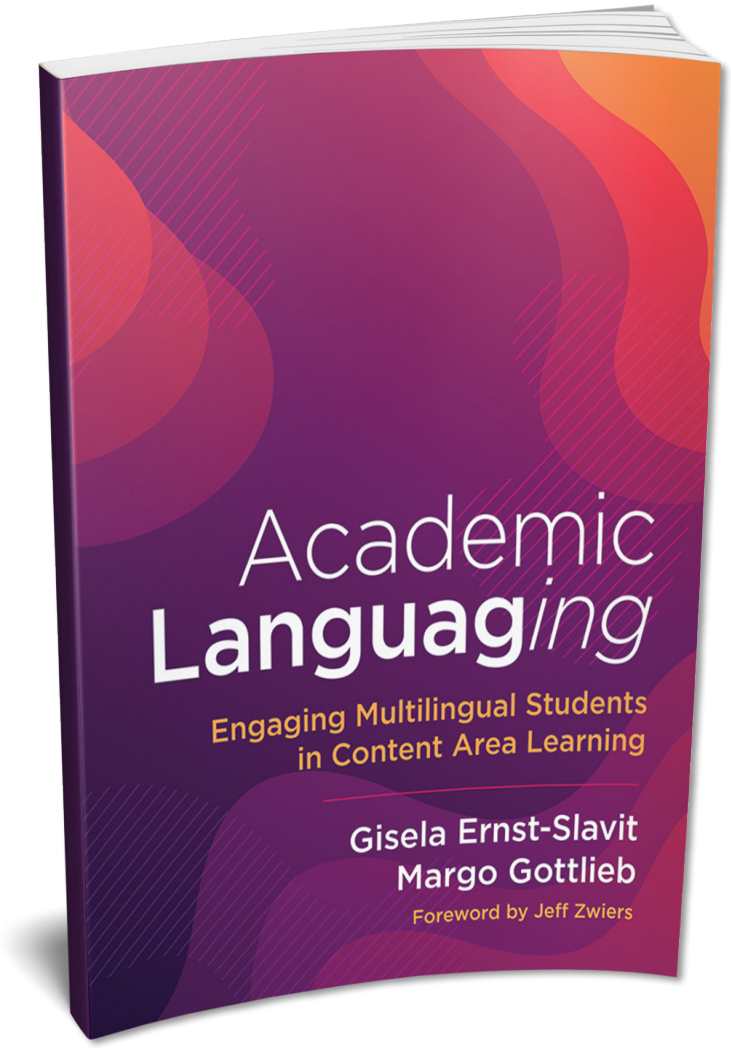


# Thank you

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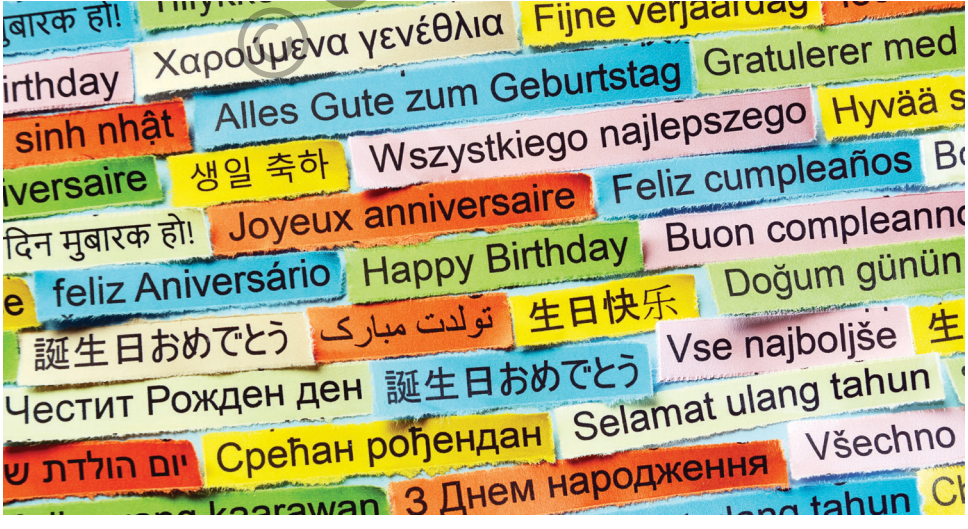
CORWIN

# 1 Moving From Academic Language to Academic Languag*ing*

Anyone who has visited Planet Word, a Smithsonian museum in Washington, DC, will have witnessed language in action, demonstrated in interactive boards with individuals from around the world describing differences between their languages and English, audio coupled with video vividly illustrating through Technicolor the borrowing of English words from multiple language families, and a hypothetical library doubled in size through mirrors—all made possible through innovative technology. These exhibits remind us of the power of language, such as the display in Figure 1.1, and its constant evolution through translingualism, the crisscrossing and continuous interaction among languages as they come in contact with each other and interconnect.



**Figure 1.1 The Power of Words**




*Source:* iStock.com/ivosar

Academic languaging, although associated with ongoing technological advancement, is much more—it is a human activity all about the negotiation of language(s) for specific purposes that is crafted for particular audiences and uses. In essence, in this book we concentrate on the interaction among K–12 students, viewing the construct through the lens of multilingual learners. This interest group has been most impacted by and historically criticized for their absence of expression of academic language in English, and we wish to rectify this misunderstanding. And so we initiate our discussion of academic languaging with Figure 1.2, sharing the warmth of a welcoming classroom filled with multilingual voices.

**Figure 1.2 A Bilingual Welcoming Poster in an Elementary Classroom**


*Source:* Melissa Sifuentes Phillips

Multilingual learners, a broad heterogeneous, ever-increasing, and expansive group of students, have the distinction of having been or currently being exposed to multiple languages at home, in the community, and/or at school, thus having access and opportunity to communicate in two or more languages (Hornberger, 1990). A subset of multilingual learners whose English language proficiency precludes them from full participation in classrooms where English is the medium of instruction are often labeled English learners. Per federal legislation, these students—many of whom were born and have been raised in the United States, and some of whom have been dually identified as students with exceptionalities—are eligible for participation in a range of language support services. Other student groups include newcomers to the U.S. educational system, students with interrupted formal schooling, and long-term English learners—all of whom qualify and participate in language programs. We also have

to acknowledge multilingual learners who have been identified as gifted and talented and receive highly capable services.

In large part, multilingual learners retain their multiple languages and cultures although some have been reclassified from designated language programs per their state's regulations. Additionally, there are heritage language learners, including members of Indigenous communities, with oral language proficiency or cultural connections to multiple languages whose overall English language proficiency has met or exceeded state criteria for eligibility. Indeed, multilingual learners are an eclectic heterogeneous mix of students!

All students have the power of language that needs to be nurtured and released; we consider that action academic languaging. Throughout the first two chapters we offer various conceptualizations of academic language and how they might become more student centric and converted to reflect the more personalized term *academic languaging*. Most important, though, is what academic languaging means to you and its implications for your multilingual learners. To what extent are you accepting of your students' personal assets and those from their home environment as part of your definition?

Here is the first of several icons sprinkled throughout the chapters. **Stop and Think** is specifically designed with the idea of reflection in mind. So, take some time to pause and ponder the information at hand and its implications for you, your colleagues, and your multilingual learners.



### Stop and Think


#### What Is the Meaning of Academic Languaging to You and Your Colleagues?

Jot down your conceptualization of academic language and, if you choose, the theorists who have contributed to your thinking. Now, make note of how you might define academic languaging. After each chapter, you might wish to revisit your notes and add how you are being influenced by our writing and moving toward a more academic languaging stance.

## Why Our Change in Thinking? Where We Came From and Where We're Going

As we proposed more than a decade ago and reiterate here, the teaching and learning of academic language requires *more* than linguistic knowledge—it also involves cultural knowledge about "ways of being in the world, ways of acting, thinking, interacting, valuing, believing,

speaking, and sometimes writing and reading, connected to particular identities and social roles" (Gee, 1992, p. 73). Ultimately, one important goal for learning academic language is to afford and promote thinking and communicating about issues in more abstract, technical, and deeper ways. "Having teachers and school leaders recognize and incorporate the linguistic and cultural influences of home and community into school enables students to unite their experiential and academic worlds to build their academic language use" (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014, p. 27).

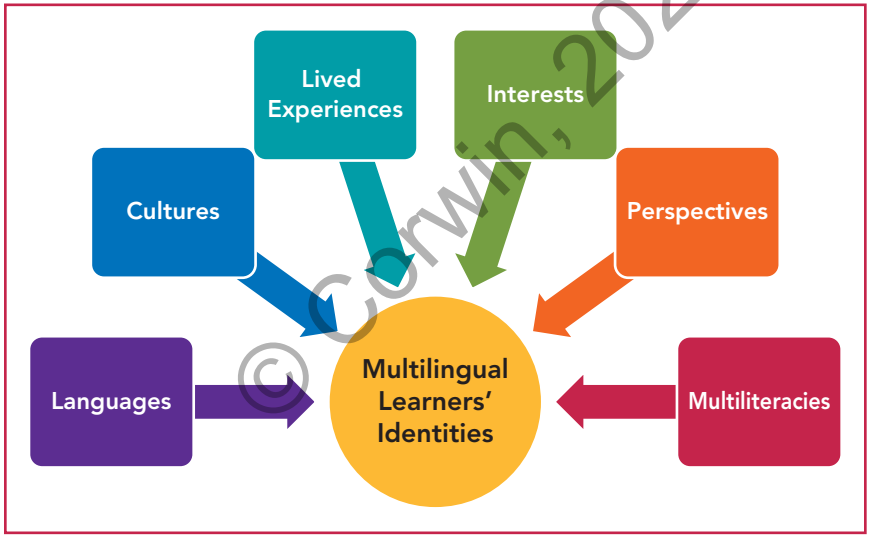
Since then, we have taken a more dynamic action-oriented stance of language that implies language use that relays a specific message, has a specific purpose, and is intended for a specific audience to effect change, thus the term *languaging*. In essence, we tend to think like linguistic anthropologists who see and use language as social action. Action-based teaching centers on promoting student agency and its relation to the development of self and identity (van Lier, 2007) to foster academic languaging.

In an action-oriented approach, language learning is a social practice that considers students as active participants in the (co)construction of knowledge where a variety of social and cultural factors influence teaching and learning. It involves students learning pragmatics (situational language use) to understand the context in which language learning occurs as part of their classroom routine. For example, students need to know when they can ask a question about a classroom presentation, under what circumstances they can use information from artificial intelligence (AI), or when can they speak without raising their hands. This stance of languaging, combining sociocultural and actionable perspectives as the bases for communication, supports language learning as a social practice where talk and interaction are central to human development and learning.

For us, academic languaging implies a more prominent role of students as contributing members of their classroom community—taking the reins, gaining agency, and exerting autonomy as they become confident and competent users of language. Taking an action-based perspective, multilingual learners help in determining, engaging, and reflecting on meaningful activities, such as research, projects, and presentations that pique their interest. Language development is fostered through student interaction in planning, exploring, discussing, and co-constructing a range of products. In this orientation, language learning is more than a cognitive process; it involves the mind, the body, emotions, and all the senses. Viewing language learning within an action-based mindset places the forms (structures) of language in the background while foregrounding language as doing.

In adopting academic languaging as a way of thinking and doing, we no longer envision language dichotomously (as social *or* academic); nor do we confine learning to school, but rather we embrace the contributions of students', families', and communities' "funds of knowledge" (González et al., 2005). Along with valuing students' languages, cultures, traditions, and experiences, we acknowledge how both educators and family members help shape the identities of multilingual learners. In essence, we privilege the resources and assets that constitute multilingual learners' self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding—that is, their "funds of identity" that are actively used in self-definition (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Features associated with the identities of multilingual learners are highlighted in Figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3 Features Contributing to Multilingual Learners' Identities**






Languaging for multilingual learners is also an empowerment issue across content area learning that can be upheld by inviting students to interact in the language(s) of their choice. We have specifically chosen the term *languaging* for activities that portray language use when communicating with others for distinct purposes. Dynamic languaging—"the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain, 2006, p. 98)—occurs at home, in school, and around the community. Similarly, Diane Larsen-Freeman (2003) challenges the focus on grammar and rules of grammar as a dynamic process, something she calls grammaring. For multilingual learners,

meaning-making can entail the imperfect use of language, dialectal variations, and different varieties of language.

Ultimately, switching from notions of academic language to academic languaging may just be a morphological tweak; however, its implications are huge, allowing educators to notice what multilingual learners can do in more empowering ways (Proctor, 2020). We agree with Sembiante and Tran (2021) who see academic languaging as the "agentive verbal action taken by language users who wield their full linguistic repertoires in functional ways to support the dynamic communicative and literary contexts of schooling" (p. 102).

Several researchers have challenged the notion of academic language over the years, claiming that academic registers are perceived as being more complex, specialized, and sophisticated than nonacademic registers, ultimately privileging white middle-class teaching practices as the default linguistic standard against which multilingual learners are evaluated (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In principle, this raciolinguistic ideology (emanating from the intersections of race, language, and social class) challenges the ever-present white middle-class dominance in schools as schools are increasingly becoming more minoritized with financially impoverished student populations. According to Flores (2020), this racialized ideology frames low-income students as being linguistically deficient and in need of remediation due to their failure to master academic language. In lieu of using "academic language," "language architecture" is suggested as a means of analyzing the literacy demands of state academic content standards, thus enabling students to be language architects capable of manipulating language for specific purposes (Flores, 2020).



Another suggested replacement for "academic language" is the "language of ideas." This reframing of academic language focuses on students' language use when engaging in school-based content area work. It accounts for the linguistic resources that students bring to academic tasks, including their (1) conversational or social language, (2) accomplishments related to academic tasks, and (3) awareness and strategic use of a range of registers for different purposes and audiences (Bunch, 2014; Bunch & Martin, 2021).

There has not been universal acceptance of what constitutes academic language, nor do we expect that there will be agreement on academic languaging. So that you can formulate your own opinion on the discussion at hand, we have inserted an icon of a magnifying glass to signal a set of resources that offers additional references on the topic. The following list is our first one on varying views of academic language over the years.

## Look Closer

### Contributors to Academic Language

There is a long history in language education that revolves around academic language and how it has evolved into academic languaging. Here are some of the major theorists and researchers who have contributed to the construct, attributed, in large part, to the groundbreaking work of Jim Cummins in the early 1980s.


Bailey, A. L., & Heritage, M. (2008). *Formative assessment for literacy, grades K–6: Building reading and academic language skills across the curriculum*. Corwin.

Bunch, C. B., & Martin, D. (2021). From "academic language" to the "language of ideas": A disciplinary perspective on using language in K–12 settings. *Language and Education*, *35*(1), 1–18.

Cummins, J. (1981). Four misconceptions about language proficiency in bilingual education. *NABE Journal*, *5*(3), 31–45.

Cummins, J. (2008). BICS and CALP: Empirical and theoretical status of the distinction. In B. Street & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Vol. 2. Literacy* (2nd ed., pp. 71–83). Springer Science + Business Media.

Gee, J. P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. Falmer Press.

Gibbons, P. (2009). *English learners, academic literacy, and thinking: Learning in the challenge zone*. Heinemann.

Gottlieb, M., & Castro, M. (2017). *Language power: Key uses for accessing content*. Corwin.

Gottlieb, M., & Ernst-Slavit, G. (2014). *Academic language in diverse classrooms: Definitions and contexts*. Corwin.

Scarcella, R. (2003). *Academic English: A conceptual framework* (Technical Report No. 1). University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute.

Schleppegrell, M. J. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Erlbaum.

Snow, C. E., & Uccelli, P. (2009). The challenge of academic language. In D. R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of literacy* (pp. 112–133). Cambridge University Press.

Zwiers, J. (2008). *Building academic language: Essential practices for content classrooms*. Jossey-Bass.

## Why Shift to Academic Languag*ing*, and What Does It Entail?

As we, a global village, are becoming increasingly affected by advancements in technology—in particular, AI—our named languages are becoming more and more in flux. The shift from *language* to *languaging* involves a subtle yet powerful distinction between views of language as a static object versus languaging as an ongoing process and action. The construct of languaging has its roots in several related and overlapping fields of study including linguistics, applied linguistics (e.g., Swain, 2006), sociolinguistics (e.g., Bloome et al., 2022), and linguistic anthropology (Becker, 1991). The term suggests that "there is no such thing as language, only continual languaging, an activity of human beings in the world" (Becker, 1991). In other words, speaking and writing are themselves language production activities that mediate remembering, attending, and other aspects of higher mental functioning. When we talk or write, our attention is focused on certain objects or ideas and not others; we create artifacts that we can refer back to, challenge, and change—processes that help us to remember and learn.



Based on the preceding conceptualization of languaging, we treat it as an agentive, verbal, or written action taken by language users who employ their full linguistic resources in functional ways to support the dynamic communicative and literary-related contexts of schooling (Proctor et al., 2020; Sembiante & Tian, 2021). This focus serves a threefold purpose. First, and as discussed earlier, a languaging perspective positions students, teachers, and community members and their language practices as inseparable, constantly shaping and reshaping language. Second, the shift from *language* as a noun to *languaging* as a verb moves our understanding of the construct away from prescriptive, fixed, and exclusive notions that have traditionally pervaded in the field to ones that are flexible and dynamic. Finally, this view of academic languaging offers a timely response to recent criticism of academic language that is seen as

- A set of static linguistic forms to be learned (e.g., Flores & Rosa, 2015)
- One that prioritizes white standard linguistic practices (e.g., Paris, 2012)
- More complex and of higher status than nonacademic registers (MacSwan, 2020)
- A tool for segregation and exclusion (e.g., Jensen et al., 2021)

In sum, the shift from a conception of language as a tacit noun to an active verb supports our premise that all educators should view

academic languaging as an ongoing process that draws from and centers the lived experiences of multilingual learners and their interactions with others and different text forms.

You will notice how Figure 1.4 represents multilingual learners' interaction with the world. School, home, and community influences underscore the grounding of multilingual learners' identity formation, agency, and empowerment. The brilliance of the stars, representing the content areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies and science, is filtered through academic languaging, enabling multilingual learners to humanize their learning experiences through multiple languages, literacies, and perspectives.

**Figure 1.4 The Larger Context of Academic Languaging**

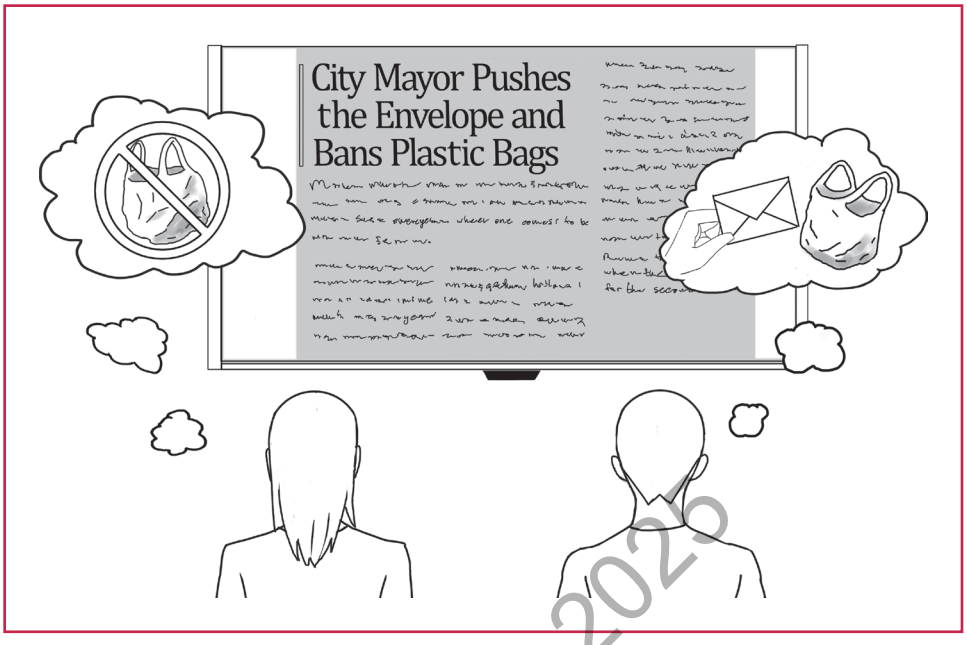



*Source:* Arthur Slavit

## A Classroom Example

At the end of her sixth-grade social studies class, Mrs. Baskin announces that tomorrow class will start with a discussion of a brief article published recently in the local newspaper titled "City Mayor Pushes the Envelope and Bans Plastic Bags" while showing a copy of the article on the screen. As the students leave the classroom, Bouzid stares at the screen, a puzzled expression on his face (see Figure 1.5).

**Figure 1.5 A Social Studies Article**




*Source:* Arthur Slavit




## Stop and Think

### What Would You Do?

Bouzid is one of seven multilingual students in Mrs. Baskin's classroom. Before you proceed, take a moment to reflect on how you might introduce this newspaper article to your students and explain the idiomatic expression.

As Figure 1.5 suggests, students proficient in English in this class understood the meaning of the newspaper headline and probably had a sense of what the article is about. On the other hand, for multilingual learners like Bouzid, the headline might not make sense due to the idiomatic expression "pushing the envelope." This idiomatic expression, and others like it, can be puzzling, generating misunderstanding in comprehension because its meaning is different than the sum of the meaning of its single words.

For students growing up in English-speaking homes, such idiomatic expressions form part of their language repertoire and may not need clarification. However, for multilingual learners, who often translate concepts literally, this kind of "opaque language" (Ernst-Slavit & Mason, 2011)

can cloud their understanding. This example reminds us of Bartolomé's (1998) assertion that "even well-intentioned teachers often fail to overtly teach the academic discourses necessary for school success" (p. 3).

Important to highlight is that colloquial and idiomatic expressions are used regularly in oral language discussions and in written contexts (e.g., podcasts, blogs, cartoons, or newspaper headlines). For multilingual learners, colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions are one other aspect of academic languaging to incorporate into their linguistic repertoire.

## What Are the Dimensions of Academic Language?

Academic language is the basis for academic languaging. Historically, academic language has been couched within three hierarchical dimensions from discourse, the overall organization of chunks of language (oral or written text); to sentences, one or more words that denote a statement, question, command, or exclamation; to words/phrases, the smallest units of meaningful communication (e.g., A. Bailey & Butler, 2003; Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014; Scarcella, 2003). Sociocultural context, specifying the situation and interaction in which academic language is operationalized, has also been recognized as a critical element in language standards frameworks (WIDA, 2004, 2012, 2020, 2023).

As shown in Table 1.1, academic languaging is grounded in the dimensions of other language frameworks (with the addition of symbols—a multimodal feature); however, it captures an underlying motivation and purpose for language use that makes learning actionable—that is, through student-led



**Table 1.1 Inquiry-Based Learning Framing the Four Dimensions of Academic Language/Languaging**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Discourse** | • Genres<br>• Organization of text<br>• Coherence of ideas |
| **Sentences** | • Questioning<br>• Statements<br>• Simple, compound, complex structures |
| **Words/Phrases** | • Prepositional phrases<br>• Multiple meanings<br>• Colloquial expressions |
| **Symbols** | • Greek letters<br>• Numerals<br>• Map icons |

Adapted from Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014, p. 6

inquiry. Student-led inquiry revolves around student-generated authentic questions about a topic, an issue, or a phenomenon and their genuine pursuit of the answers. In essence, teachers facilitate an experience that unfolds in such a way that student learning is stimulated through discovery and problem-solving.

As you may have noticed, we have added a fourth dimension—symbols, as they are used widely for communicative purposes in and out of academic settings. We further describe each dimension of academic languaging as follows.

### Discourse Dimension

Discourse refers to the broader bodies of language, their organization, coherence, and cohesion. It also refers to different communication modes as in spoken, written, and visual. Within discourse, there are genres, which are specific categories for what we read, write, speak, watch, and listen. In terms of literary genres, for example, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry are three broad categories. In addition, within each category there are a variety of different types of works. Examples of nonfiction material in science include a manual to use the 3D printer, a biographical sketch of Marie Curie, and a podcast by astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. Likewise, a variety of discourse forms are used in language arts classrooms that range from the more conventional printed materials such as essays, journal entries, and acrostic poems to current multimodal types of genres such as podcasts, digital collages, and slideshows. For students to access content area material and to show understanding of that material, they will need to understand and use the structures, conventions, and complexities required by each discourse form. Table 1.2 presents examples of a variety of genre-based discourses typically associated with the content areas.



**Table 1.2 Examples of Genre-Based Discourse by Content Area**

| CONTENT AREA | EXAMPLES OF GENRE-BASED DISCOURSE |
|---|---|
| Language Arts | Oral histories, autobiographies, editorials, audiobooks |
| Mathematics | Graphs, story problems, proofs, diagrams |
| Science | Research reports, tabular representations, digital applications, large data sets |
| Social Studies | Speeches, political cartoons, maps, historical diaries, reenactments |
| Art and Music | Scripts, music scores, 2D and 3D portfolios, lyric analyses |
| Health and Wellness | Health compendia, exercise training logs, module packets |

The range of discourse options that can be used in today's classrooms is enormous (see Table 1.3 for examples of discourses throughout the content areas). Important to highlight is the heterogeneity of the students sitting in today's classrooms; while some multilingual students might be more familiar with linear and printed texts, others maybe be whizzes at interacting with a variety of multimedia and multilanguage materials.

**Table 1.3 Examples of Genre-Based Discourse Across Formats**

| PRINT-BASED | DIGITAL | VISUAL/ MULTIMEDIA | SPOKEN |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ballads | AI searches | Charts | Asking questions |
| Book reports | Apple Books | Claymations | Audio recordings |
| Essays | Apps | Drawings | Brief recitations |
| Expository texts | Digital storytelling | Films | Debates |
| Fables/fairy tales | Emails | Graphics | Dialogues |
| Informational texts | Gaming | Graphic organizers | Giving directions |
| Myths | Podcasts | Photo collages/ murals | Monologues |
| Novels | QR codes | Podcasts | Reciting poetry |
| Opinion pieces | Rewording tools | PowerPoints | (Re)telling stories |
| Poems | Texts | Prezi presentations | Role plays |
| Song lyrics | Visual read-alouds | Sketches | Speeches |
| Tall tales | Web pages | Videos | |
| Theses | Wikis | Vocabulary pictures | |
| | | YouTube videos | |

Adapted from Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014 (ELA 6–8)



## Stop and Think

### What Is Discourse?


The term *discourse*, like many other words in English, has multiple meanings. Traditionally, *discourse* refers to dialogue or conversation between two parties. However, Gee (2011) introduces a broader concept, which he calls "Discourse with a big 'D'" (p. 34). This refers to socially accepted ways of using language that involve "thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting in the 'right' places, at the 'right' times, with the 'right' objects" (p. 34). Being proficient in academic languaging means knowing what to say, when to say it, and how to say and apply it within various oral and written disciplinary contexts.

## Sentences Dimension

The sentence dimension includes grammatical structures, language forms, and conventions that characterize languaging in inquiry-based situations. Students encounter these patterns primarily in the different types of texts they read, the talk in and out of classrooms, school-based tasks, and assessments. For all students, including multilingual students, learning how to use grammatical structures simultaneously facilitates both language development and content area learning.

The challenge is that many features in English are not intuitive. In fact, like all languages, English is also arbitrary, and some basic structures are illogical or dissimilar to the home languages of our students and thus difficult to understand and learn—even when taught in context. Think about the following examples:

**Phrasal verbs.** Most proficient English speakers do not need to think about how two or more words are strung together as a verb that may have multiple meanings. Read through the following examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| *break down* | *get through* |
| *come around* | *run out* |
| *get across* | *turn down* |

**Future tense.** In English there are several different ways for expressing future-related meanings. This range of forms of expressing the future nature of an occurrence may be extremely frustrating for multilingual learners, particularly for those who speak languages that do not use verb tenses at all (e.g., several varieties of Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Yucatec Maya). To illustrate this, here are six different constructions in English that express an action that will take place in the future:

*I'll study this afternoon.*

*I'm going (planning) to study this afternoon.*

*I'm studying this afternoon.*

*I'll be studying this afternoon.*

*I will have been studying this afternoon.*

*I was going to study this afternoon.*

Clearly, learning English can be very confusing! Multilingual learners will encounter additional irregularities—for example, learning that the word *syllabus* is singular, not plural. They will also have to learn that

many words can have two opposite meanings (e.g., *clip* means both "to cut apart" and "to attach together"), that the meanings of words can change depending on which syllable is stressed (e.g., as in *address*: *ADDress* as the particulars of a place and *addRESS* as a talk or lecture), and that the words *hundred*, *thousand*, *million*, and *billion* are singular after plural numbers (e.g., winning *three million* dollars).

In addition to irregular count nouns, prepositions, and interrogatives, students will encounter complex structures (e.g., parallel clauses, passive voice, and complex noun sentences). While there are numerous grammatical structures that cross content areas and disciplines, some are used more often in particular disciplines. Table 1.4 provides selected grammatical structures and pertinent examples used in specific content areas.

**Table 1.4 Examples of Grammatical Features by Content Area**

| CONTENT AREA | FEATURE | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| **Language Arts** | Simile | *Cool as a cucumber, white as a ghost* |
| | Compare and contrast | *In the same way, both, similarly, unlike, on the other hand, however* |
| **Mathematics** | Logical connectors | *But, and, if, then, if and only if* |
| | Compare (multiplication) | *Times as many, times as much, times more, times as large* |
| **Science** | Passive voice | *The cells were infected by the virus.*<br>*The experiment was conducted by the researchers.* |
| | Complex noun phrases | *Waste product excretion mechanisms*<br>*Carbon dioxide removal methods* |
| **Social Studies** | Sequencing | *First, second, last, finally*<br>*Soon, meanwhile, subsequently, in the end* |
| | Historical present | *It is a dark and rainy day in 1939.*<br>*Today, Lewis and Clark decided to approach the voyage in a different manner.* |



## Words/Phrases Dimension

Academic vocabulary includes words and phrases that cut across content areas or that can be specific to particular disciplines. General words and phrases include *in spite of*, *summary*, and *introduction*, whereas content-specific words and phrases in mathematics might include *multiplication*, *cardinal numbers*, and *square root*. Many general academic words have been identified through analysis of academic texts. For instance, Averil Coxhead (2000) developed an

academic word list (AWL) to help set vocabulary goals for language courses, guide independent study, and inform curriculum designers in selecting texts and creating learning activities. Based on a corpus of 3.5 million words from academic texts, Coxhead identified 570 word families that college students are likely to encounter, such as the word *analyze* and its related forms (e.g., *analytic*, *analytical*, *analytically*, *analysis*). Although the list is aimed at postsecondary education, many words align with word lists that are now available in grade-level curricula.

Your multilingual learners may already know a range of disciplinary language since most of the language of science and technology has Greek and Latin roots that serve as a bridge between the Romance languages and English. Students who speak Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, or Romanian (i.e., Romance languages derived from Latin) can leverage their existing linguistic knowledge and make connections to the English language. Table 1.5 includes cognates (i.e., words that are written similarly and have a similar meaning) in five different languages. Notice how similar their spelling is (although beware that their pronunciation might be very different).



**Table 1.5 Cognates in Five Different Languages**

| ENGLISH | ESPAÑOL | PORTUGUÊS | ITALIANO | FRANÇAISE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Active carbon | Carbón activo | Carbono ativo | Carbone attivo | Carbone actif |
| Instant | Instante | Instant | Istantaneo | Instantané |
| Legal | Legal | Legal | Legale | Légale |
| Mental | Mental | Mental | Mentale | Mentale |
| Metamorphosis | Metamorfosis | Metamorfose | Metamorfosi | Métamorphose |
| Polymer | Polímero | Polímero | Polimero | Polymère |
| Version | Versión | Versão | Versione | Version |

For all students, particularly multilingual learners, providing opportunities to explore Greek and Latin root-word construction in context can be a meaningful way of engaging in translinguistic transfer to learn new content area vocabulary. Figure 1.6 is an example of the kind of work students can do with their tablets or laptops as they inquire about the many words that can be derived from the Latin root *press*.

**Figure 1.6 Circle-Spoke Diagram for the Latin Root *Press***




online resources This resource is available for download at https://companion.corwin.com/courses/Academic-Languaging.

Important to remember is that children acquire large vocabularies when they engage in meaningful interactions about topics that are of interest to them (Snow, 2017). Focusing solely on vocabulary—such as by teaching 5 or 10 words per week—is ineffective because vocabulary is only valuable insofar as it reflects a student's broader conceptual understanding.

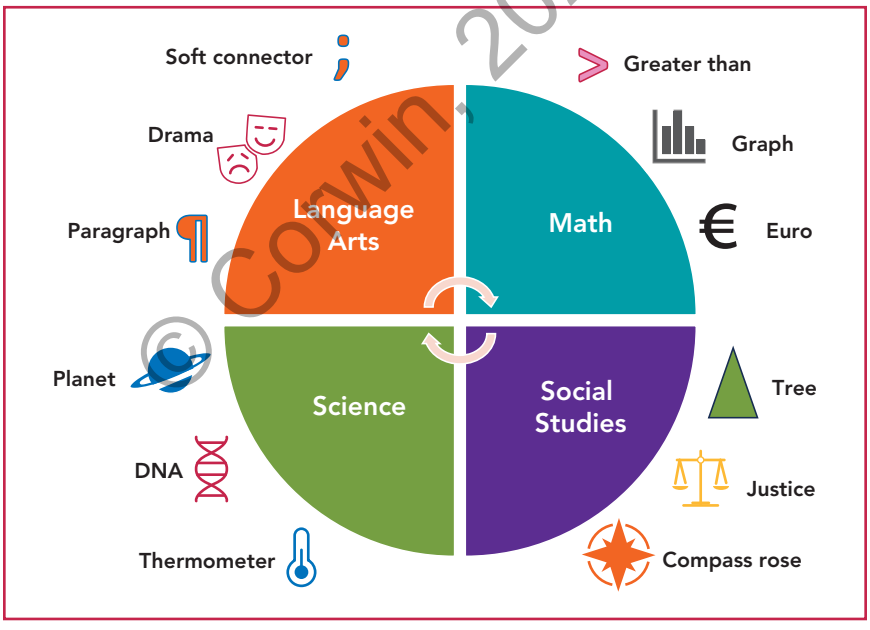
> A child's vocabulary is not important except to the extent that it signals something about conceptual or knowledge development. Indeed, the excellent academic outcomes of second-language learners with strong first language skills strongly support the notion that "knowing the words" is less important than knowing the concepts the words label. (Snow, 2017, p. 5)

Stated differently, the strong academic performance of multilingual learners with a solid foundation in their home language underscores that understanding and applying the concepts behind words is more crucial than merely knowing the words themselves.

### Symbols Dimension

A symbol is something that represents something else. Similar to words and language structures, symbols can help people comprehend the world. However, if unknown, a symbol can hinder communication and understanding. A symbol can represent a noun (e.g., a tree on a map), an action (e.g., printing on a computer), or a concept (Uncle Sam). Just as we rely on symbols when driving in the city, symbols, such as the examples listed in Figure 1.7, are vital for navigating the K–12 school curriculum.

Figure 1.7 Examples of Symbols Across Content Areas






### Symbols and Digital Media

Students today are digital natives, and most are prepared to navigate the constantly changing nature of technology and its related digital skills. However, because we know that multilingual learners in our schools are a heterogeneous population, we cannot assume that a student who is developing English will also be learning digital literacy. In fact, some students may rely on their smartphones or tablets for all sorts of communicative needs, entertainment, inquiry, and school work.

In digital communication, symbols in English have been adopted across the globe for social media, emails, and text messages. Likewise, emojis—those popular icons that convey thoughts and emotions in any language and across languages—are originally from Japan. Some symbols are used to communicate complete messages (e.g., thumbs-up emoji), emotions (e.g., smiley face), and tone (e.g., *haha* or IMAO—In My Arrogant Opinion). In addition, hashtags (#) and symbols (@) have become useful tools on social media platforms. Hashtags allow users to identify posts under a specific topic. For example, New Mexico has established some set hashtags for emergency communication such as #NMFire and #NMStorm. While some educators and families might feel that this new way of digital communication may reduce opportunities for students to use and practice "proper" English, current research (e.g., Crystal, 2008; McSweeney, 2017) indicates that using social media in English may, in fact, support English literacy development as a whole.



## Look Closer

### Technology and Multilingual Learners

**For viewing:**

British Council Serbia. (2013, November 29). *David Crystal—The effect of new technologies on English* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVqcoB798Is&ab_channel=BritishCouncilSerbia

Gassalasca4. (2013, May 11). *David Crystal on texting (S1E2 of It's only a theory)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h79V_qUp91M&ab_channel=Gassalasca4

**For reading:**

Altavilla, J. (2020). How technology affects instruction for English learners. *Kappan*, *102*(1), 18–23.

Dalton, B. (2020). Bringing together multimodal composition and maker education in K–8 classrooms. *Language Arts*, *97*(3), 159–171.

Egbert, J., & Panday-Shukla, P. (2024). *Task engagement across disciplines: Research and practical strategies to increase student achievement*. Taylor and Francis.

McSweeney, M. A. (2017). I text English to everyone: Links between second-language texting and academic proficiency. *Languages*, *27*. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages2030007