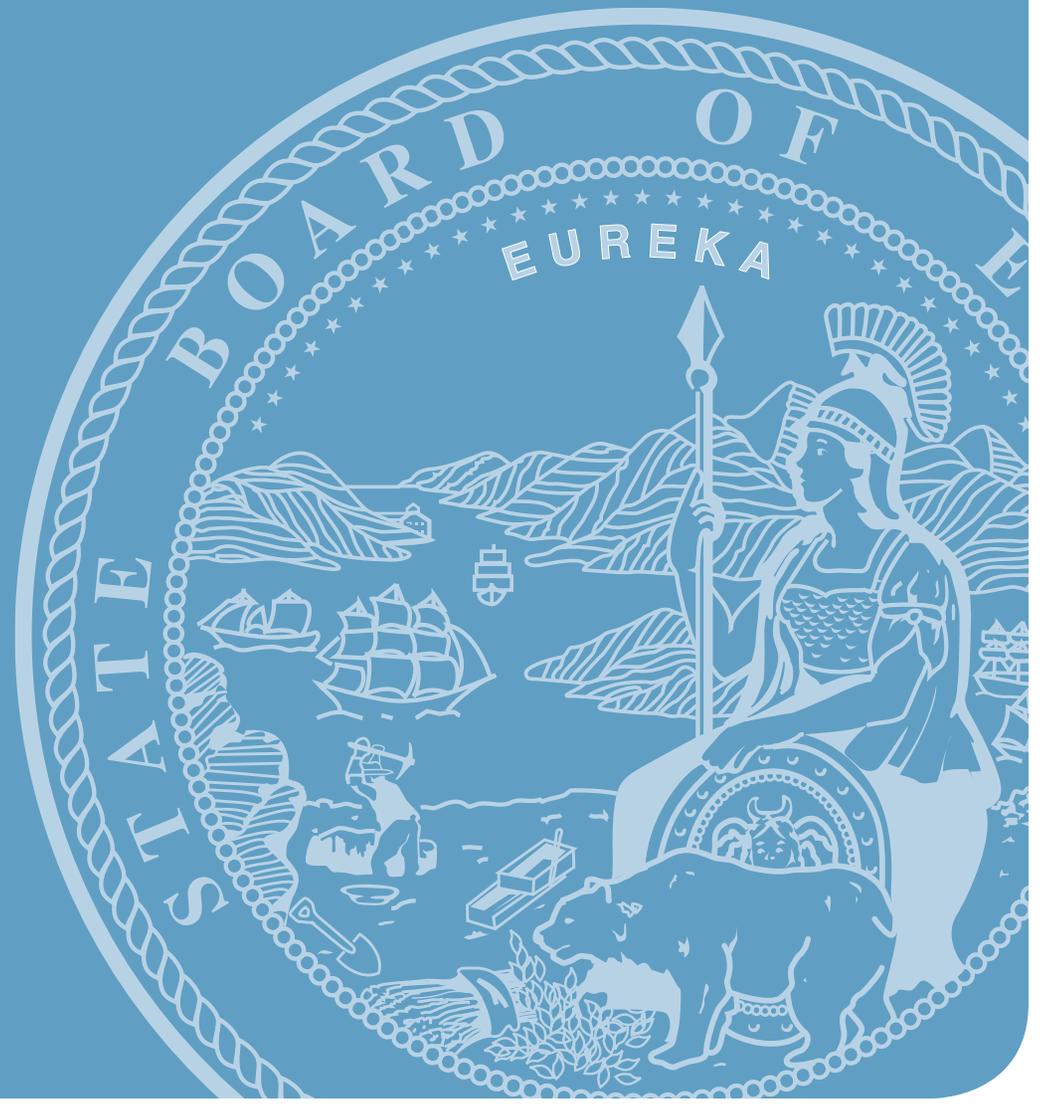


Chapter 5



Learning About How English Works



Many California teachers have observed that their students who are English learners (ELs) develop everyday English quite rapidly and can communicate effectively in informal social situations, but these students sometimes struggle with tasks involving *academic English*, such as writing a logical argument, comprehending their science and history textbooks, or participating in an academic debate (Cummins 2008, 71–83). For K–12 settings, *academic English* broadly refers to the language used in school to help students develop content knowledge, skills, and abilities; it is the language students are expected to use to convey their understanding and mastery of such knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Academic English is different from everyday, or informal, English. Some features of academic English span the disciplines, such as general academic vocabulary (e.g., *evaluate*, *infer*, *imply*), but there is also variation depending upon the discipline—in domain-specific vocabulary, for example. However, academic English encompasses much more than vocabulary. It also includes ways of structuring clauses, sentences, and entire texts that convey precision, show relationships between ideas, and present thinking in coherent and cohesive ways in order to achieve specific purposes (e.g., persuading, explaining, entertaining, and describing) with different audiences in discipline-specific ways. Research has shown that not all children come to school equally prepared to engage with academic English.¹ However, research has also demonstrated that ELs can learn academic English, use it to achieve success in academic tasks across the disciplines, and build upon it to prepare for college and careers.

1. The CA ELD Standards were designed with the view that the languages students bring to school—both the native language and different varieties of English—are considered resources. The English that students use with peers or families is not “improper English”; it is appropriate for particular contexts. Being sensitive to the language resources students bring to school and discussing different ways of using English that are suited to different contexts can help build students’ awareness of language while validating and leveraging their knowledge and experiences.

Part II, “Learning About How English Works,” offers K–12 teachers a new perspective on how to help EL students develop understanding of and proficiency in using academic English. The goal of Part II is to guide teachers to support EL students in ways that are appropriate to grade level and English language proficiency level so that ELs can (a) unpack meaning in texts they encounter across the disciplines to better comprehend them; and (b) make informed choices about how to use language appropriately—based on discipline, topic, purpose, audience, and task—when producing written texts and oral presentations.

Part II offers something that has been largely absent in prior ELD standards: attention to how the English language resources available to students are, and can be, used to make meaning and achieve particular communicative purposes. Such visibility is intended to support teachers’ efforts to make transparent for their students the linguistic features of English in ways that support disciplinary literacy. This new perspective emphasizes the interrelated roles of *content knowledge*, *communicative purposes* for using English (e.g., recounting a family event, explaining a scientific phenomenon, describing a historical event, arguing for a position), and the *linguistic resources* writers or speakers can choose depending upon the content, purpose, and audience. Part II focuses on the social actions that accompany deep knowledge about language:

- Representing our experiences and expressing our ideas effectively
- Interacting with a variety of audiences
- Structuring our messages in intentional and purposeful ways

Although the development of everyday English is important for comprehensive English language development, Part II focuses primarily on academic registers² of English because of their prominence in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and their importance for college and career readiness.

It is critical to understand that, although Part II is presented separately in order to draw educators' attention to it, the focus in Part II on understanding how English works is integral to and *inseparable from* EL students' development of meaning-making and purposeful interaction as delineated in Part I, "Interacting in Meaningful Ways." This approach parallels that of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy themselves, which identify a strand for language standards. However, as Appendix A³ of the version of the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* produced by the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (hereafter referred to as Appendix A) notes, "The inclusion of Language standards in their own strand should not be taken as an indication that skills related to conventions, effective language use, and vocabulary are unimportant to reading, writing, speaking, and listening; indeed, they are inseparable from such contexts" (NGA Center for Best Practices and CCSSO 2010, 28).

The following sections identify and discuss some of the language demands from the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy; present key differences between everyday and academic English registers, along with an explanation of how teaching students about language can support their development of academic English; and explain how Part II is organized, how it corresponds to the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, and how it works in tandem with Part I in the CA ELD Standards.

2. *Registers* refer to the ways in which grammatical and lexical resources are combined to meet the expectations of the context (e.g., the content area, topic, audience, and mode in which the message is conveyed). Informal registers include chatting with a friend or texting a message to a family member about a familiar topic. Formal registers include participating in a structured debate on climate change, writing an essay about a novel, or engaging in a collaborative discussion about solving a math problem using mathematical terms.

3. See http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf (accessed July 23, 2014).

Correspondence of the Language Demands in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy to the CA ELD Standards

The CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy set high expectations for all students to participate in academic discourse across the disciplines. Among other things, students are called on to sustain dialogue on a range of topics and in a variety of content areas, interpret the meaning of informational and literary texts, explain their thinking and build on others' ideas, construct arguments and justify their positions persuasively with sound evidence, and effectively produce written and oral texts in a variety of disciplines for a variety of audiences and purposes. The CA ELD Standards respond to these demands by conceptualizing language as a complex, dynamic, and social meaning-making resource. Part I in the CA ELD Standards focuses primarily on how EL students interact in meaningful ways to develop academic registers of English while engaged in intellectually challenging, interactive, and dialogue-rich contexts.

In addition, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy set expectations for all students to develop an understanding of how the English language works and apply this understanding to reading, listening, viewing and writing, speaking, and creating oral and written texts. Reading complex texts is one area in which developing an understanding of how English works can help students. Appendix A emphasizes the importance of text complexity in reading achievement. Complex informational texts, in particular, are characterized by *discipline-specific content knowledge and the related language used to convey this content meaning*, including ambiguous or abstract meanings, potentially unfamiliar grammatical structures (e.g., complex sentences with long noun phrases), and general academic and domain-specific vocabulary.⁴

4. Note that complex narrative texts (e.g., those that present complex ideas with relatively familiar words and simple sentences) may still present challenges for readers.

Appendix A also emphasizes the importance of grammar and vocabulary instruction to reading comprehension, writing, and speaking and listening. General academic and domain-specific vocabulary play a key role in both the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards since research has repeatedly identified vocabulary knowledge as essential for language and literacy proficiency, particularly disciplinary literacy, for EL students (Carlo et al. 2004; Lesaux et al. 2010; Nagy and Townsend 2012; Silverman and Crandell 2010; Spycher 2009).

Regarding grammar, Appendix A noted that grammar and usage development rarely follows a linear path and that former errors may reappear as students synthesize new grammatical and usage knowledge with their current knowledge. As with the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, the CA ELD Standards acknowledge the recursive nature of grammatical knowledge development, through a spiraling of specific knowledge about English language resources that should be taught with increasing levels of sophistication through the grades and across English proficiency levels. This knowledge includes developing an awareness of differences between everyday and disciplinary English and between different varieties of English, including the grammatical structures and usage; understanding the purposes for using certain grammatical features in particular disciplines and text types; and knowing how to use knowledge of grammar to comprehend complex academic texts.

Part II in the CA ELD Standards draws from current research demonstrating that teaching about the grammatical patterns of academic English in intellectually engaging ways that are contextualized in disciplinary knowledge promotes EL students' reading comprehension and writing development (Achugar, Schleppegrell, and Oteíza 2007; Aguirre-Muñoz et al. 2008; Gebhard and Martin 2010; de Oliveira and Dodds 2010).

Because of the importance of vocabulary and grammar in the development of academic English, and especially the way they interact with discourse and meaning-making in the disciplines, they are prominently featured in both the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards. Appendix A underscored this prominence in referring to how students should be taught about language:

[I]f they are taught simply to vary their grammar and language to keep their writing “interesting,” they may actually become more confused about how to make effective language choices . . . As students learn more about the patterns of English grammar in different communicative contexts throughout their K-12 academic careers, they can develop more complex understandings of English grammar and usage. Students can use this understanding to make more purposeful and effective choices in their writing and speaking and more accurate and rich interpretations in their reading and listening. (NGA Center for Best Practices and CCSSO 2010, 29)

The following examples are a small sample of where specific language demands related to text complexity and grammatical and vocabulary knowledge appear in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy at various grade levels and across domains:

Reading

RL.1.5: Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.⁵

RI.3.8: Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

The first example (RL.1.5) sets expectations for first-graders to distinguish text types and explain the differences between them. This necessitates, at a minimum, an understanding of how informational texts, such as science explanations, are structured differently from narrative texts, such as stories. The second example (RI.3.8) sets expectations for third-graders to develop

5. The order of the coding system of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy is domain, grade level, number of the standard. For example, RL.1.5 is Reading Standards for Literature, grade 1, standard number 5.

an understanding of how language is used throughout a text to create cohesion.⁶ The following example sets expectations for fourth-graders to understand how to shift between informal and formal registers to meet the expectations of particular contexts:⁷

Speaking & Listening

SL.4.6: Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion); use formal English when appropriate to task and situation.

This shift between registers requires, among other things, an understanding of which vocabulary and grammatical structures to use to convey comprehension of the subject matter and topic in question, how to interact with the audience, how to organize the information, and what kind of communicative method to use (e.g., text message, formal presentation, a side conversation). From this perspective, grammatical and lexical choices can be said to be highly dependent upon context.

As students progress through the grades and into secondary schooling, they are expected to draw upon their knowledge of how to use particular linguistic resources (e.g., vocabulary, clause combinations, expanded noun phrases) in increasingly sophisticated ways to achieve specific academic purposes (e.g., arguing for a position), as the following examples demonstrate:

6. *Cohesion* refers to how information unfolds, or flows, in a text. A cohesive text is created through a variety of cohesive devices, such as referring to people, ideas, or things with pronouns or synonyms throughout a text so as to avoid repetition (e.g., replace “the first settlers” with “they”) or linking clauses, sentences, and larger chunks of text with conjunctions, such as transition words (e.g., *in contrast*, *consequently*, *next*).

7. *Context* refers to the environment in which language is used, including disciplinary area, topic, audience, text type, and mode of communication. Context determines language choices, and the language choices used by writers and speakers help to establish context.

Writing

W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Language

L.11–12.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

- a. Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte’s *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

As these examples illustrate, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy set high expectations for students to use English in advanced ways across disciplines. These expectations represent significant shifts from previous standards, and they necessitate key shifts in the CA ELD Standards. Some of these shifts are shown in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Comparison of the 1999 CA ELD Standards and the 2012 CA ELD Standards

1999 CA ELD Standards	2012 CA ELD Standards
<i>Prior focus on:</i>	<i>New emphasis on understanding:</i>
English as a set of rules	→ English as a meaning-making resource with different language choices based on discipline, topic, audience, task, and purpose
Grammar as syntax, separate from meaning, with discrete skills at the center	→ An expanded notion of grammar as encompassing discourse, text structure, syntax, and vocabulary and as inseparable from meaning
Language acquisition as a linear, individual process	→ Language acquisition as a nonlinear, spiraling, dynamic, and complex social process in which meaningful interaction with others is essential
Language development focused on accuracy and grammatical correctness	→ Language development focused on interaction, collaboration, comprehension, and communication, with strategic scaffolding to guide appropriate linguistic choices
Simplified texts and activities, often separate from content knowledge, as necessary for learning English	→ Complex texts and intellectually challenging activities focused on building content knowledge as essential to learning academic English

A key goal of the CA ELD Standards is to support EL students to develop advanced proficiency with academic English as they also develop content knowledge across the disciplines. The following section discusses some of the ways teachers can support their EL students in developing proficiency.

Supporting English Learners to Develop Academic English

Part II in the CA ELD Standards is necessarily contextualized in the type of instruction called for in Part I, which focuses on content knowledge and purposeful language development and use. As ELs progress through the grades, they will be expected to move increasingly from everyday English to academic English. This shift from more everyday to more academic registers requires an

understanding of how English works on a variety of levels, including the text, sentence, clause, phrase, and word levels.

Understanding at the Text Level

As early as kindergarten, ELs can begin to understand the structures of different text types. For example, a story is typically structured in three main stages: orientation, complication, and resolution. In the orientation stage, the author *orients* the reader to the story by providing information on the characters and setting and also by setting up the plot. In the complication stage, the author introduces some kind of plot twist that complicates the situation and that must be resolved in some way. In the resolution stage, the author ties up everything neatly by *resolving* the complication and sometimes by offering a moral to the

story or a lesson to be learned. This is not the only way a story can be structured, but this organization illustrates the basic features of many stories students encounter in school, especially in the elementary grades. When students are aware of the text structure of stories, they are in a better position to (a) comprehend stories that are read to them or that they read independently; they can also (b) write their own stories, meeting the expectations of story structure.

As students progress through the grades and into secondary schooling, the academic texts they are expected to comprehend and produce become more varied and complex. The academic texts students encounter in middle and high school are dense with meaning, authoritatively presented, and highly structured (Schleppegrell 2004). These characteristics are part of what distinguishes academic English from more informal, everyday ways of using English. One academic text type that is prominently featured in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and in the CA ELD Standards is argument.⁸ Arguments are written to persuade others to think or act in a certain way, to discuss different viewpoints on an issue, or to assess or evaluate ideas, texts, events, and so forth. Particularly in secondary settings, ELs need to understand how various types of successful arguments are structured so that they can better understand the arguments they read and produce arguments that meet the expectations of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, the CA ELD Standards, and other content standards.

Working with students to understand argument text structure is necessarily contextualized in intellectually challenging content. In order to take a stand and argue for or against something, students must build knowledge of the content and topic, have opportunities to talk about their ideas, and develop the linguistic resources they will need to convey their thinking.

8. In the K-5 CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards, “argument” is referred to as “opinion.”

Some ways to foster these practices are illustrated in a unit that a middle school English teacher taught on the benefits and costs of conventional and organic farming, which culminated with students writing arguments. Over the course of the unit, the class read multiple primary sources and viewed several documentaries on the history of farming and recent developments in sustainable and organic agriculture. The students engaged in collaborative discussions where they debated the content in the texts, analyzed and evaluated the meaning and validity of written arguments on the topic, learned domain-specific and general academic vocabulary they would need to present their ideas, as well as other ways of using language to present their ideas persuasively, and delivered oral presentations on particular aspects of the topic, such as the use of pesticides in farming.

Another important activity was one in which the teacher repeatedly guided students to analyze the text structure of arguments, including the stages that are typically found in written arguments (e.g., provide a position statement, state the issue, make several points supported by evidence, reiterate the position). The teacher also highlighted the particular language features that made the text more cohesive or made it “hang together” (e.g., connecting or transition words). As the unit progressed, students built up the points and evidence supporting their arguments, and the culminating activity was for each student to take a position and pull their arguments together in the form of an editorial for the school newspaper. Figure 5.2 shows an example of the type of argument a teacher might guide students to analyze in order to make explicit the text structure of arguments while also maintaining a clear focus on content knowledge and meaning.

Table 5.2 Example of Argument Text Structure—Middle School

Argument Text Structure	
Stages	Middle school newspaper editorial: <i>Our School Should Serve Organic Foods</i>
Position Statement <i>Issue Appeal</i>	<p>All students who come to Rosa Parks Middle School deserve to be served safe, healthy, and delicious food. Organic foods are more nutritious and safer to eat than non-organic foods, which are treated with pesticides. Our school should serve only organic foods because it's our basic right to know that we're being taken care of by the adults in our school. Organic foods might be more expensive than non-organic foods, but I think we can all work together to make sure we eat only the healthiest foods, and that means organic.</p>
Arguments <i>Point A Elaboration</i>	<p>Eating organic foods is safer for you because the crops aren't treated with chemical pesticides like non-organic crops are. According to a recent study by Stanford University, 38 percent of non-organic produce had pesticides on them, compared with only 7 percent of organic produce. Some scientists say that exposure to pesticides in food is related to neurobehavioral problems in children, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Other studies show that even low levels of pesticide exposure can hurt us. I definitely don't want to take the risk of poisoning myself every time I eat lunch.</p>
<i>Point B Elaboration</i>	<p>Organic food is more nutritious and healthier for your body. The Stanford University study also reported that organic milk and chicken contain more omega-3 fatty acids than non-organic milk and chicken. Omega-3 fatty acids are important for brain health and also might help reduce heart disease, so we should be eating foods that contain them. According to Michael Pollan and other experts, fruits and vegetables grown in organic soils have more nutrients in them. They also say that eating the fruits and vegetables close to the time they were picked preserves more nutrients. This is a good reason to get our school's food from local organic farms. Eating local organic foods helps keep us healthier, and it also supports the local economy. We might even be able to get organic crops more cheaply if we work with more local farms.</p>
<i>Point C Elaboration</i>	<p>Organic foods are better for the environment and for the people who grow the food. Farmers who grow organic produce don't use chemicals to fertilize the soil or pesticides to keep away insects or weeds. Instead, they use other methods like beneficial insects and crop rotation. This means that chemicals won't run off the farm and into streams and our water supply. This helps to protect the environment and our health. In addition, on organic farms, the farmworkers who pick the food aren't exposed to dangerous chemicals that could damage their health. This isn't just good for our school; it's something good we should do for ourselves, other human beings, and the planet.</p>
Reiteration of Appeal	<p>To put it simply, organic foods are more nutritious, safer for our bodies, and better for the environment. But there's another reason we should switch to organic food: It tastes better. Non-organic food can sometimes taste like cardboard, but organic food is always delicious. When I bite into an apple or a strawberry, I want it to taste good, and I don't want a mouthful of pesticides. Some people might say that organic is too expensive. I say that we can't afford to risk the health of students at this school by not serving organic foods. Therefore, we must find a way to make organic foods part of our school lunches.</p>
<p><i>Note:</i> Figure used with permission from WestEd's English Language and Literacy Acceleration (ELLA) project.</p>	

Clearly, this type of writing requires time for students to develop. Students need time to learn and interpret the content, time to analyze and evaluate the content of arguments, time to discuss and debate their ideas, and time to build the language resources necessary to write arguments. By the same token, students who understand how an argument is structured—through classroom activities such as analyzing and evaluating models of arguments, jointly constructing arguments as a class or with peers, and producing multiple drafts of arguments with opportunities to revise and edit based on useful feedback—are in a better position to comprehend the arguments they read in school and to produce arguments that meet their teachers' expectations.

Students also need to understand how writers and speakers make their texts cohesive. Cohesion refers to how information unfolds, or flows, throughout a text and how the text “hangs together.” A cohesive text is created through the selection of a variety of language resources, such as referring back or forward in the text to people, ideas, or things using pronouns or synonyms (e.g., replacing *farmers* with the pronoun *they* or *people* with *human beings*) or linking chunks of text with text connectives (e.g., *instead*, *in addition*, *to put it simply*) in order to signal shifts in meaning in the text, among other language resources supporting cohesion.

One focus that teachers need to consistently maintain when teaching students to better understand text structure and cohesion is *meaning*. The central purpose of writing an argument is to persuade others to think or do something, and a successful argument involves more than structure. It also involves a range of language resources that are useful for conveying meaning. In the case of argument, language resources that are especially effective are those that are associated with persuasion, including an appeal to people's humanity (*our* basic right to be taken care of; that farmworkers are not exposed to dangerous chemicals), building a sense of community (*our school*; the use of the pronoun *we*), and the use of modality to establish authority and temper statements (*we should* do this, *organic food might be* more expensive, *we must, definitely*). Teachers who are aware of text structure, cohesive language resources, and

language that makes arguments more persuasive are in a better position to support their students to write convincing arguments that are well supported by good reasons and evidence.

Understanding at the Sentence Level and Clause Level

In addition to understanding text structure and cohesion, students need to learn how sentences are constructed in particular ways to convey meaning effectively in different contexts. For example, a student might tell her friend, “Polluting the air is wrong, and I think people should really stop polluting,” which is a perfectly appropriate way to express this idea to a peer in an informal interaction. However, this idea will likely be presented in a different way in a textbook or journal article and may be articulated as “Although many countries are addressing pollution, environmental degradation continues to create devastating human health problems each year.” This shift from more “spoken” or commonsense ways of expressing ideas or phenomena to more “written” or specialized ways requires students to develop content knowledge (in this case, knowledge about the consequences of various types of pollution and which countries around the world allow pollution) along with the language needed for humans to express (or comprehend) this understanding. This is one reason developing full proficiency in English cannot occur in isolation from content learning.

Academic English includes a variety of linguistic resources that are different from those used in informal, everyday interactions in English. The particular linguistic resources used in academic texts in the different disciplines vary, but in general, academic texts tend to include a higher proportion of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, complex sentences that connect ideas with subordinating conjunctions (e.g., *although*, *rather than*, *in order to*), expanded noun phrases, and longer stretches of discourse that are tightly organized depending upon the text type and academic discipline area. Teachers can draw students' attention to these linguistic resources in order to make the resources more transparent and understandable. Table 5.3 illustrates some of the ways in which everyday English registers differ from academic English registers.

Although both sentences are grammatically correct and could be used as the thesis statement in an argument, the sentence in the “Academic English Registers” column better meets the expectations established in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy for writing an argument in secondary settings. In addition, this example illustrates how *academic English is not just everyday English translated into an academic register*. Rather, it requires both content and linguistic knowledge, which is one reason it has been widely argued that content and language are inextricably linked. Content knowledge is embedded in language, and language conveys content in particular ways. Correspondingly, Part II of the CA ELD Standards should not be applied—whether in instruction or in assessment—in ways that isolate language use from the purposeful meaning-making and interaction presented in Part I.

The CA ELD Standards allow teachers to focus on critical linguistic features of academic English so that teachers can make those features transparent to students. The following example illustrates how one of these linguistic features of academic English (connecting ideas in logical ways to show relationships through clause combining) appears in the CA ELD Standards:

ELD Standard, Grade 7, Part II, C.6 (Bridging)

Combine clauses in a wide variety of ways (e.g., creating compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences) to make connections between and join ideas, for example, to show the relationship between multiple events or ideas (e.g., *After eating lunch, the students worked in groups while their teacher walked around the room*) or to evaluate an argument (e.g., *The author claims X, although there is a lack of evidence to support this claim*).

The examples in this standard illustrate a specific way of using language (combining clauses) in purposeful ways (e.g., to make connections between and join ideas) in order to convey understanding of content meaning. This understanding of how language works is particularly important as students move into secondary schooling and encounter the densely packed language of science and history. In order to support their students’ ability to combine clauses in a variety of ways (in writing and/or speaking), teachers might first

show them how to be more analytical as they read by deconstructing complex sentences. Deconstructing sentences serves dual purposes: analyzing the structure (linguistic features) and deriving meaning (comprehension). Teachers may also work with students to help them revise their writing and adopt some of these same ways of making connections between ideas through clause combining. For example, using the sentence in the “Academic English Registers” column of table 5.3, which is part of a longer selection that students have previously read, a teacher might guide students to deconstruct, or unpack, the sentence, first by focusing on what it means (in order to support comprehension) and then by focusing on the structure (in order to support both comprehension and subsequent writing by students).

Table 5.3 Differences Between Everyday and Academic English Registers

Everyday English Registers	Academic English Registers
“Polluting the air is wrong, and I think people should really stop polluting.”	“Although many countries are addressing pollution, environmental degradation continues to create devastating human health problems each year.”
Register: More typical of spoken (informal) English	Register: More typical of written (formal) English
Background knowledge: More typical of everyday interactions about common-sense things in the world	Background knowledge: Specialized or content-rich knowledge about topics, particularly developed through school experiences and wide reading
Vocabulary: Fewer general academic and domain-specific words (pollute, pollution)	Vocabulary: More general academic words (address, although, devastating) and domain-specific words/phrases (environmental degradation, pollution)
Sentence structure: Compound sentence	Sentence structure: Complex sentence
Clauses: Two independent clauses connected with a coordinating conjunction (and)	Clauses: One independent clause and one dependent clause connected with a subordinating conjunction (although) to show concession

To focus on meaning, the teacher might lead a discussion with students on unpacking the meaning in the densely packed text, resulting in the following summary:

Sentence to Unpack

“Although many countries are addressing pollution, environmental degradation continues to create devastating human health problems each year.”

Meaning

- Pollution is a big problem around the world.
- A lot of countries are doing something about pollution.
- Pollution destroys the environment.
- The ruined environment leads to health problems in people.
- The health problems are still happening every year.
- The health problems are really, really bad.
- Even though the countries are doing something about pollution, there are still problems.

This focus on meaning is essential because the goal of close reading is to derive meaning. However, a strategic instructional focus on sentence and clause structures from time to time serves to help students read more closely and analytically in order to derive meaning from densely packed texts. Table 5.4 shows one way a teacher might begin to show students how to deconstruct the sentence, with a focus on both structure and meaning.

Table 5.4 Sentence Deconstruction Focusing on Structure and Meaning

Structure: Type of Clause and How to Know	Text: Broken into Clauses	Meaning: What It Means
<p>Dependent</p> <p>It starts with <i>although</i>, so it can't stand on its own.</p> <p>It “depends” on the other clause.</p>	<p>Although many countries are addressing pollution,</p>	<p>The clause gives credit to a lot of countries for doing something about pollution.</p> <p>Use of the word <i>although</i> tells me that the rest of the sentence will show the efforts are not enough.</p>
<p>Independent</p> <p>It can stand on its own, even if the other clause is removed.</p>	<p>environmental degradation continues to create devastating human health problems each year.</p>	<p>This type of clause has the most important information.</p> <p>Pollution keeps hurting a lot of people every year all over the world.</p>

These examples show that by helping their EL students to become more analytical about how sentences and clauses are constructed, teachers can support their EL students to better understand the densely packed texts they encounter in school. The techniques can be used in a variety of flexible ways. For example, in high school, ELD teachers and teachers of academic subjects may work together to collaboratively identify densely packed sentences in academic subject-matter texts—sentences that could make it difficult for students to understand the knowledge being presented. During ELD instruction, the ELD teacher may support EL students to manage these language challenges and better comprehend texts by guiding the students to unpack these densely packed sentences, focusing on both structure and meaning. When appropriate, content teachers in secondary settings may also show their students strategies to unpack sentences in the texts being used. Elementary teachers, who typically teach both core content and ELD, can choose when it would be most appropriate to teach their EL students how to unpack sentences—during

designated ELD instruction, during content instruction, or both. In each of these scenarios, when students are provided with opportunities to learn about and discuss how sentences and clauses are structured to make meaning, they develop a more analytical stance when reading their academic texts. These practices allow teachers to have engaging conversations with their students about both the meaning and the form of language, in ways that move beyond simply identifying parts of speech or types of sentences.

Understanding at the Phrase Level

Similarly, teachers can show students how to unpack expanded noun phrases, which consist of a head noun with pre- and post-modifiers (words that come before and after the head noun). In the following example, the head noun is in boldface, and the modifiers are added incrementally to expand the noun phrase:

frog → That **frog** → That green **frog** → That fat green **frog** → That very fat green **frog** → That very fat green **frog** on the rock → That very fat green **frog** on the rock with a fly in its mouth . . .

Teachers often ask their students to “add more detail” or to make their writing more interesting. Expanding noun phrases is one way to add detail and also to create precision in writing. Long noun phrases are common in academic texts, particularly in science texts, where a great deal of content is densely packed into the noun phrase. In the following example, the expanded noun phrases are in boldface, and the head nouns are italicized:

Non-native *plants* are *species* introduced to California after European contact and as a direct or indirect result of human activity (NGA and CCSSO 2010).

It can be challenging for students to unpack the meaning of these types of long noun phrases while reading. Teachers of all disciplines can help their students by showing them how to deconstruct the noun phrases to derive meaning. In secondary settings, ELD teachers may work closely with content teachers to

identify long noun phrases that are critical for comprehension but that may pose challenges for EL students. During ELD instruction, the ELD teachers may show students how to identify the head noun (“plants” in the first noun phrase shown earlier and “species” in the second), then the pre-modifiers (e.g., articles, adjectives) and, finally, the post-modifiers, which are often in the form of prepositional phrases or embedded clauses. The following example shows how a teacher might represent this deconstruction (adapted from Fang 2010):

Pre-modifiers	Head noun	Post-modifiers
Non-native	<i>plants</i>	
	<i>species</i>	introduced to California after European contact . . .

Students will notice that the first expanded noun phrase (“non-native plants”) is relatively easy to identify and replicate. However, the second noun phrase is quite a bit longer and more challenging to unpack. This is the challenge EL students face in comprehending text; showing them how to unpack the meaning through a focus on the structure of the noun phrase can aid comprehension. This type of deconstructive activity can be extended by identifying types of pre- and post-modifiers (e.g., adjectives, embedded clauses, prepositional phrases). Teachers may also create activities for students to expand noun phrases in meaningful ways and discuss how the use of certain modifiers creates different meanings. These practices of deconstructing and then constructing long noun phrases in purposeful ways, all the while keeping a sharp focus on meaning, can be implemented in strategic ways by both content and ELD teachers in secondary settings and by elementary teachers who teach both core content and ELD in self-contained classroom settings; at the elementary school setting, grade-level teams could work collaboratively to address content and ELD.

Understanding at the Word Level

In addition to learning the meanings of and using general academic and domain-specific vocabulary⁹ in context, students will encounter a special kind of language resource called *nominalization* as they progress into secondary schooling. One of the prominent features of academic texts is that they are densely packed with meaning. Nominalization is one linguistic resource that helps to achieve this density and makes texts more cohesive. A simple type of nominalization that is relatively straightforward is when a verb is transformed into a noun or noun phrase (e.g., They *destroyed* the rain forest → The *destruction* of the rain forest _____). Sometimes, adjectives are nominalized as well (e.g., *strong* → *strength*; *different* → *difference*). Additional examples of how verbs may be transformed into nouns are as follows:

Verb		Noun
develop	→	development
grow	→	growth
interact	→	interaction

Sometimes nominalization collapses an entire clause or even multiple clauses into nouns or noun phrases. For example, in conversational language, a student might say, “The ranchers came to the rain forest, and they cut down a lot of trees. The next year, the river flooded everything.” Nominalization allows writers or speakers to densely pack these three clauses into one, achieving a more academic register: “The *destruction* of the rain forest led to *widespread flooding*.” Also note how the nominalized subject of the example sentence (“*destruction*”) hides the agents involved in the act, which is characteristic of history texts and a common reason for using nominalization in history texts.

At the text level, this collapsing of entire clauses through nominalization helps to create cohesion in texts and also contributes to the lexical density (i.e., percentage of content words to total words) of academic texts by condensing larger chunks of information into single words or phrases, often

9. Domain-specific vocabulary and general academic vocabulary are explicitly addressed in Parts I and II of the CA ELD Standards.

through summarizing nouns (e.g., *this event*, *the problem*). By turning actions into things, nominalization allows writers or speakers to create abstractions, condensing entire events, theories, and concepts into nouns and noun phrases (e.g., *democracy*, *photosynthesis*, *the symbolic presence of children in the scene*, *the disappearance of native languages*). This allows writers and speakers to create relationships between the abstractions, develop arguments with them, and evaluate them.

Secondary ELD teachers can support content teachers in raising students’ awareness of how nominalization works in academic texts to achieve particular purposes. They can develop opportunities during ELD instruction for students to identify nominalization in the texts they read in their content classes, discuss how nominalization conveys meaning (and how it is different from everyday language), and practice using their growing understanding of nominalization when writing texts such as arguments or explanations for their content classes. In this way, students can learn to be more analytical when reading and also develop new ways of conveying ideas and structuring texts in more academic ways. Secondary content teachers and elementary teachers who teach the intermediate grades can also use their understanding of nominalization to build their EL students’ awareness of and proficiency in using nominalization.

Part II in the CA ELD Standards provides a framework for teachers to design these types of activities and talk with their students about how English works. Part II supports teachers’ efforts to ensure that all EL students can:

- comprehend the disciplinary texts they read, view, or listen to by thinking about how the language in the texts is used to convey meaning;
- meet academic discourse demands within disciplines when writing, speaking, and creating texts by making conscious and informed choices about the linguistic resources they use.

Organization of Part II

Part II in the CA ELD Standards, “Learning About How English Works,” identifies key language demands in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, as well as those in academic English texts, that may present particular challenges to EL students as they develop academic English across the disciplines. Research has demonstrated that identifying these linguistic challenges and attending to them in meaningful ways through instruction can help ELs develop proficiency with academic English (NGA and CCSSO 2010).

The language demands that are featured prominently and repeatedly in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy are grouped together and represented by key language processes: structuring cohesive texts, expanding and enriching ideas, and connecting and condensing ideas. These language processes are further unpacked into numbered strands as follows:

- A. Structuring Cohesive Texts
 - 1. Understanding text structure
 - 2. Understanding cohesion
- B. Expanding and Enriching Ideas
 - 3. Using verbs and verb phrases
 - 4. Using nouns and noun phrases
 - 5. Modifying to add details
- C. Connecting and Condensing Ideas
 - 6. Connecting ideas
 - 7. Condensing ideas

Part II in the CA ELD Standards provides guidance to teachers on intentionally, strategically, and judiciously addressing the language demands in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and in the texts used in instruction. Table 5.5 provides an example of how multiple CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy across the domains correspond with the CA ELD Standards in Part II, “Learning About How English Works.” California additions to the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy appear in bold-face and are designated with “CA.”

Table 5.5 Correspondence of Grade 5 CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and CA ELD Standards

Grade 5 CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy	Grade 5 CA ELD Standards Part II: Learning About How English Works Structuring Cohesive Texts, Strands 1 and 2		
	→ Emerging →	→ Expanding →	→ Bridging →
<p>RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.</p> <p>RI.5.5 Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.</p> <p>W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.</p> <p>a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.</p> <p>b. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.</p> <p>c. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., <i>consequently, specifically</i>).</p> <p>d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented. (See similar cohesion expectations in W.5.2 and W.5.3.)</p> <p>W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing (including multiple-paragraph texts) in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. CA</p> <p>W.5.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.</p> <p>SL.5.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.</p> <p>a. Plan and deliver an opinion speech that: states an opinion, logically sequences evidence to support the speaker's position, uses transition words to effectively link opinions and evidence (e.g., <i>consequently</i> and <i>therefore</i>), and provides a concluding statement related to the speaker's position. CA</p> <p>L.5.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</p> <p>L.5.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.</p>	<p>1. Understanding text structure Apply basic understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a story is organized sequentially with predictable stages versus how opinions/arguments are organized around ideas) to comprehending texts and writing basic texts.</p> <p>2. Understanding cohesion a. Apply basic understanding of language resources for referring the reader to the text (e.g., how pronouns refer to nouns in text) to comprehend texts and write basic texts. b. Apply basic understanding of how ideas, events, or reasons are linked throughout a text using a select set of everyday connecting words or phrases (e.g., <i>first/next, at the beginning</i>) to comprehending texts and writing basic texts.</p>	<p>1. Understanding text structure Apply growing understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a story is organized sequentially with predictable stages versus how opinions/arguments are structured logically around reasons and evidence) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion.</p> <p>2. Understanding cohesion a. Apply growing understanding of language resources that refer the reader to text (e.g., how pronouns or synonyms refer to nouns in text) to comprehend texts and write texts with increasing cohesion. b. Apply growing understanding of how ideas, events, or reasons are linked throughout a text using a variety of connecting words or phrases (e.g., <i>for example, in the first place, as a result</i>) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion.</p>	<p>1. Understanding text structure Apply increasing understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a historical account is organized chronologically versus how opinions/arguments are structured logically around reasons and evidence) to comprehending texts and writing cohesive texts.</p> <p>2. Understanding cohesion a. Apply increasing understanding of language resources that refer the reader to text (e.g., how pronouns, synonyms, or nominalizations refer to nouns in text) to comprehend texts and write cohesive texts. b. Apply increasing understanding of how ideas, events, or reasons are linked throughout a text using an increasing variety of academic connecting and transitional words or phrases (e.g., <i>consequently, specifically, however</i>) to comprehending texts and writing cohesive texts.</p>

By design, multiple CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy across several domains correlate with a single CA ELD Standard strand, and multiple CA ELD Standard strands correspond to the same CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy. This “many-to-many” correspondence is explicitly shown on each page of a grade level’s CA ELD Standards, as seen in the following example from grade 5.

Section 2: Elaboration on Critical Principles for Developing Language and Cognition in Academic Contexts				
Part II: Learning About How English Works				
Texts and Discourse in Context	ELD Proficiency Level Continuum			
	→ Emerging →	→ Expanding →	→ Bridging →	
<p>Part II, strands 1-2, corresponding to the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy 1. RL.5.5; RI.5.5; W.5.1-5; SL.5.4 2. RL.5.5; RI.5.5; W.5.1-4; SL.5.4; L.5.1, 3</p> <p>Purposes for using language include but are not limited to: Describing, entertaining, informing, interpreting, analyzing, recounting, explaining, persuading, negotiating, justifying, evaluating, and so on.</p> <p>Informational text types include but are not limited to: Description (e.g., science log entry), procedure (e.g., how to solve a mathematics problem), recount (e.g., autobiography, science experiment results), information report (e.g., science or history report), explanation (e.g., how or why something happened), exposition (e.g., opinion), response (e.g., literary analysis), and so on.</p> <p>Literary text types include but are not limited to: Stories (e.g., fantasy, legends, fables), drama (e.g., readers’ theater), poetry, retelling a story, and so on.</p> <p>Audiences include but are not limited to: Peers (one to one) Small group (one to a group) Whole group (one to many)</p>	A. Structuring Cohesive Texts	<p>1. Understanding text structure Apply basic understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a narrative is organized sequentially with predictable stages versus how opinions/arguments are organized around ideas) to comprehending texts and writing basic texts.</p> <p>2. Understanding cohesion a. Apply basic understanding of language resources for referring the reader back or forward in text (e.g., how pronouns refer back to nouns in text) to comprehending texts and writing basic texts. b. Apply basic understanding of how ideas, events, or reasons are linked throughout a text using a select set of everyday connecting words or phrases (e.g., <i>first/next, at the beginning</i>) to comprehending texts and writing basic texts.</p>	<p>1. Understanding text structure Apply growing understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a narrative is organized sequentially with predictable stages versus how opinions/arguments are structured logically around reasons and evidence) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion.</p> <p>2. Understanding cohesion a. Apply growing understanding of language resources for referring the reader back or forward in text (e.g., how pronouns or synonyms refer back to nouns in text) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion. b. Apply growing understanding of how ideas, events, or reasons are linked throughout a text using a variety of connecting words or phrases (e.g., <i>for example, in the first place, as a result</i>) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion.</p>	<p>1. Understanding text structure Apply increasing understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a historical account is organized chronologically versus how opinions/arguments are structured logically around reasons and evidence) to comprehending texts and writing cohesive texts.</p> <p>2. Understanding cohesion a. Apply increasing understanding of language resources for referring the reader back or forward in text (e.g., how pronouns, synonyms, or nominalizations refer back to nouns in text) to comprehending texts and writing cohesive texts. b. Apply increasing understanding of how ideas, events, or reasons are linked throughout a text using an increasing variety of academic connecting and transitional words or phrases (e.g., <i>consequently, specifically, however</i>) to comprehending texts and writing cohesive texts.</p>

Use of the CA ELD Standards

As emphasized previously, the CA ELD Standards are not intended to be used as a stand-alone document. Rather, they are designed to be used with the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, as well as other California content standards, to provide a robust and comprehensive instructional program for ELs. The examples provided in previous sections illustrate how designated ELD instruction in elementary and secondary settings can support the language practices found in core content curriculum. ELD instruction should not be provided in a manner that is disconnected or isolated from core content instruction. The focus of instruction determines the standards' role. For example, the CA ELD Standards serve as the focal standards in settings specifically designed for English language development—such as designated ELD instruction in secondary school or designated block of time for ELD in elementary school where ELs are grouped by English proficiency level. Additionally, the CA ELD Standards are designed and intended to be used *in tandem with* other academic content standards to support ELs in mainstream academic content classrooms. Parts I, II, and III of the CA ELD Standards should be consulted and used strategically during content instruction (e.g., English language arts, science, history, mathematics) that is focused on the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and other content standards that have been approved by the California State Board of Education. Applied in this way, the CA ELD Standards foster more comprehensive instruction for ELs by helping content-area teachers recognize the opportunities for language development in content instruction and foster the language needed to engage in discipline-specific practices and to express content knowledge.

When used as part of a coordinated application of standards, the CA ELD Standards will help California educators to support ELs to:

- read, analyze, interpret, and create a variety of literary and informational text types;
- develop an understanding of how language is a complex, dynamic, and social resource for making meaning;

- develop an understanding of how content is organized in different text types across disciplines using text structure, language features, and vocabulary, depending upon purpose and audience;
- become aware that different languages and varieties of English exist;
- recognize their home languages and cultures as resources to value and draw upon in building English proficiency;
- contribute actively to class and group discussions by asking questions, responding appropriately, and providing useful feedback;
- demonstrate knowledge of content through oral presentations, writing, collaborative conversations, and multimedia;
- develop proficiency in shifting registers based on context.

This complex undertaking requires deep commitment, collaboration among groups of educators, support for teachers to develop and refine instructional practices, and, most importantly, a sustained focus on the strengths and needs of individual ELs and a persistent belief that all ELs can achieve the highest levels of academic and linguistic excellence. Fostering the academic and linguistic development of ELs is best done in professional communities of practice, in which teams of teachers work together to recognize and identify language challenges in core content, develop strategies to address these challenges, regularly discuss student work, and reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction for student learning. This collaborative approach among teachers requires districts to adopt an appropriate paradigm of support—one in which teachers have adequate time to collaborate to develop lessons; participate in relevant, sustained professional learning and refine their practice; and are held accountable for implementing the practices (Elmore 2002). In such a collaborative and supportive environment, teachers are better prepared to meet the needs of their EL students, and EL students have ongoing opportunities to meet the expectations of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards.

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