiency

English Language Development Program
Based on Respected Research and Literature

Introduction

Language Power is an English language development program that engages students in meaningful language experiences with structured, comprehensible input and output and provides students with an authentic purpose for learning academic language functions and forms. The program and lessons are systematically structured to differentiate for students' language proficiency levels and to scaffold the acquisition of the language objectives.

Language Power provides students with meaningful language experiences through the use of thematic text sets. English learners benefit from a thematic approach to learning. When students can connect learning to a larger context, it makes the information more meaningful (Haas 2000). In each theme, students have multiple exposures to vocabulary and language structures. They also receive varied opportunities to use the language in context and across the curriculum. Additionally, these themes build students' background around content-area topics supporting their academic achievement in other curricular areas.



Language Power Consultants

Eugenia Mora-Flores, Ed.D., is a Professor of Clinical Education and Assistant Dean of Teacher Education in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. She teaches courses on first- and second-language acquisition, Latino culture, and literacy development for elementary and secondary students. She leads doctoral students in a wide range of research in teacher education. She began her work in education over 25 years ago as a first-grade, dual-language teacher and went on to teach a range of grade levels and instructional contexts. Her research interests include studies on effective practices in developing the language and literacy skills of English learners in grades Pre-K–12. She has written 10 books in the areas of literacy and academic language development (ALD) for English learners, including *Connecting Content and Language for English Learners*. She has also published a number of articles and chapters on literacy and language across the curriculum and on gifted education for English Learners. Eugenia further works as a consultant for a variety of elementary, middle, and high schools across the country in the areas of comprehensive literacy programs for English learners, English language development (ELD), ALD, and writing instruction. She was named MAT Professor of the Year (2016 and 2018), a title awarded by the students of USC. Eugenia was further honored with USC’s Teaching Excellence Award (2018) and the USC Rossier Mentoring Award (2021).

Stephanie Dewing, Ph.D., started her career in education in 1998 after graduating from the University of Illinois (U of I) with a degree in the teaching of Spanish. Her journey began in Quito, Ecuador, where she taught English and social studies at a K–12 bilingual school, and English as a second language (ESL) at a local university. Upon returning to the United States, she earned her Master of Arts degree in TESOL while teaching adult English learners at the U of I intensive English program. Since then, she has taught ESL, Spanish, English language development, and Spanish heritage. She then started a new path on her educational journey as a teacher educator working with both in-service and pre-service teachers with strategies for supporting their multilingual and English learners. She earned her doctoral degree in educational leadership and innovation from the University of Colorado, Denver. In 2018, Stephanie joined the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, where she is currently an Assistant Professor of Clinical Education and Chair of the Bilingual Authorization Advisory Board. She continues to support in-service and pre-service teachers across the country through coursework and professional development in the fields of language and literacy development and dual-language instruction, with a particular emphasis on newcomers.

Erick J. Herrmann, M.A.T., is an educator, author, and consultant. He has taught Spanish at the high school level, Spanish literacy, and English as a second language at the elementary level, and served as a teacher on special assignment (TOSA). Mr. Herrmann has trained thousands of teachers across the United States, and has worked in turnaround and transformation schools in Colorado and the Bureau of Indian Education schools in North Dakota and Montana. Erick has a high degree of expertise in sheltered instruction and meeting the educational needs of English language learners, as well as integrating academic language and literacy instruction into the content areas at all grade levels. Mr. Herrmann holds a Master of Arts in Teaching and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with minors in Linguistics and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

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The Language Power Logic Model

The Logic Model below demonstrates how *Language Power* is designed to develop students' English language skills in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These essential skills help students communicate effectively and participate in literacy and content area activities. Evidence of this is suggested through its resources and activities, which are linked to positive outcomes for students. The goal of this table is to help visualize how implementing *Language Power* can support and contribute to achieving school and district goals.

| Theory of Action | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Assumptions | Resources/Inputs | Activities | Outcomes/Metrics |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School districts are interested and prepared to incorporate effective practices for language development. Students can develop language skills through regular, focused instruction. Providing instruction in the three dimensions of language (word/phrase, sentence, discourse) leads to stronger language understanding. High-interest texts engage students in reading and using new language. Technology is accessible in the classroom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials developed through collaboration of experts in the field A Management Guide with key research and planning tools with pacing suggestions for instruction occurring three to five days per week Focused lessons supporting instruction in all four language domains 30 high-interest texts (both books and text cards) organized into eight themed units A Student Guided Practice Book with engaging opportunities for students to practice language in a variety of ways. Supporting videos and audio recordings of all texts Interactive ebooks Assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible lessons with pacing suggestions to use three to five days per week Vocabulary and background building activities to build knowledge of thematic concepts Explicit instruction of language development skills using the gradual release model Collaborative language and discussion opportunities during Talk Time activities Listening and Speaking and Language Development activities to apply language skills Take-Home Literacy activities to support language learning at home Engaging practice activities using pencil and paper Digital resources to support language development and practice of language skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student engagement in texts and resources Meets or exceeds expectations of ELD standards: speaking, listening, reading, and writing Completion of lessons Formative and summative assessments Improvement in language and reading skills |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators implement research-based <i>Language Power</i> materials and strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-8 students engage in and utilize <i>Language Power</i> content and strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-8 students will have increased listening and speaking skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-8 students will have increased reading and writing skills. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-8 students will be prepared to apply academic language skills across content areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will become confident communicators within the four language domains. | <p>Problem Statement: There is a need for content-rich language instruction to support English learners with varying levels of language proficiency in grades K-8.</p> <p>Outcome/Goal: To help students develop English language proficiency in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.</p> | |
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Guiding Principles

- Language is foundational to everything that people do; therefore, it should be a key instructional focus in schools to ensure students' academic success.
- English language development instruction prioritizes literacy and language skills, engaging students in using habits of proficient readers and speakers and supporting all learners regardless of primary language.
- Rigorous language instruction includes opportunities for language input as well as language output.

These guiding principles are the foundation of *Language Power* and are embedded in every component of the product.

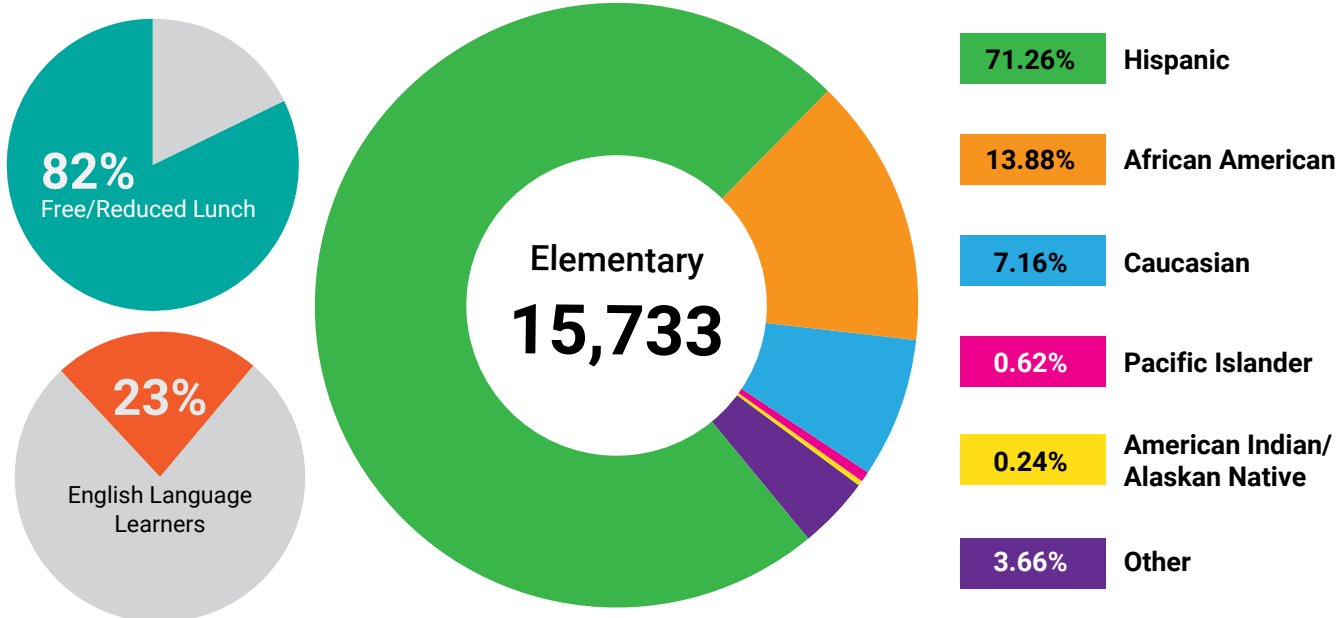


Data Study Illustrating the Efficacy of the *Language Power* Series (1st Edition)

The following evaluation was completed in 2014 in Moreno Valley Unified School District (MVUSD) in California, using the first edition of the *Language Power* series. A study evaluating the second edition of *Language Power* is currently underway.

MVUSD used Teacher Created Materials' *Language Power* program to provide 30 minutes of daily designated ELD instruction in classrooms, differentiated according to the language proficiency level of each student. Professional development training, model lessons, and coaching were put in place to systematically implement the program.

MVUSD Demographics Enrollment



Implementation

The goal of the implementation of *Language Power* was to purposefully build students' language proficiency through the required 30 minutes of daily designated ELD instruction. This time was called the "*Language Power Half Hour*" and was differentiated for students based on their language proficiency levels.

The program was piloted across grades K–5 in five schools in MVUSD: Chaparral Hills, Creekside, La Jolla, Sunnymead, and Cloverdale. At each school site, all students were grouped by language proficiency level and received daily instruction using the *Language Power* program.

Scores from the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) were used to measure students' language proficiency levels from the 2014–2015 school year to the 2015–2016 school year. Due to the success of the program, all 19 elementary schools in MVUSD began implementing the *Language Power Half Hour*.

Results

Upon comparing student CELDT* scores from the 2014–2015 school year to the 2015–2016 school year, results showed that students who participated in the *Language Power Half Hour* made overall significant gains in proficiency levels after just one year of implementation. Across the five schools, beginner and early intermediate levels decreased 14% while early advanced and advanced levels increased a combined total of 14% (see Figure A). The highest gain achieved was at Creekside Elementary with over 20% growth in advanced and early advanced levels and over 20% decrease in beginning and early intermediate levels (see Figure B).

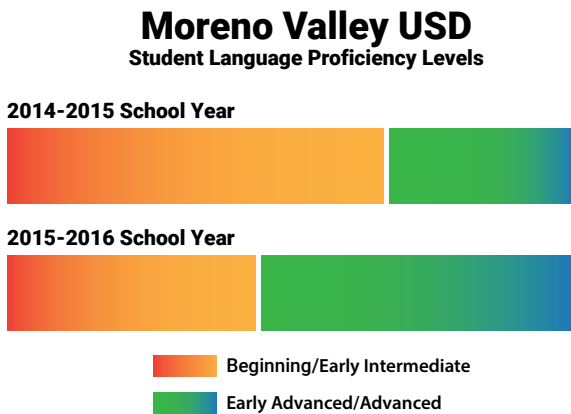


Figure A

After implementation, more students moved into the advanced levels and fewer students remained in beginner and early intermediate levels.

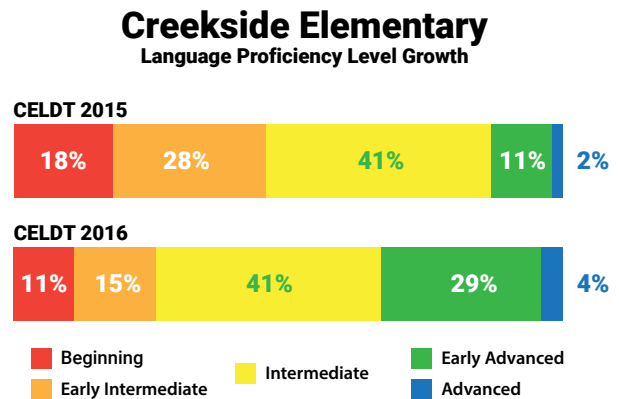


Figure B

Creekside Elementary School language proficiency growth

*CELDT is the California English Language Development Test given once a year to assess language proficiency.

Testimonials

“Language Power has been an invigorating addition to our English Learner Program. The nonfiction texts are highly engaging and offer a variety of learning opportunities for the students. The Teacher’s Guide allows for instructional flexibility to meet the diverse needs of the students.”

–Grade 3 Teacher

“

“The students really had opportunities for discourse and they were able to use the language of the skill they were practicing.”

–English Language Development Teacher

”

“

I really enjoyed the fact that the lessons and the readers coincide with what we are already teaching, so it adds on value!

–Grade 3 Teacher

”

“Happy? No, I am *thrilled* with the second edition of Language Power! Its instructional and practice materials clearly support students toward success on state English language proficiency assessments. I anticipate fantastic results.”

–Lilia Villa
Director, English Language Learner Programs
Moreno Valley Unified School District

The Foundations of Language Development

Language is the means by which we communicate with one another in different contexts and for many purposes. Louisa Cook Moats (2020) notes that there are five important general ideas to understand about the nature of language, English in particular. They are as follows:

- Human language is unique.
- Language change is constant.
- English is special [but not superior] because of its wide use across the world.
- A language is made up of systems [rules].
- Reading is not natural.

One aspect unique to humans is the ability to create language. This creative capability allows us to communicate our thoughts, feelings, and experiences for myriad purposes. It also allows us to change our lexicon by inventing new words or expressions when new circumstances, such as technology inventions, arise or removing words or expressions that seemingly become obsolete. Although this creativity and flexibility exists, in order to communicate even the most basic information effectively, speakers of a language need to understand the system of rules that “govern the production of sounds, words, and sentences and when to use them” (Moats 2020). This is especially true for English speakers, which includes a variety of dialects and uses a complex spelling system that makes it more difficult to read and spell than other languages (Pugh and Verhoeven, 2018). Furthermore, since alphabets were not comprehensively used until about 500 years ago, it makes sense that “our brains are not as fully evolved for processing written language as they are for processing spoken language, and, therefore, learning to read and write is more challenging than learning to speak.” (Moats 2020)

Regardless of the language, a child begins to develop the foundations of language at home before they even set foot in a classroom. As children interact with their environment (family, friends, and community), they are exposed to rich and complex systems of language. These initial experiences set the foundation for learning the complexities of academic language in school.

School provides both ongoing formal and informal opportunities to develop language. Students are given explicit instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They learn about phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse. These elements of language work together as students become fluent users. In addition, students have the opportunity to apply what they have learned across the curriculum and continue to acquire content-specific language and general academic language.

Language Development for Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners' prior experiences with language can prepare them for the difficult task of learning the English language. They have learned to communicate with their families, friends, and community members, and many have high levels of conversational fluency in their primary language. Because of this, English learners can often call upon the knowledge they have acquired in their primary language to understand and develop a second language. Research consistently shows that there is a strong transfer between a student's primary language and the development of second language literacy (Goldenberg 2010, Salmona Madriñan, 2014). Joanna Yip and Ofelia García (2015) further explain that "educators must acknowledge the students' full linguistic repertoire as a resource for learning, and not as a problem" (paragraph 13).

Language development for English learners includes both conversational fluency and academic language. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) is the language students need to engage in during social conversations on a daily basis. For English learners, this is often the level of proficiency reached at a speech-emergent level of second-language acquisition. Students with strong BICS often sound fluent in social conversations, can understand directions, and can verbally express their thinking at basic levels of comprehension. Typically, students develop BICS within six months to two years (¡Colorín Colorado! n.d., "What are BICS and CALP?").

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), on the other hand, is the level of language development at which students are able to understand concrete and abstract language and express their thinking across the curriculum. It is the language level students need to comprehend and use in order to achieve academic success (Cummins 1980a). Students usually take at least five years to develop CALP (¡Colorín Colorado! n.d., "What are BICS and CALP?").

The challenge for English learners is often the speed at which they are expected to learn a second language, coupled with learning content and academic English (Mora-Flores 2011). While continuing to develop conversational fluency, they need support in understanding how English is crafted across the curriculum. This includes learning a wide range of new words, learning new ways of sharing their thinking, learning through oral and written forms, and understanding how language is crafted and used for a given academic purpose.



The Importance of Academic Language

Academic language impacts student achievement across the curriculum (Olsen 2010). Students need to understand the language of the discipline (through reading or listening) to access information and, in turn, share their learning in oral and written forms. Academic language can best be understood as a compilation of the following descriptions:

- oral and written language that students must acquire to learn the content taught in a classroom (WIDA 2020)
- rules of spoken and written English that students need to succeed in school (Lexia 2017)
- language intertwined with learning and development and used when communicating (orally and in writing) about content across the disciplines (Heineke and Neugebauer 2018)
- formal written and spoken language used in school and work settings rather than social language—the latter of which students tend to learn more rapidly (Cooper and Fenner 2009)
- the language of school and school resources, such as textbooks, assignments, and assessments, as well as the language of the workplace (Breiseth 2014)
- the set of words and phrases that describe content area knowledge and procedures; language that expresses complex thinking processes and abstract concepts; and language that creates cohesion and clarity in written and oral discourse (Zwiers 2005)

A critical acknowledgement is that language is key in all academic learning processes. “Academic language is not a prerequisite for learning, but rather the medium by which learning occurs” (Heineke and Neugebauer, 2018, 81). Because students are learning language as they learn content, they may make linguistic mistakes or need to use approaches such as translanguaging to fully understand or make sense of a concept. However, instruction should always support the relationship between content instruction and language development.

As an educator, it is important to understand the different facets of academic language in order to best support English learner’s language development. Those facets include the difference between general academic and content vocabulary, the three dimensions of language, and the forms and functions of language.

General Academic and Content Vocabulary

Isabelle L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan’s tiered model (2013) divides vocabulary words into three categories: Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three. General academic vocabulary includes words that are valuable for academic purposes and

have high utility across the curriculum, which equates to their Tier Two words. These words are not specific to any one discipline and can be used across the curriculum to express academic thinking. Specialized content vocabulary is domain specific, is often encountered with low frequency, and supports students' access to the curriculum. Specialized content vocabulary equates to their Tier Three words, and is widely accepted as necessary for comprehension of both written and spoken language.

Research shows that direct and explicit vocabulary instruction is important for all learners, especially English learners (What Works Clearing House 2014). It is especially important to connect new words to students' prior knowledge (Sibold 2011). English learners benefit most from instruction that emphasizes student friendly definitions, engages students in meaningful use of the words in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and is revisited throughout instruction over multiple activities (What Works Clearing House, 2007, 2014).



Research to Practice

Each lesson in *Language Power* begins with building students' background knowledge and vocabulary. This provides the opportunity to learn, in context and connected to prior knowledge, the vocabulary words necessary to support content learning of the lesson's essential question, as well as to comprehend the selected text. Vocabulary picture cards are provided in the Digital Resources to further support students' understanding of the word meanings. General academic or multiple-meaning vocabulary words are starred.

Using the provided sentence starters, or sentence frames, students are also provided time to discuss the meaning of the words in pairs or small groups. The words are revisited as students encounter them in the selected text for the lesson.

Three Dimensions of Language

Social language, as well as academic language, must be viewed from multiple dimensions every day. In their English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework, the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, or WIDA (2020), sets forth three dimensions of language within a sociocultural context:

The **word/phrase dimension** points to the importance of words in creating precision, effect, and shades of meaning to support general, specific, and technical language. It includes literal and figurative meaning, synonyms, antonyms, and connotation.

The **sentence dimension** points to how students effectively convey complete thoughts through simple, compound, and complex sentences. It includes parts of speech, word order, grammar and mechanics, affirmative and negative statements, idiomatic expression, and questions and exclamations.

The **discourse dimension** refers to how sentences are joined in larger blocks of speech or written text. Ideas are sequenced and framed in a way to express a message (e.g., an opinion, an explanation, a story, a narration, or information) for a specific purpose (e.g., to persuade, inform, express, entertain, or justify). It also looks at the coherence and cohesion of ideas, while also encouraging the use of a variety of sentence types to form organized speech or written text.



Research to Practice

Language Power introduces and develops domain-specific and cross-content academic vocabulary words throughout each lesson. This resource builds word-analysis skills, such as roots and affixes, and teaches students the language resources at their disposal to effectively convey meaning through focused lessons.

Sentence starters and sentence frames support students in expressing complete thoughts. Specific “Language Development” sections within the lessons presents spiraling content that focuses on aspects of grammar, syntax, subject-verb agreement, and questions formation to support students’ language growth.

Language Power also provides models of how to support discourse through guided discussions and in the “Reading” and “Speaking and Listening” sections. In the “Writing” section of each lesson, students are often provided paragraph frames to support the writing of cohesive paragraphs.

Bones

Speaking and Listening

1. Show students the image of bicyclists not wearing helmets. Bicyclists, which is provided in the Digital Resources.
2. Review the image together, asking students to make careful observations about the scene.
3. Ask students to create a web diagram in a notebook. In the center of the web, have them write one of the following statements:
Laws should state that everyone must wear a bicycle helmet.
It should be everyone's choice to wear a bicycle helmet or not.
4. Tell students they will use the information from *Bones*, this image, and any background knowledge they have on the topic to list reasons to support their opinions.
5. **Talk Time:** Give students time to note their ideas on their web diagram. Then, place students in small groups to share their opinions about bicycle helmets.

Language Development

1. Before class, print enough copies of *Complex Sentences* (provided in the Digital Resources) so that each student can have one strip of paper. Cut the strips apart.
2. Display the following sentence: *If you pay attention, you will learn the secrets of the universe. Circle the word if. List other subordinating conjunctions, such as, when, ever, though, and while. Tell students that dependent clauses that start with these (and other) words are not complete thoughts. If you only said, "If you pay attention" and stopped, they would wonder what you were trying to communicate. In contrast, independent clauses such as "you will learn the secrets of the universe" make sense on their own. When you join these two clauses, you can form a complex sentence.*
3. **Talk Time:** Distribute the strips of sentence pieces, giving one to each student. Ask each student to search for the person with the missing half of their sentence. Then ask partners to read their sentences to the group and identify the parts.

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Functions and Forms

In addition to general and content-specific vocabulary instruction, students also need explicit instruction to understand language functions and forms (Snyder and Fenner 2021, What Works Clearing House 2007). “It is critical for ELs to have a command of the forms and functions of academic language to gain access to challenging academic content and to express their knowledge of subject matter in the content areas” (Fenner and Snyder 2017).

Language functions can be defined as the purpose for using language. The forms or syntax connected to the function, often referred to as “sentence starters” or “sentence frames,” are the structures of language used to meet a function or purpose. For example, if students were studying the branches of government and were asked to evaluate which branch is most important and to share why, the purpose for using language would be to make an evaluation and defend that position. The forms or sentence frames would then be used to express an evaluation and a defense in written or oral forms. The forms are the syntactical structures students use when asked to defend an evaluation, and they can be transferred across disciplines when the same language function is called upon.



Research to Practice

Language Power consistently supports students in developing the forms and functions they need to speak and write for different purposes. Talk Time frames and sentence starters guide students in expressing themselves appropriately in English. Additional frames and prompts are provided throughout the lessons any time a question is posed or a discussion is prompted. Further, focused Speaking and Listening and Language Development lessons effectively build students’ awareness of how English works and what levels of formality are required for different situations.

The Forms and Functions table found in the Management Guide provides a variety of language functions with sample forms aligned to the functions. These can be used at any time to support students’ language development. Also included in the table are cue words. When students no longer need explicit sentence frames, cue words can help support a focused use of language for identified language functions.

Oceans

During Reading

- Remind students that facts are statements that can be proven true. Opinions express someone’s thoughts, feelings, or beliefs about a topic. Ask students for examples of facts and opinions about their school or community. Record them for students to see.
- Talk Time:** Read *Oceans* to students. As you read, point out examples of facts, and ask partners to share opinions about those facts.
What is a fact about the kind of water in oceans? One fact about ocean water is _____.
What is your opinion about salt water? I think _____. I believe _____.
- Have students turn to the activity in the *Student Guided Practice Book* (page 26). Think aloud to model identifying the first sentence as fact or opinion.
The sentence says, *Oceans are made of salt water*. Can I use another source to prove this fact is true? Yes. I can check a reliable website or another book about this fact.
- Talk Time:** Have students work in groups of three to complete the activity.

ad the directions, m a text: ed." I will look filled with / animals." On be there under support it. Steps 2 and 3, ng textual evidence of opinions. ✓ should be ? Read the ents share 9

Language Forms and Functions

| Language Functions | Sentence Frames | Cue Words |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Agreeing and Disagreeing | I agree with... but... I believe... was right when they said... I disagree with... when they said... I am in favor of... I think... was wrong when they said... | agree believe disagree however right think wrong |
| Classifying | ...belongs in this category because... ...is part of this group because... I organized the... by... You can group these together because... | belong group order organize part of sort together |
| Commanding | Begin by... First you will... and then... Start by... Then... Finally... Before you begin... and then... I order you to... | command demand do not order should start/begin they/finally will |
| Comparing | ...is... but... is not. ...has... but... does not. ...can... However... ...can... whereas... cannot. Though... can... cannot. | as opposed to but can/cannot different however it's not whereas |
| Concluding | Based on... I can conclude... In conclusion... After reading... I conclude... In the end, it was clear that... After careful review, I determined... I conclude... Upon further review, I conclude/conclude... | conclude concur conclusion determine review |

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Language Proficiency Levels

The rate and progression of language development for English learners varies greatly. However, researchers have been able to identify a common sequence of development as students progress from simple language production to more complex and diversified ways of communicating. This progression is often referred to as English language development, or proficiency levels.

According to WIDA (2007), determining language proficiency levels should take the following into consideration:

- **linguistic complexity:** the amount and quality of speech or writing for a given situation
- **vocabulary usage:** the specificity of words or phrases for a given context
- **language control:** the comprehensibility of the communication based on the amount and types of errors

Researchers and school districts have defined these levels using diverse scales. Some identify five or more levels of development, while others focus on three distinct stages. In 2016, WIDA developed Can Do Descriptors to further support educators' understanding of what their students can do at various levels of language proficiency and expand understanding of what the process of language learning can look like.



Research to Practice

Language Power is organized in three language proficiency levels: Level A, Level B, and Level C. Each proficiency level includes common listening, speaking, reading, and writing behaviors used to create language-appropriate lessons to support ongoing language development. Though the use of three levels may seem overly simplified, each level differentiates for a range of abilities, as all language learners are unique.

This chart shows how the *Language Power* levels align to a few common proficiency descriptors.

| Language Power | WIDA | ELPA21 | California | Texas | New York | Arizona |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Level A | 1: Entering 2: Emerging | 1: Beginning 2: Early Intermediate | Emerging | 1: Beginning 2: Intermediate | 1: Entering 2: Emerging | Pre-Emergent/ Emergent |
| Level B | 3: Developing 4: Expanding | 3: Intermediate 4: Early Advanced | Expanding | 3: Advanced | 3: Transitioning | Basic |
| Level C | 5: Bridging | 5: Advanced | Bridging | 4: Advanced High | 4: Expanding | Intermediate |

This chart details the common language expectations for English language learners for Level A, Level B, and Level C proficiency levels.

Common Language Expectations

| Proficiency Level | Common Language Expectations |
|-------------------|--|
| Level A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on comprehending oral and written language. • Have an emerging receptive vocabulary (words they understand). • Repeat what is heard (parroting). • Participate by using gestures, drawings, short answers, or by acting things out. • Use simple sentences and stock expressions to express immediate needs. • Understand concrete, closed questions (in which there is one expected answer). • Write in a familiar language (translanguage). • Progress very quickly after the silent period ends. • Begin to understand and use academic vocabulary and English sentence structures. • Are capable of high-level thinking. • Start sharing their thinking orally and in writing. • Start answering open questions. • Are capable of participating in factual, analytic, creative, and evaluative activities. • Need substantial linguistic support (visual, pictorial, verbal, and written). • Lean heavily on word banks and sentence frames. |
| Level B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to focus on comprehending oral and written language in different content areas. • Continue to develop a receptive vocabulary as they use an active, expressive vocabulary. • Learn a greater variety of vocabulary and linguistic structures. • Continue to learn about rules, language patterns, and exceptions to rules. • Achieve conversational proficiency. • Ask clarifying questions. • Are capable of high-level thinking. • Share their thinking orally and in writing. • Answer average-length open and closed questions. • Participate in complex factual, analytic, creative, and evaluative activities. • Need moderate linguistic support (visual, pictorial, verbal, and written). • Still benefit from word banks and sentence frames. |
| Level C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn more general academic and domain specific vocabulary. • Listen to complex academic language across the content areas. • Express abstract thinking orally and in writing. • Read a wide variety of text across the content areas. • Write in a variety of forms and genres. • Achieve strong command of English in oral and written language. • Errors in standard English rarely interfere with meaning. • Participate in complex factual, analytic, creative, and evaluative activities. • Debate or defend thinking. • Need light linguistic support or reminders. |

The following verbs support WIDA's Can Do Descriptors. These verbs can be used to create questions or activities that students can engage with across content areas and will help students use language to recount, explain, argue, and discuss what they are learning.

WIDA Can Do Descriptor Verbs

| Grade Range | Key Verbs to Use |
|-------------|---|
| K–2 | act out, answer, apply, ask, classify, communicate, compare, connect, contrast, demonstrate, describe, distinguish, draw, explain, express, find, follow directions, identify, interpret, label, locate, make predictions, match, mimic, order, participate, repeat, reproduce, respond, restate, retell, role-play, sequence, sort |
| 3–5 | answer, arrange, ask, categorize, classify, compare, complete, contrast, describe, differentiate, discuss, draw, engage, evaluate, explain, find, follow, identify, infer, interpret, match, offer, present, produce, restate, retell, role-play, sequence, share, summarize, use |
| 6–8 | apply, ask, categorize, classify, communicate, compare, complete, connect, contrast, convey, create, defend, describe, differentiate, explain, express, extend, find, follow, give, group, identify, interpret, justify, locate, make, match, order, paraphrase, produce, rephrase, respond, retell, role-play, sequence, sort, substantiate, use |

Supporting Language Development for All Learners

Between 1980 and 2015, the immigrant population in the U.S. increased by 29.2 million people, many coming from countries where English is not an official language (Batalova and Zong 2016). Schools reflect the diversity of the nation, which means that at any given school, there is a wide variety of cultures and languages represented. This requires teachers to be prepared to respond to these needs through culturally- and linguistically-responsive teaching practices.

Language development takes time (Cummins 2000). There are multiple factors that contribute to how quickly one can reach fluency, some of which are related to students' linguistic backgrounds and abilities, or multilingual repertoires. As mentioned previously, skills and concepts developed in a first language transfer across languages, and they can even accelerate the development of a new language (Cummins 1980b, 1981). Those multilingual repertoires can be used as foundations on which to build English knowledge and skills. Doing so will increase students' metalinguistic awareness, which is the awareness of the similarities and differences between their first language(s) and English. For example, in Spanish, nouns typically precede adjectives (*tema interesante*), whereas in English adjectives precede nouns (*interesting topic*). Knowing the difference is an element of metalinguistic awareness. And if a student knows that, in Arabic, words are written from right to left, whereas in English they are written from left to right, their metalinguistic awareness is activated. In conjunction to similarities, identifying cognates can be a helpful strategy. Cognates are words that are the same or similar in two languages (*music*—English, *musique*—French, *musica*—Italian, *música*—Spanish/Portuguese). When English learners discover those similarities and differences among language systems, they can become stronger in both languages.

Newcomer students—those who have recently arrived in the United States, many of whom are just beginning the process of developing English—enrich classrooms in countless ways. They bring with them diverse experiences and perspectives from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Initially, newcomer students need extensive *comprehensible input*, or ways to understand the language and content (Krashen 1982). Typically, comprehension of language (listening and reading) comes before production of language (writing and speaking). The use of sentence frames, graphic organizers, and opportunities to engage in language experiences with peers can support newcomer students' *comprehensible output*. Many newcomers have shared that talking with other people is one of the things they felt helped them most with learning English (Mora-Flores and Dewing 2023). Some newcomers may experience a *silent period*, which is the time when students are taking in language but are not yet ready to produce it (Krashen 1982). There is an emphasis on *yet* because, with the right support tools and effort, they *will* get there (Dweck 2013).



Research to Practice

All lessons within *Language Power* are grade-range and proficiency-level specific with engaging, relevant content that newcomers can access. This alleviates the need for teachers to pull from a variety of different resources. The program is designed with multiple levels of English proficiency in mind. There is a particular focus on newcomers at the entering/emerging level of English in Level A for each grade range K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Some wordless picture books are included to engage newcomers from the very first day of instruction.

To support comprehensible input for newcomer students, *Language Power* lessons include: simplified language that gradually increases in complexity over time, digital and visual support, hands-on activities, gestures, and a variety of language models.

To support comprehensible output for newcomer students, *Language Power* lessons include sentence frames and sentence starters, graphic organizers, and suggestions for scaffolded instruction. Specific Talk Time opportunities are also incorporated throughout the lessons to provide newcomer students the opportunities to practice their language skills with peers or in small groups.



Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) are students who have been identified as English learners, have been in the United States school system for six years or more, and have not yet reached levels of proficiency in English to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (Olsen 2014). Of the 4.9 million English learners in U.S. schools today, between one quarter and one half are LTELs (McFarland et al. 2019, Sarakyan and Ryan 2018 as cited in Ferlazzo 2020).

It is important to note that LTELs have multiple assets they bring to the table. They are working toward bilingualism/multilingualism and have a set of linguistic skills that many other students do not have. There are a plethora of benefits to being bilingual or multilingual. In addition, LTELs have unique life experiences, social histories, and backgrounds, or funds of knowledge, that can serve as strengths in the classroom (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005). Typically, LTELs have strong BICS, or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, which is an asset that can be leveraged to support their development of CALP, or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins 2008).

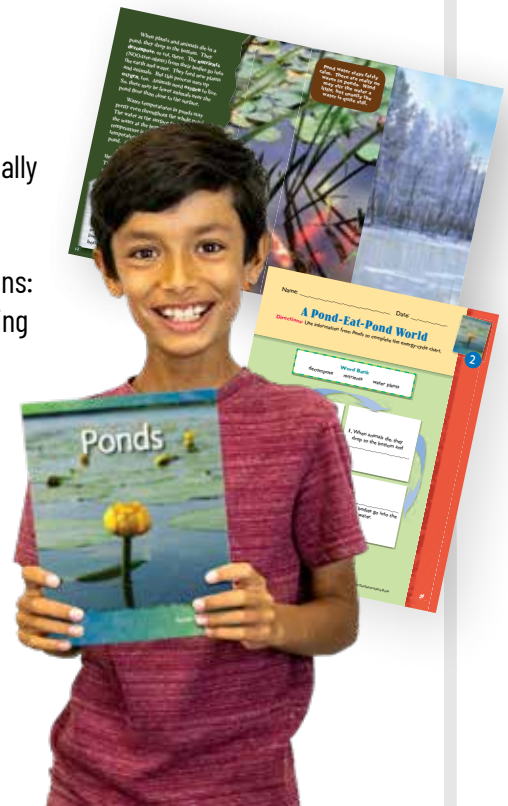
Sometimes, LTELs' social language and communication abilities can lead teachers to assume that they are fluent in academic English. However, most of the time, these students become LTELs because they have not yet developed the oral or literacy skills necessary for academic success in English (Ferlazzo 2020). Giving them the linguistic tools that they need to develop academic English and reach fluent levels of English proficiency is a critical step in this process.



Research to Practice

Language Power Levels B and C are designed to help students, especially LTELs, develop academic English and reach fluent levels of English language proficiency. There is a focus on academic language and literacy throughout the theme-based units across all language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each lesson begins by building students' background and emphasizing key vocabulary, which serves as starting points for each of the lesson's subsequent literacy and speaking activities. Within each lesson, there is also a "Language Development" section and "Fluency" section to further support language development. The Digital Resources include fluency assessment resources to monitor students' progress over time.

The units build in complexity over time to support linguistic development. The content is engaging and relevant, and students will see themselves in the materials, which tends to increase motivation and confidence. This, in turn, fosters greater language development.



Effective Practices for Language Development

A Thematic Approach to Instruction

Thematic instruction is an authentic approach to learning, as it relates to the real world. English learners benefit from a thematic approach to learning because it allows for them to connect their learning to a greater context and provides meaningful opportunities for practice. Mari Haas (2000) explains that using a thematic approach “allows the teacher to incorporate a variety of language concepts into a topic area that is interesting and worthy of study and that gives students a reason to use the language” (2).

Donna Brinton (2003) furthers this by pointing out that a thematic approach offers optimal conditions for language acquisition because “language is being continually recycled throughout the unit and students are given multiple opportunities to use the new language they acquire as they read, discuss, and write about the topics” (201).

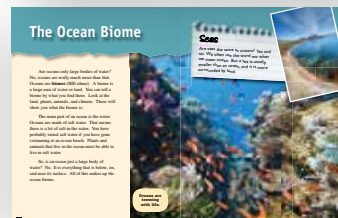
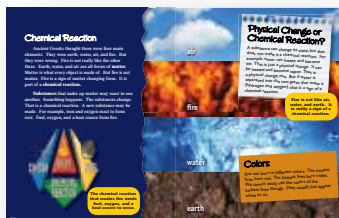
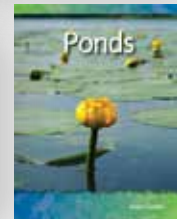
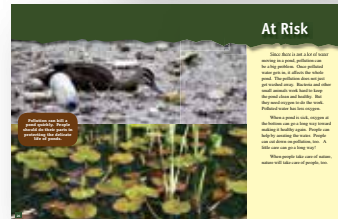
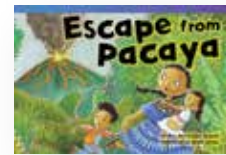
Thematic teaching also allows teachers to incorporate a wide range of texts and resources for students to use to support their learning about the content. This is especially true for English learners, who benefit from engaging, high-interest texts that reflect their lives, experiences, and identities (Fleming 2019).



Research to Practice

Language Power provides students with 30 high-interest texts, all organized around common curricular themes. Some themes include animals, weather, plants, cultures around the world, sports, inventing and engineering, space, my community, and all about me.

The thematic text sets provide a range of reading levels to meet students’ needs. Each book and text card was carefully selected to provide a natural progression in language and learning opportunities and focus on a variety of high-interest topics with diverse text types and genres, including fiction and nonfiction.



The WIDA ELD Standards Framework Language Expectations (2020) incorporate the four language domains in a broader framework consisting of two modes of communication: interpretive and expressive. The interpretive mode includes listening, reading, and viewing. The expressive mode includes speaking, writing, and representing. By integrating these modes of communication including the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) into thematic learning, English learners have an opportunity to use academic language across the curriculum and experience the varied contexts in which to use language appropriately.



Listening: Students use listening skills to understand and interpret what is heard either during instruction or conversation with the teacher or with peers. Students use facial expressions and body language to help them process what they heard and decide what output strategies to use in response. By using a thematic approach to learning, students are able to practice their listening skills and make sense of the content in context. Providing ample opportunities for discussion among peers also helps students practice their active listening skills in a safe and friendly environment.



Speaking: As language continues to develop, students begin to apply their learning to speech. Providing scaffolds such as sentence frames, sentence starters, and word banks related to the theme helps students understand the appropriate language structures and vocabulary to use to respond appropriately to the given task or within a conversation. It is important to provide students with consistent opportunities to practice their oral language skills in a variety of formats (August 2018).



Reading: In order for students to become fluent readers, they must have ample strategies and skills that can move them from the act of decoding to focusing on comprehension. Access to a variety of texts and purposeful instruction related to a specific theme allows students repeated exposure to vocabulary and language structures in context. Further, with repeated reading of the same texts students build fluency skills and increase their confidence as readers.



Writing: Producing written text is one of the most difficult language skills to master. Just like spoken language, written language can take formal or informal tones and can be created for different purposes (e.g., to inform or persuade) and in different forms (e.g., essay or letter). By engaging in relevant writing opportunities related to a theme, students benefit from applying the same sentence starters and frames that they have practiced orally to their written work. They also benefit from the use of supports, such as graphic organizers, and specific instruction related to revising and editing their work.



Research to Practice

Language Power builds both interpretive and expressive modes of communication through varied instructional materials and guided tasks.

During Reading

1. Remind students that facts are statements that can be proven true. Opinions express someone's thoughts, feelings, or beliefs about a topic. Ask students for examples of facts and opinions about their school or community. Record them for students to see.
2. **Talk Time:** Read *Oceans* to students. As you read, point out examples of facts, and ask partners to share opinions about those facts.
What is a fact about the kind of water in oceans? *One fact about ocean water is _____.*
What is your opinion about salt water? *I think _____, I believe _____.*
3. Have students turn to the activity in the *Student Guided Practice Book 1* (page 24). Think aloud to model identifying the first sentence as fact or opinion:
The sentence says, *Oceans are made of salt water.* Can I use another source to prove this fact is true? Yes. I can check a reliable website or another book about this fact.
4. **Talk Time:** Have students work in groups of three to complete the activity.

Talk Time allows students to interact with peers during the lesson.

Essential Question

How do humans interact with their ecosystem?

Talk About It!

How can you help protect the natural world around you?

The essential and guiding questions provide opportunities for students to make connections and discuss the themes.

Speaking and Listening

1. Write the words *inform*, *persuade*, and *entertain* for all to see. Tell students that authors write for different purposes, and they will study examples of author's purpose in *Ponds*.
2. **Talk Time:** Reread with students pages 4 and 18. Discuss the differences in tone and information. Ask students which of the words best describes the author's purpose on each page. Have partners discuss and share sentences on each page that support those conclusions.
3. **Talk Time:** Read the last sentence on page 6. Have student pairs discuss whether they'd like to jump in a pond and why or why not. Monitor conversations. Point out that they were correct in speaking in casual English because the idea of jumping in a pond is casual.
Would you like to jump in a pond? Why/Why not?

The Speaking and Listening activities are interactive and encourage students to produce language or represent it in creative ways.

Before Reading

Building Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

1. Share with students that they are going to read about ponds. Show the cover photograph. Tell students that this photograph shows one small part of a pond, but a pond is actually filled with water.

During Reading

1. Remind students that facts are statements that can be proven true. Opinions express someone's thoughts, feelings, or beliefs about a topic. Ask students for examples of facts and opinions about their school or community. Record them for students to see.

After Reading

1. **I Do:** Have students turn to the *Student Guided Practice Book 2* (page 25). Read the directions, and think aloud to model supporting a statement or opinion with evidence from a text:
The first statement says, *Oceans are teeming with life.* *Teeming* means "filled." I will look through the book to find specific facts to support the idea that oceans are filled with life.

The Before, During, and After Reading sections focus on important reading comprehension skills. Visual literacy is a big part of *Language Power* texts and lessons.

Writing

Have students write paragraphs about biomes that need to be kept clean and healthy in the *Student Guided Practice Book 3* (page 27). Have them support opinions with evidence from the text.

Fluency

Have students echo-read from the book. You read a sentence, paragraph, or page aloud. Then students chorally read that segment.

Note: Checklists and rubrics to assess fluency and language development are provided in the Digital Resources.



The Writing activity provides opportunities for students to write for different purposes and share and display their work in creative ways.

Building Background Knowledge

To prepare students for academic learning, it is important to engage students with vocabulary and build background knowledge. Sometimes, students may have experiences or prior learning with the content or concepts in instruction, and other concepts may be new. Building background knowledge is especially important for newcomer students, as it is a crucial first step in language and literacy development across the content areas (Echevarría, Vogt, and Short 2007).

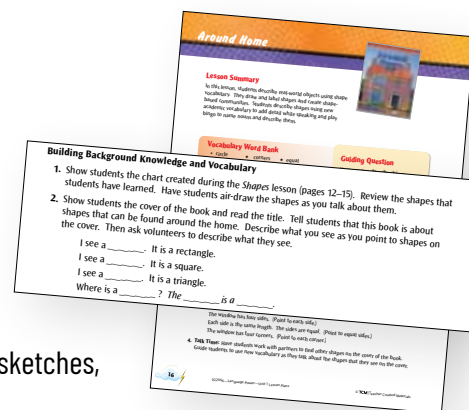
In order to know how to best build students' background knowledge, Sydney Snyder and Diane Staehr Fenner (2021) advocate a three-component process:

- 1. Know your multilingual learners' background:** By getting to know their students' background, teachers can capitalize on those experiences that relate to the content being taught and showcase the students who can provide information to others (California Department of Education 2020). (For example, when learning about farm animals, you can call upon the two students in the class who regularly visit their relatives who live on farms in Mexico. They can share their experiences visiting those family members and information about the animals that live on the farms.)
- 2. Seek out opportunities in the curriculum to connect to prior experience and learning:** As teachers prepare for a unit or lesson, it is important to think about connections that can be made to previous instruction/units, previously read texts, or shared learning experiences (e.g., field trips, assemblies, science experiments, community events).
- 3. Activate prior knowledge:** Once teachers have identified possible connections to prior experiences and learning, there are a variety of instructional strategies that can be used to activate students' prior knowledge or build new necessary background. Strategies could include image discussions or picture walks, concept/word sorts, peer discussions, videos, carousel brainstorming, or quick sketches.



Research to Practice

Language Power lessons include a specific section for building background knowledge and vocabulary. This section is strategically placed before reading to help students get familiar with key language and concepts prior to reading a new text. It includes opportunities for students to engage in activities such as word/concept sorts, peer discussions, quick sketches, picture-walks through text, image discussions, and more.



Scaffolding Language Instruction

Scaffolding is defined as “a **temporary** guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the student to perform a task he or she otherwise would not be able to do alone, with the goal of fostering the student’s capacity to perform the task on his or her own later on” (California Department of Education 2014).

Rather than simplify a task, instructional scaffolds are used to support a student’s language proficiency level so that they can perform the task at grade level as independently as possible. Scaffolds can be used to support English learners’ language input or output, as well as general academic tasks. As students gain independence and build language skills, the scaffolds should be changed, lessened, or removed entirely (CCSESA 2015, Snyder and Fenner 2021).

There are three main categories of scaffolds: instruction or instructional practices, materials and resources, and student grouping (Snyder and Fenner 2021, WIDA 2020).

Scaffolding Instruction or Instructional Practices

When people hear or read language, they are receiving language input. The language input that a person understands is called *comprehensible input* (Krashen and Terrell 1983). By scaffolding the way students receive language during instruction, teachers can help make the language and learning more accessible to students. Instructional scaffold strategies include repeating and paraphrasing language, implementing routines to support reading, and preteaching vocabulary and academic language structures (Snyder and Fenner 2021). Another strategy is using shorter sentences with simpler syntax, progressing to more complicated language structures as students’ language proficiency develops.

Another way to scaffold instructional practices is through the use of the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher 1983). Teacher support begins highly structured and moves through a process that gradually releases the responsibility of learning to students. This helps students become independent learners. As students develop higher levels of academic language and learn more content, they need less support to continue accessing the curriculum. However, this does not mean that the scaffolds are taken away completely. As students encounter more complex, content-specific language and more demanding content instruction, they still require support through the use of carefully designed scaffolds for instruction. This more effectively helps students develop language proficiency.

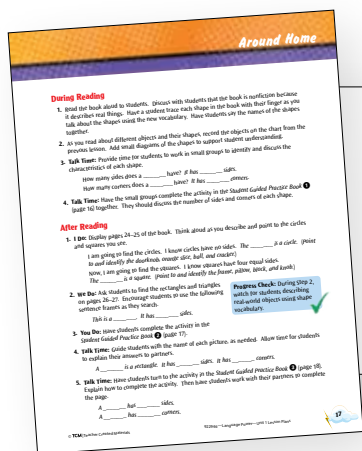
The gradual release model begins with the “I Do” phase, characterized by teacher modeling. The next phase is, “We Do,” where high levels of support/scaffolding are in place to allow the learner to work alongside the teacher and practice the language/literacy skills together. “We Do” experiences provide students with ongoing support while helping them take risks and try out the new learning.

These “I Do” and “We Do” stages provide the necessary learning opportunities for students to then use their literacy and language skills by themselves in the next stage of the lesson: “You Do.” “You Do” experiences allow students to independently demonstrate their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. During this stage, teachers can informally assess and support students based on individual needs.



Research to Practice

Language Power facilitates comprehensible input by giving students multiple opportunities to see, hear, and interact with content and language. *Language Power* also provides students with appropriate support to ensure the successful transfer of language skills from guided practice to independent application. Each lesson follows the I Do, We Do, You Do model with the overall goal of promoting language proficiency.



- I Do:** Display pages 24–25 of the book. Think aloud as you describe and point to the circles and squares you see.

I am going to find the circles. I know circles have no sides. *The _____ is a circle.* (Point to and identify the doorknob, orange slice, ball, and cracker.)

Now, I am going to find the squares. I know squares have four equal sides.

The _____ is a square. (Point to and identify the frame, pillow, block, and knob.)

- We Do:** Ask students to find the rectangles and triangles on pages 26–27. Encourage students to use the following sentence frames as they search.

This is a _____. It has _____ sides.

- You Do:** Have students complete the activity in the *Student Guided Practice Book* (page 17).

Progress Check: During Step 2, watch for students describing real-world objects using shape vocabulary.



Scaffolding Materials and Resources

Another way to provide scaffolded support is through materials and resources that language learners use when they speak, write, or present or share their thinking and learning. When students are generating language (Rahmi 2019), it is called *comprehensible output*.

Traditional instruction provides students with receptive language acquisition opportunities, such as listening and reading (Mora-Flores 2011). Unfortunately, many students do not have enough expressive language acquisition opportunities, such as writing and speaking. As a result, these students have a higher receptive vocabulary than expressive vocabulary, and their language skills are weaker. To support students' expressive vocabulary and language output, scaffolds such as graphic organizers, word banks, sentence stems/frames and paragraph frames, visuals, and digital texts can be provided.

These scaffolds are especially affective during interdisciplinary activities where students engage in added challenge and high-order thinking skills to apply their language learning and produce language output across the disciplines (Snyder and Fenner 2021).



Research to Practice

Language Power includes many scaffolds strategically embedded throughout the lessons to support students various levels of language proficiency and to promote language development. These scaffolds include the use of graphic organizers and word banks throughout the Student Guided Practice Book, sentence and paragraph frames/starters to use when asking a question or prompting a response, and digital versions of all the texts that enable audio support.

Language Power includes “Content Connection” boxes that provide interdisciplinary activities aligned to the theme of the unit. These activities have students apply their language learning across the disciplines and engage with authentic, real-world scenarios or questions. *Language Power* also includes a matrix of culminating activities that allows students to show learning in different content areas through performance-based tasks.



Scaffolding Student Grouping

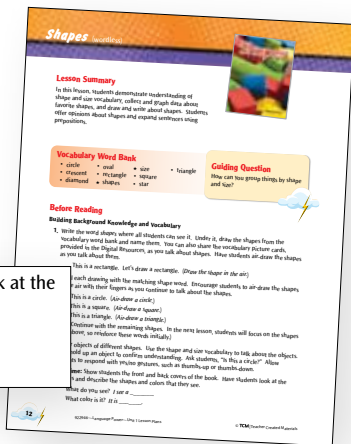
The last type of scaffolding is the use of student grouping. Through the use of strategic pairing or structured small groups, students have the opportunity to discuss academic content (August 2018), work together, and learn from each other to further support their language development. For example, teachers may choose to pair/group students with the same home language or mix language and proficiency levels where some students are modeling language for others and providing feedback.

Providing ample opportunities for thoughtful dialogue and discussion with peers is a critical part of English language development (Mora-Flores 2011). Research from Carmen Arreaga-Mayer and Claudia Perdomo-Rivera (1996) found that English learners spend less than 2 percent of their day engaged in academic talk. By scaffolding the use of student grouping, students are able to spend more time engaging in academic discussion in a supportive classroom environment.



Research to Practice

Language Power embeds opportunities for the strategic use of pairs or small groups throughout each lesson. The Talk Time feature specifically addresses peer-to-peer conversation and shares the necessary sentence starters/frames to provide if necessary. Additional partner work, small-group work, and class discussions provide opportunities for students to communicate and receive immediate feedback. In particular, the Speaking and Listening section of each lesson plan models and provides opportunities for students to listen closely, present and support ideas, and sustain dialogue.



4. Talk Time: Show students the front and back covers of the book. Have students look at the pictures and describe the shapes and colors that they see.

What do you see? *I see a _____.*
What color is it? *It is _____.*



Using Technology to Support Language Development

The use of technology in the classroom can highly support language development for English learners, especially for newcomer students who benefit from repeated exposure to content. Digital resources offer accessibility opportunities that go beyond print resources through the use of images, audio recordings, videos, digital assessments, and ebooks. These resources enhance student learning in a variety of instructional settings, support English language acquisition, and improve student engagement.

Digital resources can be used in a variety of instructional settings and for a variety of purposes.

Whole Class: Whole-class instruction is best applied when introducing texts. In this setting, every student engages with the text at the same time. Projecting introductory videos, ebooks, or lesson plan activities creates a large canvas for shared literacy and language acquisition experiences.

Small Group: With small-group instruction, students access ebooks and digital activity sheets in more hands-on settings. This limits transition times and fosters engagement. Using built-in digital tools helps students focus on improving specific skills in language, fluency, and content area knowledge.

Independent Practice: Students use digital tools to navigate the ebooks independently. The interactive features can be used to increase rigor and support students in extending their own knowledge. Videos and audio recordings allow students to approach texts through different modalities.






Research to Practice

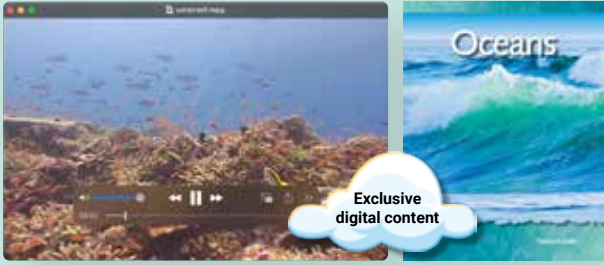


Language Power provides the following types of digital resources that can be used as explained above:



Available in print and digitally

Vocabulary picture/word cards are provided to support teaching and learning.




Exclusive digital content

Introductory thematic videos and content-specific videos are included for each unit.



Exclusive digital content

Professional recordings of texts are ideal for listening centers.



Exclusive digital content

Engaging activities to support literacy and language learning at home are provided in English and Spanish.

Conclusion

Developing English language proficiency is a complex process that takes time. It encompasses all four language domains, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, none of which can be developed in isolation. Language instruction must focus not only on the interpretive mode of communication, which includes listening, reading, and viewing, but also the expressive mode of communication, which includes speaking, writing and representing. All of the components of *Language Power* encourage participation in the domains of language through the use of engaging texts and a systematic lesson structure that allows for whole and small group practice, independent work, and peer-to-peer interaction. Content and language build upon one another in a spiraling horizontal and vertical curriculum.

Ultimately, growth is what educators should emphasize. Through effort and mistakes, everyone has the capacity to learn and grow (Dweck 2013). No two English learners are the same. They are unique individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. They have different strengths and challenges. However, educators can also draw on some commonalities to inform their strategies and scaffolds to further advance students' English.

The variety of activities in *Language Power* helps reach a wide range of learners by incorporating multiple modalities for representation, engagement, action, and expression (Ralabate 2016). Focusing on specific proficiency bands and grade levels allows educators to appropriately support their English learner population and leverage their students' strengths to set them up for success, emotionally and academically.



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