



## Glossary of Key Terms

This glossary provides definitions of key terms used in the California English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards) and in related chapters. Many of these terms derive from traditional grammar and from linguistics, and some have evolved in their meaning or have different meanings that vary by linguistic tradition. The definitions provided here are intended to be teacher-friendly and are specific to use within the CA ELD Standards and related chapters.

**adjectives and adjective phrases.** Adjectives provide details about (or modify) nouns or pronouns. For example, adjectives such as *appalling*, *obnoxious*, *desperate*, *alluring*, and *pleasant* allow speakers and writers to add nuance and precision to a description of a person or thing. An adjective can be made even more precise by adding pre- or post-modifiers, as shown in the following table:

### Adjective phrase

	Pre-modifier	Head adjective	Post-modifier
She was	quite	distraught.	
	even more	distraught	than yesterday.
	so	distraught	that she couldn't eat.

**Note:** In addition to the terminology found in the glossary, the terms listed below were referenced where relevant in the CA ELD Standards, but are not summarized here. Appendix A (NGA Center for Best Practices and CCSSO 2010, referenced in chapter 5) provides extensive and detailed explanations and elaboration of these terms: *text complexity*, *Reading Foundational Skills*, *text types: argument (informational/explanatory writing and narrative writing)*, *oral language development*, *conventions and knowledge of language*, and *acquiring vocabulary*.

**adverbs.** Adverbs add detail to (or modify) verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs about when, where, why, or the conditions under which something happens or happened. Examples are shown below (the adverb is in boldface, and the word that it modifies is italicized).

Sentence with adverb	Word modified
He <i>ate</i> his dinner <b>slowly</b> .	Verb
It was a <i>very graceful</i> gesture.	Adjective
She moved <b>extremely quickly</b> across the room.	Adverb

**clause.** A clause is a unit of meaning that expresses a message. A clause always contains a verb (e.g., *go*) and is usually accompanied by a subject noun or noun phrase (e.g., *She went*). A clause may be independent or dependent.

- **independent clause (also known as the main clause).** A clause that contains a complete idea and can stand alone (independently) as a complete sentence. For example:

The bees swarmed in the attic.

I couldn't hear anything.

Two independent clauses can be combined to form a compound sentence by using a **coordinating conjunction** (*and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, *yet*). For example:

The bees swarmed in the attic, but I couldn't hear anything.

- **dependent clause (also known as a subordinate clause).** A clause that is dependent on the independent (or main) clause for its meaning and therefore cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. Dependent clauses are formed in several different ways. Two examples are provided below.

**Use of a subordinating conjunction.** A subordinating conjunction (e.g., *because, although, if*) introduces a dependent (or subordinate) clause. Different kinds of subordinating conjunctions create different types of relationships between the clauses. In the first example below, the relationship is one of cause. In the second example, the relationship is one of concession. The dependent clauses are italicized, and the subordinating conjunctions are in boldface.

**Because** *they were hungry*, the horses ate all the hay.

**Although** *she loves to swim*, she decided not to go to the pool today.

**Use of a relative pronoun.** A relative pronoun (e.g., *that, who, whom, which, whose*) introduces a relative clause (a type of embedded clause also called an adjective clause). Sometimes, the relative pronoun is omitted. In the following examples, the dependent clause is italicized, and the relative pronoun is in **boldface**. Words that can be omitted are in brackets.

Butterflies are winged insects **that** *undergo complete metamorphosis*.

He's the teacher **who** *changed my life*.

Serotonin is a natural neurotransmitter [**that is**] *produced in the human body*.

**cohesion.** Cohesion refers to how information is connected and flows in a text. A cohesive text is created through a variety of cohesive devices that facilitate understanding across the text or discourse. One device is to refer back to people, ideas, or things with pronouns or synonyms throughout a text so as not to be repetitive (e.g., replacing *the first settlers* with *they*). Another is to link clauses, sentences, and larger chunks of text with conjunctions, such as transition words (e.g., *in contrast, consequently, next*).

**connecting words and phrases.** Connecting words and phrases signal how different parts of a text are linked. In narratives and other text types organized by time or sequences of events, temporal connectives (e.g., *first, next, after awhile, the next day*) are often used. In text types organized around ideas, such as arguments and explanations, connectives may be used in various ways to show relationships between ideas (e.g., *on the contrary, for example*); to organize events or sequence ideas (e.g., *previously, until that time, first of all, to conclude*); or to add information (e.g., *in addition, furthermore*).

**context.** *Context* refers to the environment in which language is used, including content area, topic, audience, text type, and mode of communication.

**modality.** Modality refers to the degree of ability, necessity, obligation, prohibition, certainty, or possibility of an action or situation. Understanding of modality allows speakers and writers to temper statements, give information about the degree of obligation or certainty of a situation or idea, or express the degree to which we are willing to entertain other possibilities may be considered.

**modal adverb.** High-modality adverbs include *definitely, absolutely, and certainly*. Medium-modality adverbs include *probably* and *apparently*. Low-modality adverbs include *possibly, perhaps, and maybe*.

**modal auxiliary.** High-modality auxiliaries include *must* and *will*. Medium-modality auxiliaries include *should* and *need to*. Low-modality auxiliaries include *could* and *might*.

**mood.** There are a variety of ways to structure messages into statements, questions, commands, and so on, depending on the relationship between the speakers and listeners or the writers and readers. Examples of some of the main sentence types identified by mood follow.

- Declarative (statements):

Bats are mammals.

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who loved books.

You're impossible to live with.

- Interrogative (questions):  
How do you solve this problem?  
What's your name?  
Why are you here?
- Imperative (commands):  
Don't you ever do that again!  
Put that over there, please.
- Subjunctive (expressing wishes, desires, or suggestions):  
I wish I were younger.  
If I were you, I wouldn't boast so loudly.  
It is necessary that I be allowed to participate in this event.

**nominalization.** Nominalization is the process of creating a noun or noun phrase from another part of speech or condensing large amounts of information (e.g., an event or concept) into a noun or noun phrase. Often, a verb or verb phrase is nominalized (e.g., They *destroyed* the rain forest. → The *destruction* of the rain forest), though adjectives are nominalized as well (e.g., strong → strength; different → difference). Nominalization can also collapse a clause or even multiple clauses at once. For example, in conversational language, a student might say, "The ranchers came to the rain forest, and they cut down all the trees. The next year, the rain flooded many areas of the rain forest." With nominalization, these three clauses can be collapsed into one clause: "The *arrival* of the ranchers and the *clearing* of the rainforest led to *widespread flooding*."

**nouns and noun phrases.** Nouns and noun phrases represent people, places, things, or ideas. A noun phrase includes a noun (e.g., *ball*) plus its modifiers, including articles (e.g., *the ball*) and adjectives (e.g., *the blue ball*).

**expanding noun phrases.** More detail can be added to nouns by expanding the noun phrase 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 modifiers are added incrementally:

**frog** → That **frog** → That green **frog** → That fat green **frog** → That very fat green **frog** → That very fat green **frog** on the rock

**prepositions and prepositional phrases.** A preposition (e.g., *to, of, with, at, in, over, through*) combines with a noun or noun phrase to form a prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrases provide more information or specific details about people, things, ideas, activities, or events in a sentence. Specifically, they enable a writer or speaker to add detail about where things are, why things occur, or how things are in comparison to other things. Prepositional phrases can be used to locate something in space or time (e.g., **under** the table, **on** the moon); to show reason (e.g., **due to** the rain), purpose (e.g., **for** tomorrow), or comparison (e.g., **like** a dog); or to specify which thing is referenced (e.g., the lady **with** the blue hat).

**register.** Register refers to variation in the vocabulary, grammar, and discourse of a language to meet the expectations of a particular context. A context can be defined by numerous elements, such as audience, task, purpose, setting, social relationship, and mode of communication (written versus spoken). Specific examples of contextual variables are the nature of the communicative activity (e.g., talking with someone about a movie, persuading someone in a debate, or writing a science report); the nature of the relationship between the language users in the activity (e.g., friend-to-friend, expert-to-learner); the subject matter and topic (e.g., photosynthesis in science, the Civil War in history); and the medium through which a message is conveyed (e.g., a text message versus an essay).

**scaffolding.\*** Scaffolding is temporary guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the student to perform a task he or she otherwise would not be able to do alone, with the goal of fostering the student's capacity to perform the task on his or her own later on. (Though Vygotsky himself does not use the term *scaffolding*, the educational meaning of the term relates closely to his concept of the zone of proximal development. See L. S. Vygotsky [1978]. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.)

\*This definition, including the parenthetical note, is drawn directly from page 43 of Appendix A (NGA Center for Best Practices and CCSSO [2010], referenced in chapter 5); see [http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_A.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf) (accessed October 23, 2013).

See chapter 4, “Theoretical Foundations and the Research Base of the English Language Development Standards,” for further explanation of scaffolding for English learners.

**sentences.** There are four types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound–complex.

**Simple sentences** consist of a single independent clause. See the example below (the independent clause is italicized, and the verb is in boldface):

*Earthworms **are** invertebrates.*

*One interesting thing about earthworms **is** their regeneration ability.*

**Compound sentences** consist of two or more independent clauses connected with coordinating conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*). An example is shown below (the independent clauses are in italics, and the verbs are in boldface):

*Earthworms **have** no legs, but they **do have** five hearts.*

**Complex sentences** consist of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses connected with a subordinating conjunction (e.g., *because*, *when*, *although*). An example is shown below (the independent clause is in boldface, and the dependent clauses are italicized):

*If you want to graduate, **you need to pass your classes.***

**Her first film was a huge success,** *although she’d never made a movie before.*

**Compound–complex sentences** consist of at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. An example is shown below (the independent clauses are in boldface, and the dependent clause is italicized):

*Although I’d love to go to the soccer game, **I haven’t finished my homework yet,** and **I also need to wash the dishes.***

**shades of meaning.** Shades of meaning can be created by using various language resources—including vocabulary, figurative language, phrasing, using dependent clauses to begin sentences in order to emphasize something, and so forth. For example, vocabulary can be used to evaluate (e.g., *Misty was a **stubborn** horse*) or express degree or intensity (e.g., *It’s **very likely** that \_\_\_\_\_; It was an **extremely** gloomy room*). In addition, phrases and clauses can be used to create nuances or precision and to shape how the message will be interpreted by readers or listeners. This often occurs at the beginning of sentences (e.g., *In my opinion, \_\_\_\_\_; **Bizarrely,** she interrupted \_\_\_\_\_*). As English learners progress through the grades, they learn to create shades of meaning in increasingly sophisticated and subtle ways in order to cause a certain reaction in the reader (e.g., to build suspense or characterize a historical figure) or to persuade readers to believe something or to take action.

**verbs and verb phrases.** Verbs are used to express happenings, doings, and states of being. A verb phrase may consist of a single verb (e.g., *She **ran***) or a number of words (auxiliary verbs and other infinitive or participle constructions) around the verb (e.g., *She **might have been running***).

**verb types.** There are different types of verbs that create precision in texts. The CA ELD Standards refer to four types of verbs:

- Doing/action verbs (e.g., *go*, *take*, *gather*, *abandon*)
- Saying verbs (e.g., *ask*, *say*, *suggest*, *explain*, *promise*)
- Being/having verbs (e.g., *am/is/are*, *seem*, *appear*, *symbolize*, *have*, *include*)
- Thinking/feeling verbs (e.g., *know*, *decide*, *dislike*, *smell*)

**verb tenses.** Verb tenses (present, past, future, simple, progressive, and perfect) help to convey time relationships, status of completion, or habitualness of an activity, or state denoted by the verb (e.g., *she **ran** yesterday; she **runs** every day; she **will run** tomorrow; **she has been running** since she was in college*).

**vocabulary.** The CA ELD Standards and the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy define three categories of vocabulary.

1. **Domain-specific vocabulary.** Vocabulary that is specific to a particular discipline (field of study, or domain). Domain-specific words and phrases carry content meaning (e.g., *lava*, *hypotenuse*, *chromosome*, *democratic*, *stanza*).
2. **General academic vocabulary.** Vocabulary that is found across text types, particularly in written texts, that provides more nuanced or sophisticated ways of expressing meaning than everyday language (e.g., *devastation*, *reluctance*, *significantly*, *misfortune*, *specificity*).
3. **Conversational vocabulary.** The vocabulary of everyday interaction (e.g., *run*, *table*, *friend*). This is also referred to as *frequently occurring vocabulary* or *everyday vocabulary*.

**voice (active and passive).** In addition to verb types and tenses, sentences can be structured in the active voice (*He told the children to do their best*) or the passive voice (*The children were told to do their best*).

There are a number of reasons to choose the passive voice over the active voice. One reason often seen in academic texts is to suppress the human agents in an event, discovery, and so on, either because the event or discovery is important or because the speaker or writer does not wish to reveal who is responsible for certain acts. For example:

The discovery that “junk DNA” actually plays critical roles in controlling cell, tissue, and organ behavior was first made last year.

(Here, the scientists who made the discovery are not as important as the discovery.)

Mistakes were made.

(A conscious effort was made to conceal the identities of the people who made the mistakes.)