Preface

Academic language is a hot topic. And not just for teachers of English learners. With increased rigor and high academic standards in schools, there is growing awareness that all students benefit from attention to the language demands of academic tasks, texts, and discussions. Currently, educators are giving much more consideration to the level of language required in lessons such as the complex vocabulary, sentence structure, and academic expressions that students need to complete assignments successfully. However, English learners are learning the same challenging material and complex language as English proficient students, but they are doing it through a second language. It is because of the situation faced by English learners that we wrote this book.

Although this book is intended for all educators, many of you are already familiar with our work with the SIOP Model (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2000; 2013). Twenty years ago we developed an approach to lesson planning and delivery that focuses specifically on the academic and linguistic needs of English learners. The SIOP Model, whose features are seen in Appendix A, is a framework that shows teachers how to integrate language and content instruction and identifies key elements that should be in every lesson delivered to students learning content through a new language. Used widely across the United States, the SIOP Model has been shown to improve academic outcomes for English learners (Short, Echevarría, & Richards-Tutor, 2011). You will see references to the SIOP Model throughout this book, particularly in Chapter 2. The reason is that the SIOP Model reflects best practices for English learners based on decades of research on second language acquisition and effective instruction, as well as on the SIOP Model itself. As an illustration of its relevance to this book, more than half of the features of the SIOP Model focus on academic language development.

Developing Academic Language offers educators an in-depth look at what academic language is and recommends ways for teachers to encourage and advance English learners’ language proficiency and academic performance. It is a comprehensive approach for identifying students’ areas of need and using a variety of techniques for improving English learners’ language proficiency.

Overview of This Book

This book examines various aspects of language that require attention and focused instruction for developing academic English. Our intent is that teachers use a consistent and systematic approach for implementing the ideas presented in the chapters.

Chapter 1 Understanding Academic Language: A Second Language for All

As the title implies, in this chapter we define academic language and how it impacts English-speaking students and English learners alike in school settings. The chapter also addresses what teachers need to know about teaching academic English to English learners.

Chapter 2 Maximizing Language Development in Lessons

In this chapter we provide information to help teachers anticipate when and where language learning can and should take place in SIOP lessons. Specifically we walk through the SIOP components and identify the features where academic language development is paramount and explain how to maximize the language learning in the lessons.
Chapter 3 Strengthening Language Objectives
In this chapter, we highlight the importance of including language objectives in all lessons so that students can develop and strengthen the language and literacy skills they need for academic success. In order for this to happen, teachers must plan carefully, teach explicitly to the language objectives, and offer multiple opportunities for academic language practice. This chapter offers specific steps for identifying and writing language objectives too.

Chapter 4 Building Academic Vocabulary
This chapter and Chapter 5 both focus on aspects of academic language that are critically important for English learners to acquire: vocabulary and oral language. These are two areas where English learners have a significant knowledge gap when compared to English speakers since they did not grow up learning English as their first language. In Chapter 4 we present a plethora of ideas for strengthening vocabulary development to ensure that students are actively building their knowledge in every lesson.

Chapter 5 Enhancing Academic Oral Language
In this chapter we emphasize the need for opportunities to develop oral language. English learners have had much less exposure to the sounds, words, and phrases of English than their English-speaking peers and far fewer opportunities to develop an innate sense of English grammar. So, as with vocabulary development (Chapter 4), teachers need to help our English learners catch up by providing explicit instruction in the listening and speaking skills needed in an academic classroom environment.

Chapter 6 Promoting Collaborative Academic Discussions
This chapter builds on the discussion of oral language in Chapter 5 and takes those practices one step further to enable students to participate in rich, academic discussions. The suggestions we offer are not simply for classes with English learners; they will apply to all classrooms where productive student talk can be enhanced.

Chapter 7 Advancing Academic Language Proficiency
In this chapter we focus on those students who have seemingly plateaued in their language development, at a high intermediate or advanced level overall, yet are still considered English learners or struggling readers or writers by district guidelines. We offer some guidance for assessing gaps in students’ knowledge and then addressing those gaps.

Features of the Book
- Learning Outcomes—each chapter begins with content and language objectives, which are the hallmark of the SIOP Model. The objectives provide focus for readers and help them identify specific knowledge they will gain from the chapter.
- Tools for Practice—to augment information in the chapters, we present a variety of tools throughout the book such as lists of guidelines and procedures, examples of sentence frames, sentence starters and scripts, and other devices to assist in making the information more concrete for readers.
- Application Activities—each chapter presents opportunities for readers to apply the chapter’s information so that it is relevant to their own teaching situation.
- Links to Common Core State Standards and other state standards—we recognize that not all states have adopted the CCSS, but all states have standards that are challenging
for English learners to achieve. Across the United States, academic standards share many common themes and skills, and in each chapter we present specific ideas for advancing students’ academic language in order to meet state standards.

- **End-of-Chapter Summary**—each chapter has a concluding section that summarizes the main points using a bulleted list. Readers can easily review the chapter’s information with the summary.

- **Questions for Reflection**—Individual readers, book study groups, and university classes alike will find the questions a useful way to think more deeply about the chapter’s material.

## Acknowledgments

As with any undertaking such as this book, we are indebted to colleagues and teachers who have influenced our thinking along the way. In particular, we wish to recognize our friend and collaborator, Dr. MaryEllen Vogt, who is a co-developer of the SIOP Model and has been a valued colleague for many years. Also, we are grateful to Amy Washam, who is an outstanding SIOP trainer, colleague, and friend. A huge thank you goes to Aurora Martinez Ramos for her vision, patience, and persistence in shepherding this book along. Finally, we appreciate the contributions of the generous SIOP teachers in Norwalk, Connecticut who gave us access to their classrooms and shared their ideas.

We would also like to thank our reviewers: Margaret E. D. Baker, Whitfield County Schools; Katharine Garcia, University of St. Thomas; and Laurie Weaver, University of Houston-Clear Lake.
In this chapter you will

Content Objectives:
- Distinguish between social and academic language and explain the relationship between the two.
- Interpret a graphic to identify the elements of academic language and literacy.

Language Objectives:
- Discuss assets English learners possess that support the acquisition of academic language.
- Describe and give examples of the characteristics of academic language.

Complete the matching exercise. Can you match Column A with Column B?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Milk, orange juice, bread, toothpaste</td>
<td>a. casual conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Despite the protracted and contentious debate in the houses of</td>
<td>b. line from a script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government, the legislation was passed by a large margin, enabling</td>
<td>c. textbook sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the majority party to claim victory.</td>
<td>d. shopping list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hey, did you enjoy the movie last night?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Terence (whispering): Did you hear that moan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding Academic Language: A Second Language for All
Was it a challenge for you? What clues allowed you to match the text in column A with the genre in column B? Which, if any, of the text examples do you associate with academic language? Which would you most likely find in written school materials? Why did you make these choices? You may have an intuitive notion as to the answers to these questions, but you may not have stopped to consider what academic language is and how it differs from social language. Further, you may not have fully developed your own skills in explicitly teaching academic language to students in your classes, yet for them to be successful in school and beyond, they need you and your colleagues to do so.

**Defining Academic Language**

Simply put, academic language is a second language for all students. Young children use everyday language at home. They engage socially with family and friends. They have books read to them, they tell stories, they play games. They may take walks and ask questions about the flowers and birds they notice. Their parents may ask them basic comprehension questions or seek their appraisal of a movie. Adults may ask them to compare a new experience with a prior one. But these young learners do not enter Grades K or 1 classrooms using embedded clauses and nominalizations in their conversations, nor do they analyze text for an author’s bias or write persuasive essays about subject area topics. They learn these ways of using language for specific purposes over time in school. And school is where children and young adults mostly use academic language.

Academic language involves the use of higher-level vocabulary, more complex sentence structures, and more sophisticated forms of expression than are generally found in everyday conversation. It is the type of language students need to discuss complex ideas, articulate a position, summarize material, and contrast points of view. Education researchers have offered various definitions of academic language, and while there is no singular definition, there is consensus that academic language includes the application of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to knowledge of vocabulary, language structures, language functions, genres, discourse patterns, and strategic competencies that students need to be successful in school with spoken and written academic text. There is also agreement that academic language demands and linguistic elements vary, at least partially, by subject area. Academic language is used by teachers and students. It is interpretive, productive, and interactional. Proficiency in academic language enables students to understand new information in the manner it is conveyed to them (orally, visually, or in writing) and to demonstrate and apply their knowledge through classroom tasks and assessments.

Figure 1.1 is a useful illustration of the complexity of academic language and helps capture why it takes considerable time to learn.

Think of this graphic as a clock. If we begin at 1 o’clock and move to 4 o’clock we see the five components of reading that the National Reading Panel identified as critical for academic reading (NICHD, 2000). As schools augmented reading periods to provide explicit

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1 For examples see Anstrom et al., 2010; Bailey & Heritage, 2008; Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Coxhead, 2000; Gersten, et al., 2007; Gibbons, 2003; Goldenberg, 2008; Halliday, 1994; Scarrcella, 2003; Schleppegrell, 2004; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Snow & Uccelli, 2009; Zwiers, 2008.
instruction in these five areas, ESL educators pointed out that English learners need more than basic reading skills to be successful in school (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010). At the very least, additional instruction in the other language domains, namely listening, speaking, and writing, are necessary (see 4 o’clock to 6 o’clock). Unlike native English speakers who enter the primary grades with oral English skills, most English learners start with no or few skills in all the domains. In the diagram, listening comprehension is linked with reading comprehension because the cognitive strategies are similar. Instruction in these domains would be broken down into components as reading has been (e.g., pronouncing sounds and words, writing words and combining them into sentences, producing language functions for different purposes).

Language learning does not stop there, however. Educators of English learners also teach grammar to their students, sometimes embedded in writing instruction and sometimes in targeted mini-lessons on discrete points. They must teach the interaction patterns of classroom discourse, which are critical for active participation in academic settings. These patterns include turn-taking, building on others’ ideas, and expressing agreement or disagreement with something a classmate has said or written. Teaching English learners to make meaning from different genres is needed too, and has been part of content-based English as a second language (ESL) and sheltered/SIOP instruction (Friend, Most, & McCrary, 2009; Short, 2013; Vogt, Echevarria & Short, 2010). These aspects of academic language and literacy are found at 7 o’clock through 9 o’clock. What is noteworthy is that reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, and genre knowledge are now part of the Common Core State Standards for English language arts (NGA, 2010a). In 44 states (at the time of this writing), English learners will be tested on these standards along with their English-speaking peers.
The remaining four items have some unique application to English learners. The first, at 10 o’clock, refers to the alphabet. For English learners whose first language does not use the Roman alphabet, educators must begin developing academic literacy with the letters and sounds of English. Typically in schools, the alphabet is part of the kindergarten and first grade curricula, but rarely is it covered in the higher grades. Yet English learners may enter our schools at any grade. The next, at 11 o’clock, is prosody and paralinguistics. These terms refer to the supports we use to make our utterances comprehensible, such as intonation, inflection, gestures, and body language. They are infrequently part of English language arts instruction (except perhaps when learning to read poetry and Shakespeare’s plays aloud), but for those who did not grow up speaking and listening in English, they are critical for advancing language proficiency.

At 12 o’clock we find background schema and native language transfer. We know that good readers apply their background schema to text when they read. We also know that as we read we can learn new things and thus build new schema that we can apply in the future. English learners, particularly those who enter U.S. schools at the upper elementary grades or higher, often have to build schema for topics they have not studied previously or for experiences they may not have had, unlike their English-speaking classmates. Because many textbooks assume knowledge has been acquired in earlier grades and build on that knowledge base, especially at the secondary school level, teachers of English learners have to be particularly careful to prepare students for the academic topics. Another consideration for teachers is the schema our learners have. They may have more experience with political conflict or agriculture or types of climate than the average English-speaking classmate; if so, this knowledge should be tapped by effective teachers to enrich the classroom discourse.

Native language transfer is the final item in our figure. If students have literacy in their native language, many skills and knowledge bases will transfer to learning academic language and literacy in English. In some cases, students have a native language with the same letters and similar sounds systems as English. This knowledge will transfer easily. If students know how to read and find the main idea in a passage in their native language, they do not need to relearn that cognitive process. Yes, they will need to learn the words and syntax of English, but not the steps for determining the main idea. Further, any knowledge that students have learned through oral interaction in their native language (e.g., with their parents) is knowledge that can be tapped for background schema (Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010).

Social and Academic Language

Academic language represents the range of language used in academic settings, including elementary and secondary schools. Essential for success in school, it is more challenging to learn than social, or conversational, English, especially for students who are acquiring English as a new language. Many students require four to seven years of study, depending on individual and sociocultural factors, to become proficient in academic English and to be on par with their English-speaking peers (Collier, 1987; Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Social language is generally more concrete than abstract, and it is usually supported by contextual clues, such as gestures, facial expressions, body language, and sometimes visual aids (Cummins, 1979; 2000; Echevarria & Graves, 2015). Knowing conversational language assists students in learning academic language, but it is only a launching point. We must go further and explicitly teach English learners subject area vocabulary, complex sentence
Defining Academic Language

structures, and rhetorical forms not typically used in everyday situations (Goldenberg, 2008). Native English speakers need this instruction as well.

In the education field, we used to talk about a dichotomy between social language and academic language. Cummins (1981) articulated the two categories as BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), and his theories revolutionized instruction for English learners. As the movement toward standards-based education spread in U.S. schools, beginning with the national standards for mathematics in 1989 (NCTM, 1989), attention to preparing English learners for success in the content classroom grew. That preparation necessarily required explicit instruction in academic language as used in the different subject areas, in addition to subject-specific conceptual knowledge. Old notions of teaching English as a second language as if it were a foreign language course were put aside.

Over time the practice of exiting students from language development programs based on oral language proficiency was also curtailed. The need to teach some content to students and to strengthen their academic literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing, became paramount and galvanized changes to language development programs. More recently, classroom teachers in elementary and secondary schools have been responsible for developing English learners’ language proficiency rather than relegating the responsibility to specialists. In some states, classroom teachers are required to provide focused English language development for a specified amount of time each day, most of which focuses on academic language.

### Social Language | Academic Language
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Hi, class. Let’s get started. | Today we will be studying potential and kinetic energy.
I didn’t like the article. | In my opinion, the article was inaccurate. There is no evidence that Russian cosmonauts landed on the moon.
Railroad tracks are parallel. | Alternate interior angles formed when a transversal intersects parallel lines are congruent.

Three decades later, our view of social and academic language has shifted from a dichotomy to more of a continuum. Consider the interaction in a typical classroom. Aspects of social language are often present. Teachers and students use high-frequency words and simple sentence structures—and these are found in academic texts and used in academic tasks too. However, the information presented is typically more complex in school than outside the classroom, and it increases in difficulty as students move up the grades and the content topics become more specialized. The use of the forms and functions of social language (e.g., simple sentence and question structures, simple language functions such as expressing likes and dislikes) diminish while academic forms and functions (e.g., sentences with embedded clauses and abstract concepts, higher-order language functions such as analyzing and justifying) escalate.

Think about encoding, for example. Students learn to write a word and next a simple sentence; then they proceed to complex, compound, and complex-compound sentences. They learn to relate sentences and organize them into a paragraph, choosing one to be a topic sentence. They learn to connect paragraphs at a higher discourse level with a specific
purpose, such as to narrate a story, compare historical events, or interpret results of an experiment. The development of the ideas being conveyed is increasingly complex.

Now think back to the exercise at the beginning of this chapter. A shopping list did not strike you as academic text. It was not seemingly related to an academic topic. It was a list of words, not a sentence. It had no subject or verb. A casual conversation did have subjects and verbs, but you did not identify it as academic text either. So what are characteristics of academic language? How do we know it when we read it or hear it?

Characteristics of Academic Language

Although we do not have a single definition of academic language in our field, there is widespread agreement that academic language is both general and subject-specific. **General academic language** is cross-curricular; in other words, it is applicable across content areas, and includes process and function words.\(^2\) The following are examples:

- Nouns and verbs that can be used in many contexts, such as *argument, effect, circumstances, comprehension, define, analyze, represent, and encounter*
- Verbs and phrases that indicate procedures, actions, and uses of language, such as *classify, summarize, and compare*
- Conjunctions and transition words, such as *however, although, while, and in conclusion* that link ideas and concepts
- Sentence structures, such as *if–then* statements, relative clauses, and passive voice
- Grammatical features, such as comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, adverbs of time and place, and the perfect verb tenses

**Subject-specific academic language** tends to be more relevant to one content area than another. Examples include:

- Vocabulary that is associated with individual subjects (e.g., *exponent, numerator, and parabola* in mathematics; *legislation, medieval, and republic* for social studies; *characterization, author’s purpose, and adverb* for language arts; *xylem, density, and lysosome* for science)
- Polysemous words that have a particular meaning in one subject and a different meaning in another (e.g., *x* to the 2\(^{nd}\) *power* in algebra, *judicial power* in government, *solar power* in physical science)
- Text structures that are more common to certain subject areas than others (although rarely exclusive), such as cause–effect in science and problem–solution in mathematics

In academic text, ideas and concepts are connected structurally—through embedded clauses and conjunctions, for example—and lexically—through synonyms, words related to the same concept, and referents. The discourse structure is determined by the purpose of the text (e.g., comparison, causation, persuasion) and typically includes words to signal that purpose.

The following list describes characteristics of academic language. Not all of these descriptors are likely to be present in any given text, and in fact some may seem contradictory, such as *authoritative* versus *uncertain*. But the presence or absence of one is due to the

\(^2\) Chapter 4 discusses academic vocabulary in depth.
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purpose of the discourse (Uccelli, 2012). Is the author stating an unequivocal fact (authoritative) or hedging (uncertain) because the idea being conveyed has not yet been proven? Both are found in academic text. The first part of the list is more syntactical, referring to word choices and sentence formations. The second part of the list refers to the tone and presentation of information conveyed in a sentence, paragraph, or larger piece of text.

Academic Syntax

- **Long noun phrases**—Academic text often has noun phrases with multiple modifiers (e.g., *greatest common multiple* in math; *random sampling technique* in science).
- **Abstract nouns**—Academic text uses many abstract nouns, referring to concepts that cannot be shown with a picture or gesture (e.g., *representative democracy; theme*).
- **Nominalizations**—A process is transformed into a thing and the agent of action disappears; in brief, a verb is transformed into a noun form (e.g., “The sun evaporates the water” becomes “Evaporation occurs.”).
- **Polysemy**—Multiple-meaning words are present; the definition in one subject area or context is not the definition in another (e.g., *root, attraction, mole, dependent* in science; *square, power, rational* in math).
- **Lexical precision**—Words are carefully chosen for clear, exact meanings (e.g., *bay or inlet* instead of “body of water”).
- **Lexical diversity**—Authors of academic text typically use synonyms, pronouns, and other referents to refer to concepts already mentioned; English learners may struggle to find the antecedents or may know one word but not its synonyms (e.g., *add, increase, increase by, plus, more, and and all indicate addition*).
- **Lexical density**—A high number of words that convey information (e.g., nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs) are present in a sentence, compared to words used for grammatical purposes (e.g., pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions); this is also related to higher use of pronominal antecedents and synonyms rather than repetition of the same content word (e.g., *The study findings indicate that English learners are able to retain and produce vocabulary terms learned through thematic text better than those learned in unrelated sentences.*).
- **Embedded clauses**—Ideas are linked through independent and dependent clause structures rather than as a series of short, choppy sentences (e.g., relative clauses—An equilateral triangle, *which has three equal sides and three equal angles*, differs from an isosceles triangle.).
- **Logical connectors and transition markers**—Wide use of conjunctions (e.g., coordinating conjunctions like *and* and *but*, subordinating conjunctions like *because* and *although*) to link ideas in a sentence and use of transitional words and phrases (e.g., *next, finally, in addition, in contrast, prior to, for example*) to link ideas across sentences and paragraphs.
- **Passive voice**—The subject of the sentence receives the action of the verb rather than performs it; the verb is usually constructed with a form of *to be* plus the past participle. If the agent of the action is known, it may be marked with *by* (e.g., *The legislation was passed by the state senators.*) Passive voice is used sometimes to avoid responsibility or when the agent doing the action is unknown.
- **Reported speech**—Academic discourse often reports on what others have written or reported using reported speech formats (rather than direct quotes) that can be
confusing to English learners. “‘Did the star collapse?’ asked the scientist” becomes “The scientist asked if the star had collapsed.” Verb tenses, adverbs of time, pronouns, and sometimes sentence word order change when direct speech is converted to reported speech.

- **Logical or sequential structure**—Text follows a discourse structure suited to its academic purpose. For example, when making an argument, the text follows a logical progression of points supporting the claim, perhaps also refuting counterclaims; when recounting a series of events, the text structure is sequential or chronological.

- **Conciseness**—Academic text packs a lot of information into a sentence and much more into a paragraph by using some of the elements mentioned above (e.g., long noun phrases, embedded clauses), along with precise word choices and by reducing redundancy (e.g., use *same*, not *exact same*) and unnecessary words.

- **Oral variations on written text**—In certain subjects, like math and science, there may be multiple ways of expressing terms orally (e.g., \((2x + y)/x^2\) can be either “two \(x\) plus \(y\) over \(x\) squared” or “the sum of two \(x\) and \(y\) divided by the square of \(x\)”).

### Academic Tone

- **Authoritative**—The author states facts or claims and provides evidence, and may assert strong opinions; the text may be persuasive or conclusive.

- **Cautious**—The author presents a theory or acknowledges an opinion but expresses lack of certainty or evidence and may call for research or support.

- **Detached**—The author is dispassionate or outside the action or findings, and may be connected to the passive voice.

- **Formal**—Academic text typically stays away from colloquial expressions and lends gravity to the information being presented through word choice and sentence structure.

### Presentation

- **Text layout**—Academic text typically has less white space on the page and smaller font sizes than text encountered in everyday settings.

- **Directional tracking**—We teach students to read from left to right, but in some cases, they need to track text in other directions. Students read from right to left (as when reading an integer number line or a chemical equation), from top to bottom or vice versa (as when reading tables and charts), diagonally (as when reading some graphs), and holistically and with detail analysis (as when reading diagrams and images).

### Academic Language in the Common Core and Next Generation Standards

Proficiency in academic language encompasses decoding meaning—determining what a passage states, a question asks, or a task requires—and encoding meaning—expressing one’s thoughts, orally and in writing, in ways that can be communicated to and understood by others. Academic language skills are built on a foundation of vocabulary, grammar, fluency, phonics, and oral discourse. The skills needed for students to be college and career ready, however, extend from this base to include analytical reading and writing, effective communication and interaction, critical thinking, and creativity. These skills represent goals
of the new Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy (NGA, 2010a) and for mathematics (NGA, 2010b), and of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS Lead States, 2013). We also find these skills in the standards of states like Texas and Virginia that did not adopt the Common Core.

In examining these new standards we see evidence of direct attention to academic language development in all subject areas (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). As in Figure 1.1, the academic language of the standards moves far beyond the five components of reading (NICHD, 2000). The following are key areas:

- **Vocabulary**—We see the importance of vocabulary in all three standards documents (English language arts [ELA], mathematics, and science) as they emphasize the need for students to communicate clearly, craft arguments, explain solutions, and the like. These in turn require students to determine meanings of words, distinguish between general academic and subject-specific terms, choose words carefully for oral and written purposes, and interpret nuances of words.

- **Genre Variety**—The Common Core language arts standards recommend that students spend approximately half their time working with informational texts. This is a shift from traditional curricula that included mostly fiction and poetry. Multiple genres are mentioned for language arts and other content areas, such as short stories, science articles, historical documents (primary and secondary sources), poems, biographies, interviews, digital texts and media, and more. Students also are expected to compose text in a number of these genres as well.

- **Complex Text**—The language arts and literacy standards in particular call for students to spend time working with complex text and to respond to comprehension questions based on the texts being read (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012; CCSS, 2010). However, it is important to remember that when working with English learners, any text beyond their reading level is complex for them. For instance, a text written at a Grade 4 reading level is likely to be complex for beginning-level English learners in that grade or any higher one, given their limited proficiency. Therefore, a complex text being analyzed by beginning-level students does not have to be a text written at the grade-level of their native-speaking peers; it may be at a lower reading level. As students advance in English proficiency, the texts they read should progress in complexity until they can read grade-level texts.

  The new standards also press teachers working with complex texts to move students beyond recalling basic information about what they have just read or explaining how a text made them feel. Instead, students must be encouraged to think critically—analyzing points of view, making inferences, synthesizing information, and connecting concepts across texts. Yet, being able to articulate their ideas along with these higher-order thinking processes requires significant academic language skill.

- **Listening and Speaking Targets**—Including listening and speaking standards in the Common Core is beneficial for English learners because research has shown that developing the four language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—together is more effective for language acquisition than learning the skills in isolation (August & Shanahan, 2006; Carlo et al., 2004; Lesaux, Crosson, Keiffer & Pierce, 2010; Perez, 1981). Our students need to learn language functions and academic discourse patterns in order to participate in high levels of academic classroom talk, such as evaluating a historical perspective or presenting evidence for a scientific claim.
Effective communication involves the ability to use precise words, plan for a specific audience, and respond to the feedback in a conversation. If someone does not understand an utterance, then the speaker must rephrase or provide an example or find another way to make the message clear. If the listener has a follow-up question, the speaker must think about a response and then provide it.

- **Argumentation and Text-Based Evidence**—One particular language function that is called out in the language arts and literacy standards is argumentation. Students are expected to learn how to craft an argument and cite evidence for their ideas or opinions, both orally and in writing. The evidence may derive from a text or texts they have read, research they have done, an experiment they have conducted, or a video they have viewed. What constitutes evidence may vary by discipline. This argumentation function conceptually includes justification and persuasion and is applicable to all subject areas. The mathematics standards, for instance, ask students to use math language to solve and explain solutions to mathematical problems. The science standards require students to use reasoning to critique arguments and perspectives based on evidence that has been provided.

- **Critical Thinking and Creativity**—Critical thinking and creative activities may not seem language dependent at first glance. After all, they describe processes that take place in one’s brain. But in practice, and in the spirit of college and career readiness, they require us to apply our knowledge. Although they can be accomplished non-verbally, the results must be expressed orally or in writing. Students generally need to listen and participate in academic talk in order to discuss their critical reasoning. Open-ended, higher-order questions and tasks by their very nature require more language knowledge to understand the intent of the question and to produce a response that communicates complex reasoning and describes abstract concepts.

Knowing these key areas of academic language in the new standards can help teachers prepare lessons that integrate appropriate language development with literacy and content area instruction. Teachers then can better tailor their lesson tasks to the language needs of the subjects, topics, and skills being taught.

**Using Academic Language to Meet Standards**

Let’s examine some sample standards for their embedded academic language demands. One of the Anchor Standards for Reading in the Common Core language arts and literacy document for Grades K–12 is

- **Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development, and summarize the key supporting details and ideas.**

In order to accomplish this, students have to engage with text several ways:

1. Read the text (use knowledge of vocabulary, phonics, sentence structure).
2. Determine what the text is about and what key idea or theme it conveys (comprehend, infer, generalize, determine author’s purpose).
3. Track the development of the idea or theme in the text (sequence, analyze).
4. Summarize the details and ideas that support the main idea or theme (distinguish between supporting details and main ideas, identify essential information, present
Academic Language in the Common Core and Next Generation Standards

information succinctly, remove extraneous information, choose words carefully, form summary sentences).

As you can see, a seemingly straightforward standard has multiple components, each of which requires a high level of language knowledge and use. The next example shows the language demands of math processes in one of the Common Core Math Standards for Grade 3:

- Students develop an understanding of fractions, beginning with unit fractions. Students view fractions in general as being built out of unit fractions, and they use fractions along with visual fraction models to represent parts of a whole. Students understand that the size of a fractional part is relative to the size of the whole. For example, 1/2 of the paint in a small bucket could be less paint than 1/3 of the paint in a larger bucket, but 1/3 of a ribbon is longer than 1/5 of the same ribbon because when the ribbon is divided into 3 equal parts, the parts are longer than when the ribbon is divided into 5 equal parts. Students are able to use fractions to represent numbers equal to, less than, and greater than one. They solve problems that involve comparing fractions by using visual fraction models and strategies based on noticing equal numerators or denominators.

While there is clearly a focus on mathematical understanding of fractions and visual representations, expressing such understanding will require students to use math language in ways such as the following:

1. Make comparisons, orally or in writing (use comparative adjectives and forms: longer than, less than; use symbols: <, =, >).
2. Use math vocabulary accurately (e.g., fraction, numerator, denominator, equal).
3. Express math reasoning (give examples, express causation: if–then, because).

Similarly we find use of academic language necessary for meeting the performance expectations of the Next Generation Science Standards. The example below is for high school life science, focusing on ecosystems:

- Evaluate the claims, evidence, and reasoning that the complex interactions in ecosystems maintain relatively consistent numbers and types of organisms in stable conditions, but changing conditions may result in a new ecosystem.

In order to demonstrate their understanding of the standard, students will:

1. Make comparisons and contrasts (use comparative adjectives and forms, use conjunctions to express relationships between ideas).
2. Weigh points in an argument (read or listen to claims and others’ reasoning, interpret new information and compare to known information).
3. Synthesize information and construct an argument in favor of or opposed to one given (sort and consolidate information gathered through reading or listening, express agreement or disagreement, state evidence or counterclaims).

This brief look at three standards shows us that all teachers, not just ESL teachers, will need to focus on academic language in their content areas so the students can meet these rigorous goals.

It’s your turn. Examine one of your state standards for the embedded academic language demands. Notice if the standard refers to language functions and/or skills.
What Teachers Need to Know about Teaching Academic Language to English Learners

Some excellent, informative books and articles explain second language acquisition principles and the role of language in academic settings; others offer teachers guidance about teaching language to linguistically and culturally diverse students at school. We will not attempt to summarize all the important information in these works here, but will highlight certain key points for teachers to keep in mind (see Figure 1.2).

First, we should re-emphasize that academic language is a second language for all. Students learn to interact with academic writing and participate in academic conversations in school. Teachers build on the everyday language students bring to school to develop their facility with academic language.

Second, we must remember that English learners have to do double the work in schools: they must learn English and learn content, but they are not given double the time (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). With the exception of a one-year’s grace period for language arts assessments, English learners are evaluated with the same tests as their native English-speaking classmates, no matter what their English proficiency level is. That is why it is imperative for all teachers to help English learners both acquire English and learn content. Content-area/classroom teachers must integrate academic language and literacy into their lessons and ESL/ELD teachers must add content topics to their language classes. As students improve their academic English skills, they also will increase their content area achievement scores (Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011). In brief, the teachers have to double up too, just like the students, to achieve success in school.

Third, it is important to note that English learners come to school with assets that will support their development of academic language proficiency. These assets are related to language practices in the home. For example, children learn to make guesses and predictions at home. In school they learn to call these notions estimates, hypotheses, or theories depending on the subject area and context. All can act as precursors to academic language.

Figure 1.2  Key Points to Remember When Teaching Academic Language to English Learners

1. Academic language is a second language for all learners in school.
2. English learners must do double the work: learn English while they learn content.
3. English learners bring many assets to the classroom that can support academic language development.
4. Individual factors affect the rate and degree of academic language development.
5. It takes time to learn academic English, and English learners are often tested in English before they are proficient.
6. Students need opportunities to learn both English and content through quality programs and instruction.
7. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

See, for example, Adger, Snow & Christian, 2002; August & Shanahan, 2008; California Department of Education, 2010; Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2009; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Gersten et al., 2007; Goldenberg, 2008; Seedhouse, Walsh, & Jenks, 2010.
development. Teachers need to be aware of the language and literacy skills the students have and use outside of school. These assets include:

- **Native language and literacy knowledge**—As mentioned earlier, many aspects of the native language learned at home can apply or transfer to learning academic English (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006; Guglielmi, 2008; Restrepo & Gray, 2007). These include phonemic awareness and phonics, vocabulary cognates, knowledge of affixes and roots, and reading/listening comprehension strategies. In addition, the knowledge students have learned through their native language is a resource to be tapped. Further, students who have learned a second language already and are adding English as a third or fourth language will generally acquire English more easily.

- **Out-of-school literacies**—Students learn to use literacy outside of school, sometimes for family purposes (e.g., making a shopping list, reading a bill, calling for a doctor’s appointment) and sometimes for personal reasons (e.g., listening to music, sending texts, reading websites). Students learn to navigate the Internet and social media. They are sometimes more media savvy than their teachers. These practices help them understand that literacy is used for different purposes and is found in different formats (Alvermann & Moore, 2011; Skerrett & Bomer, 2011; Xu, 2008).

- **Language brokering**—School-aged English learners often assume the role of language broker in families where the adults do not speak English or are less proficient in it (Cline, Crafter, O’Dell, & de Abreu, 2011; Halgunseth, 2003). Students learn to engage with others using English, experiencing different interaction patterns, and being responsive to others’ utterances. Notions of turn-taking, asking for clarification, and paraphrasing, for example, are practiced, as may be interpreting and translating, when young learners fill this role.

- **Sociolinguistic and sociocultural practices**—In their homes and cultures, students learn norms for using their native language. These norms involve a range of behaviors and expectations, such as the degree of formality to use when addressing others, the length of pauses between sentences or utterances, eye contact, word choice, and more. Sometimes these norms are similar to language use expectations in U.S. classrooms, and sometimes they are not. If not, students benefit when teachers explain the classroom culture and teach students how to participate (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

- **Codeswitching**—It is natural for proficient bilinguals to codeswitch; and, contrary to common belief, codeswitching is not a sign of semi-literacy or of secrecy (Nilep, 2006). Codeswitching, that is, switching between two languages during a single conversation, can be a strategic resource. Languages often have words that are more precise than their translation in a different language. For example, in Spanish the term *ganas* means “desire” or “wish,” but the English translation of the word does not quite capture its essence. Someone might say, “I’m going to get some coffee. I’ve got *ganas* for a cappuccino.”

Fourth, individual factors affect the rate and degree of academic language development. Below we explain a few of these—prior schooling, motivation, and mobility. Additional ones include personality, learning style, social identity, and age.

- **Prior schooling**—Students with strong academic backgrounds in their native language typically develop academic language skills in English more readily than
those who have had limited formal schooling (Riches & Genesee, 2006). Those who developed native language academic literacy have relevant cognitive strategies and higher-order thinking skills and have had significant practice using academic language. Students who have not developed literacy in their native language will need to develop it for the first time in the new, unfamiliar language.

- **Motivation**—Most English learners in U.S. schools are eager to learn English. They exhibit both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. But for some, years of poor instruction or lack of progress in their language development can diminish their drive to become proficient. For these students, “more of the same” is rarely successful. They need different interventions that build on their strengths and the knowledge they already have and that target underdeveloped aspects of their academic literacy.

- **Mobility**—Students in families that move frequently experience educational interruptions that can interfere with academic language development (Glick & White, 2004). With the advent of new standards, students who move may find that their new school has a similar curriculum for English language arts, mathematics, and/or science, and so may not duplicate or skip content in those subjects, but the other subjects’ and the English language development curricula could be quite different. Further, the socio-emotional stress involved with moving can hinder students’ academic development.

Fifth, we should recognize it takes time to learn academic English and schools need common-sense policies about accountability measures. Most English learners are tested in English before they are proficient in English. As a result, on state assessments, the average scores of English learners reveal an achievement gap when compared with those of native English speakers. That gap should be expected and acknowledged *pro forma* in the public reporting of scores. Teachers and schools should not be penalized if students designated as English learners do not reach proficient levels on these tests, because by definition they are not yet proficient.

Sixth, it is critical that students be offered opportunities to learn English and content through quality programs and instruction. Quality indicators include:

- Language support programs of three years’ or more duration that include sheltered content classes and English language development or English as a second language classes.
- Teachers knowledgeable about the language of their subject area and trained in techniques that integrate language and content development.
- Teachers well informed about sociocultural practices who are able to co-construct a classroom environment that promotes respect, learning, and interaction among all students.
● Classroom settings that are conducive to interaction—no cemetery headstone set-ups where all the desks are in a row facing forward; desks should be clustered.

● Instructional materials that include resources in English and native languages, representing multiple genres and texts at and above the students’ reading levels.

● Lessons that engage students by tapping their interests and knowledge, building background schema, offering choices about activities and partners, and providing scaffolds to support their success in learning new material and accomplishing assigned tasks.

Finally, we must remember that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. For example, non-English speaking students with limited formal schooling and no native language literacy may need to begin instruction in a newcomer class, while those who have had schooling and are literate may begin with the equivalent of an ESL 1 course. This caveat is especially important if a student who has been in the program for two years or more is not making expected progress. We need to examine these situations on a case-by-case basis. Questions we might pursue are:

● Which skills has the student acquired and which are lagging behind expectations?

● Are conditions outside school interfering with the learning process?

● Does the student have a learning disability?

● Does the student suffer from test anxiety?

These students would benefit from an intervention targeted to their specific needs to ensure they continue to make progress toward full proficiency in academic English.

Addressing Academic Language with the SIOP Model

Standards such as the Common Core and Next Generation tell teachers what students need to learn and do as a result of instruction. They do not, however, tell teachers how to teach. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model, better known as the SIOP Model (Echevarría, Vogt & Short, 2013), shows teachers how to plan and deliver effective standards-based lessons. As discussed above, the new standards embed a considerable amount of academic language in both their individual explanations and their expected student performances. The SIOP Model can help teachers and students meet those language demands. It offers a pedagogical approach for teaching academic language development at the same time content is taught, in a manner that is comprehensible to English learners. The SIOP Model has been tested empirically in several research studies over fifteen years and has been shown to be effective in improving students’ academic English skills (Batt, 2010; Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011; Echevarria, Short & Powers, 2006; McIntyre, et al., 2010; Short, Echevarria, & Richards-Tutor, 2011; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012). A copy of the SIOP Model protocol listing its 30 features is found in Appendix A.

Well-implemented SIOP instruction incorporates all four language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—in lessons across the content areas. Teachers using this model purposefully plan scaffolding, building background, and vocabulary activities to make lessons accessible to English learners. Scaffolding provides support for students as they learn to do a task independently. For example, scaffolds may help students understand procedures (e.g., watch the teacher model a task step by step), process the new material being taught (e.g., add notes to a partially completed outline while reading a section of the
textbook), or practice how to orally describe a diagram (e.g., use sentence starters: The illustration on the left shows . . . . The arrow indicates . . . ). The goal is to reduce and eventually remove scaffolds as students gain academic language proficiency.

Teachers using the SIOP Model also develop their students’ background knowledge (e.g., through multimedia and hands-on experiences) in order to facilitate their reading comprehension skills and to set them up for adding content information to their knowledge base. By pre-teaching key vocabulary and giving students multiple opportunities to use the new words (e.g., with vocabulary routines, games, and graphics), teachers build students’ conceptual knowledge. Teachers also help students learn strategies to determine the meanings of unknown words.

Several features of the SIOP Model promote the type of oral interaction called for in the Common Core and Next Generation standards. SIOP teachers design lessons that build oral discourse skills and use oral language to support and strengthen reading and writing. Teachers include techniques that require student–student communication, such as collaborative group activities, pair work, debate teams, literature circles, author’s chair, and role-play. They may assign projects that ask students to create something new, such as a cover for a literary magazine or a summary of an article related to a topic being studied in science. There are also opportunities to enhance oral presentation skills, for instance, by presenting information about a topic to the class.

The rest of this book focuses on ways that teachers can consciously and effectively incorporate academic language teaching into their daily lessons. In particular, we advocate implementing the SIOP Model of instruction to make academic material comprehensible and to develop students’ academic language skills. The principles and techniques are applicable not only to English learners but also to other students who are not proficient in using academic English. If you are not familiar with the basic SIOP Model framework, we suggest you read one of the main texts first. Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2013) explains the model with examples for Grades K through 12, while Making Content Comprehensible for Elementary English Learners: The SIOP Model (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014a) and Making Content Comprehensible for Secondary English Learners: The SIOP Model (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014b), as their names suggest, target the information to Grades K–6 and Grades 6–12, respectively. For those serving our youngest learners, Using the SIOP Model with Pre-K and Kindergarten English Learners (Echevarria, Short, & Peterson, 2012) may be most appropriate.

Summary

Remember that language is the key to learning. Language reflects how we think—how we acquire, process, remember, and connect information. Language offers us an important way to articulate and extend our ideas (Vygotsky, 1978). Using academic language, we can describe what is in our environment or visualize a different setting. We can hypothesize, research, and draw conclusions about science phenomena. We can justify a solution to a math problem or compare two novels on similar themes with a peer. Language allows us to broaden our knowledge base and make sense of our experiences.

Academic language proficiency is the ability to use academic language for various purposes and with different audiences in ways that are valued in individual subject-area
When students are proficient in academic language, they can use their knowledge of language:

- to learn new information,
- to demonstrate knowledge of information,
- to apply information,
- to be creative and form opinions,
- to perform academic tasks.

Such proficiency involves the application of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, background schema (including knowledge learned through another language), and higher-order thinking skills.

We need to help English learners and other students who struggle with academic literacy to develop their academic language skills and become facile using academic language for multiple purposes and with a variety of audiences. We need to set up optimal learning conditions in our classes where students have many practice opportunities for using academic language and strong models of appropriate and interesting uses of it. We hope that the following chapters guide you in designing and delivering lessons that engage students in learning and using academic language effectively.

### Questions for Reflection

1. It is well established that there is a difference between language used for social purposes and academic language. Explain the distinction between the two. In what ways are social and academic language interrelated, and how are both used in the classroom?

2. Select at least five of the characteristics of academic language listed in the chapter and describe each one in your own words. Then, using a student textbook, find an example of each of the characteristics you selected.

3. How does understanding the characteristics of academic language assist you in lesson planning? What might you do differently in your lessons after having read this chapter?

4. Discussions about the education of English learners often focus on what skills they have yet to acquire. However, English learners possess a number of assets that support and may even accelerate their acquisition of academic language. What are some of those assets? How might you tap into students’ assets and incorporate them in lessons?
In our work with elementary and secondary teachers, we have found that many do not recognize the teachable language moments in their lessons. Those who have trained as grade-level or subject-area teachers often notice the content learning that takes place among their students and recognize moments when students have an “aha” reaction related to a key concept, but they are less cognizant of the “aha” language moments and less prepared to elicit or take advantage of them.

In this chapter you will

Content Objectives:

• Identify the eight components of the SIOP Model
• Explain three types of learning strategies that support academic language development

Language Objectives:

• Summarize the features of SIOP’s components that focus on language development
• Modify lesson plans to create more language learning opportunities

ACTIVITY

Take a guess. How many of the 30 features in the SIOP Model focus on language development? Now look at the SIOP Protocol in Appendix A. Confirm or correct your guess. Which features focus on language?
Maximizing Language Development in Lessons

When we developed the SIOP Model as an approach for teaching English learners, our goal was to create a framework that shows teachers how to integrate language and content instruction and identifies key elements that should be included in every lesson delivered to students learning content through a new language. In looking at the protocol now, almost two decades later, we are pleased that with the growing awareness of the role of academic language in schools—for all students—16 of the 30 SIOP features focus on language development (see Figure 2.1). We didn’t intentionally plan a fairly even distribution of language features, but through the early years of research and refinement, that is how it turned out. And how valuable is the result, to demonstrate the balance that is needed in every lesson!

Figure 2.1 Opportunities to Develop Academic Language in the SIOP Model

**Lesson Preparation**
- In Feature 2, teachers must define clear language objectives in their lesson plans, post the objectives for students to read, and review them orally with students.
- In Feature 6, teachers are encouraged to plan meaningful activities that incorporate language and content practice opportunities.

**Building Background**
- Feature 9 emphasizes vocabulary that needs to be introduced to students and practiced during the lessons.

**Comprehensible Input**
- Teacher speech is the focus of Feature 10. The words, idioms, and syntax that teachers use can contribute to student comprehension and can strengthen students’ listening skills if carefully planned, but they can also add to students’ confusion if the speech is far above their ability to understand.

**Strategies**
- Feature 13 addresses explicit teaching of learning strategies to students; these include vocabulary strategies, reading comprehension strategies, and other language learning strategies such as using native language resources, self-monitoring, and rehearsing.
- The scaffolding emphasis of Feature 14 reminds teachers to support English learners’ language use, but as the students advance in proficiency, teachers need to remove some of the supports so students can use academic language independently.
- Although the words of Feature 15 focus on higher-order thinking, the practical application involves sophisticated language knowledge and use. Even if students think critically in their first language, to articulate their understandings, they need to use academic language.

**Interaction**
- Feature 16 focuses on increasing student-to-student interaction in a structural way and also calls for elaborated speech on the part of the students. Thus the English learners have to provide more than one- or two-word responses and work on framing their responses using appropriate academic terms and phrasings.
- The grouping configurations teachers design as part of Feature 17 should connect to the language objectives and encourage student language practice.
- Feature 19 enables teachers and students to make use of students’ native language for clarification. The first language thus becomes a resource for learning the meanings of new academic terms and for language transfer opportunities (depending on the native language) such as using cognates, decoding words, and forming sentences.

**Practice & Application**
- Features 21 and 22 remind teachers to include activities that give students opportunities to practice and apply all skills and knowledge across the four language domains.

**Lesson Delivery**
- This component holds the teacher accountable during the lesson, and Feature 24 specifically addresses whether the teacher helped the students meet the language objective(s) of the lesson through the presentation and activities.

(Continued)
Chapter 2  Maximizing Language Development in Lessons

Lesson Preparation

Lesson preparation is one of the most important aspects of teaching and also the most neglected. Teachers generally map out what they are going to teach for a given lesson, but in order to advance student learning and language development, it is critical that teachers plan carefully. As you begin considering the academic language you teach in every lesson more closely, the planning will become easier and go more quickly. But initially it will take time to implement the lesson planning we advocate for meeting the needs of both your English learners and other students who would benefit from more attention to academic literacy.

The lesson preparation component has two features directly connected to academic language learning, Feature 2 and Feature 6. Feature 2 allows teachers to explicitly plan for a language goal in their lessons and Feature 6 makes sure the lesson has practice activities to give the students an opportunity to make progress in developing their academic language knowledge.

Figure 2.1  Opportunities to Develop Academic Language in the SIOP Model (Continued)

Review & Assessment

- Teachers are asked to review the key vocabulary of the lesson in Feature 27. This helps English learners remember the key words and related concepts each day.
- Feature 29 calls on teachers to offer feedback to students on their academic language use. This provides the opportunity for teachers to improve student academic language skills in context, whether it be related to pronunciation, sentence structure, or word choice.
- Assessing student learning informally is an important element of lesson design. Feature 30 reminds teachers to assess student language use throughout the lesson, and not just focus on content comprehension.

The purpose of this chapter is to help teachers anticipate when and where language learning can and should take place in SIOP lessons. Specifically, we will walk through the SIOP components and identify the features where academic language development is paramount and explain how to maximize language learning in the lessons.

Lesson Preparation

Lesson objectives clearly defined, displayed, and reviewed with students.

Meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking.

SIOP® Feature #2

Language Objectives Defined

When we first introduced the idea of having language objectives in every lesson in the 1990s, many content teachers did not think of their lessons as having the dual purpose of teaching both the lesson’s content and the language required for understanding that content. Currently, however, widespread understanding of the importance of language in learning has led many instructional approaches and materials to highlight both content and language objectives.
In Feature 2, teachers are told to define clear language objectives for their lessons, post written objectives for students to read, and review them orally with the class. Further, and most importantly, they are to plan instructionally to address the objectives and give students an opportunity to work toward mastering them.

Some favorite ways that teachers have shared with us for engaging students in thinking about the objectives include the following:

- Student pairs discuss what they think they will learn based on the written objectives.
- Students focus on the verbs in the objectives to determine what they will be doing and learning.
- Students select one objective that may be meaningful to them that day and reflect on how well they met it at the end of the lesson.
- Students decide which objective may be most challenging and then revisit their progress in meeting it at the end of the lesson.

Based on our years of work with teachers and our research with the SIOP Model, we suggest four categories for language objectives (LOs) that teachers can draw from in order to develop LOs for their lessons (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2013). These categories are:

- **Academic vocabulary**: Key concepts (democracy, characterization), subject-specific or technical terms (mitosis, isosceles triangle), general academic terms (result, involve), function words (compare, persuade), logical connectors and transition words (finally, unless, in addition), and word parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots)
- **Language functions and skills**: Language as used in the lesson while they speak, read, write, or listen to information related to the lesson topic (e.g., students read to find evidence supporting a claim in the text, students make predictions, students draft a laboratory report)
- **Language structures and grammar**: Structures in the spoken and written discourse of the lesson (e.g., students must interpret passive voice or embedded clauses in text)
- **Language learning strategies**: Mental strategies that students use to make sense of oral and written text, to organize information, to monitor language production, and to apply skills to language tasks

Teachers are comfortable teaching vocabulary because they regularly do so and many key terms are highlighted in their textbooks. While vocabulary may be the “low-hanging fruit,” it is not the sole area for language development since vocabulary acquisition alone will not fully develop students’ ability to use language in ways that are required in school and in careers. We encourage teachers to use the following process to determine language objectives:

1. Identify the language demands of the standards-based lesson concepts or tasks you plan to include in your lessons.
2. Determine which ones your students would benefit from explicit instruction on.
3. Write observable objectives that focus on those skills.
4. Design the lesson to ensure practice opportunities.

This selection process may be challenging for teachers who are not accustomed to thinking about the academic language of their content area. There is always a wide range of language objective possibilities—how can teachers winnow it down? And once an LO is chosen, how can they be sure to provide explicit instruction and practice activities for the students? The activity alone, such as reading four pages in a book, is not sufficient as a
Chapter 3 of this book focuses on the selection, writing, and delivering of language objectives in lesson plans.

**SIOP® Feature #6**

**Meaningful Activities**

Although the objectives establish the main language focus of each lesson, other opportunities for language development will be present. Feature 6 is a case in point. Content teachers are skillful at creating practice activities for students to deepen their understanding of subject area topics. Language teachers are likewise very able to design tasks for students to practice language goals. In order for lessons to be effective for all learners, we want both types of teachers to incorporate practice opportunities for content and language learning. The activities need to be relevant to the lesson concepts and should give students a chance to read, speak, listen, and write about the content topics—if not each day, then over the course of several days.

Meaningful activities are authentic and relevant. Unfortunately, English learners are often assigned activities that are not meaningful and are unrelated to the tasks given to the English-proficient students in their classes. Content standards that apply to students with English proficiency must also apply to English learners. However, it is in the planning process that teachers make decisions about scaffolding and other adjustments to instruction so that the intended activities supporting these standards are accessible to English learners. We hope never to observe another lesson like one we saw in our first SIOP research study. One of the comparison teachers (i.e., not SIOP-trained) had her 7th grade English learners coloring pictures of butterflies in science class, while the lesson for English speakers was focused on the life cycle of a caterpillar. Our English learners are students who can least afford to have time wasted with irrelevant, non-academic activities.

To help students participate in meaningful activities, teachers may have to pre-teach vocabulary words, give a jumpstart lesson that builds background, scaffold the procedures for a task, or provide sentence starters so students can express their thoughts. Carefully planned meaningful activities are also culturally responsive ones—with students’ multiple perspectives welcomed and their cultural backgrounds respected. Students’ native languages should also be used to help transfer skills or to clarify information. The activities overall should call on students to interact with text, task, and each other, using several of the four language domains within each activity.
Building Background

Two misconceptions surrounding the Common Core State Standards, particularly in English/language arts, are that students are required to spend an entire lesson reading the text and that teachers ought not to spend time building students’ background knowledge and linking their experiences to the text. It is true that the CCSS emphasize the importance of exposure to grade-level text and call for more time spent with students engaged in reading. But background can be built and activated. Teachers are cautioned, though, not to waste instructional time on unfocused discussions that are tangential to the text.

In the Building Background component, Features 7 and 8 encourage language development indirectly, but that is not their main purpose. When we ask teachers to make links to the students’ personal lives (Feature 7), there are often opportunities for oral language practice—to retell a song, poem, or legend they heard as a child, or recount an adventure related to the topic. English learners benefit from a discussion of previous learning (Feature 8) not only to reinforce the concepts but also to provide additional practice with academic English (e.g., using vocabulary or language structures they have been studying).

**ACTIVITY**

Look at a lesson plan that reflects what you taught recently. Identify the explicit opportunities for language development—where you explicitly taught something about language or where students practiced a meaningful language activity. Did the lesson spend a reasonable amount of time on academic language development?

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**Building Background**

9. Key vocabulary emphasized (e.g., introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see).

**SIOP® Feature #9**

**Vocabulary Emphasized**

The main feature in the Building Background component that explicitly promotes academic language development is Feature 9, which is focused on vocabulary. We all know the importance of vocabulary learning. Simply put, the students who know the most words do the best in school. As one learns more and more words, one learns more about the concepts that the words are associated with. Deep conceptual knowledge is important for academic success. Having a wider vocabulary also means one generally knows more synonyms and related words, as well as multi-meaning words. This knowledge becomes strategic during assessments when knowing terms associated with the key words in the test question can help a student evaluate responses in multiple choice contexts or craft a constructed answer that is on point.
The Common Core English/language arts standards acknowledge the importance of this topic with a strand focused on vocabulary acquisition and use that is applicable from kindergarten through Grade 12. Students are expected to determine the meaning of new words and use strategies (e.g., examination of affixes or of context) to do so. They are also expected to apply knowledge of these words in their reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities.

Researchers recommend that students learn 2,000–3,000 words each year from 3rd grade on to be ready for college or a career at the end of high school (Graves, 2006). Typically a student learns 5–10 words per week in a particular subject. With only 36–40 weeks in a school year, that equals a range of 180–400 words per year per subject. If students learned 10 words per week in 5 subjects, we would reach 2,000 words per year, the minimum that research suggests. But does that really happen? And is it enough? Some researchers also indicate that students should have a reading vocabulary of 50,000 words by the end of 12th grade in order to be prepared for college or a technical school. After 12 years of schooling, at 2,000 words per year, students would reach 24,000 words.

The twist is that when researchers count a “word,” they are actually counting a word family, that is, a word and all of its forms and fixed expressions. So, the word go counts as one word even though its forms encompass go, went, gone, going, and phrasal verbs like go on, go over, and more. It is no surprise that researchers urge teachers to ramp up the number of words they teach, so students can learn more words and have a better chance at academic success. In truth, though, students will need to learn words on their own as well, and so we need to give them tools to facilitate the process.

As mentioned above, academic vocabulary can be a focus for a lesson’s language objective. But even if it is not the objective of the day, it needs to be part of every lesson. We know students need multiple exposures to words—12–15 by some counts—that go beyond seeing the words printed on a flash card that number of times. Students need to learn what the words mean, how they can be used (e.g., part of speech, use in sentences), and what they sound like spoken aloud. Students need to say the word, read text with the words, write the words in different contexts, and listen to others use the words. Over time, 12–15 engagements with the words will help students learn them and make them part of their reading and speaking repertoire.

In Chapter 4 we explore ways to promote academic vocabulary development.

**Comprehensible Input**

Because English learners are doing double the work every day, it is important for teachers to make the new information being taught through the new language as accessible as possible. Accomplished teachers adjust their rate of speech, word choice, and sentence structure complexity according to the proficiency levels of the students. They make content comprehensible through content-ESL techniques and also explain academic tasks clearly, both orally and in writing, providing models and examples wherever possible.

**Comprehensible Input**

10. Speech appropriate for students’ proficiency level (e.g., slower rate, enunciation, and simple sentence structure for beginners).
SIOP® Feature #10

Appropriate Teacher Speech

The CCSS and other state standards ask for a more sophisticated level of language use, so teachers need to be very aware of their enunciation, rate of speech, vocabulary usage, and oral delivery during lessons. How a teacher modulates his or her speech in accordance with the proficiency levels and comprehension of the students is critical to engaging students in the lesson. We encourage teachers to consider their utterances carefully. With newcomers and beginners, they want to speak more slowly but with natural language patterns and clear articulation. They should not pause between each word, but pause at phrase and clause breakpoints. They should pronounce the words distinctly. They should choose words carefully—simple and familiar terms, few synonyms, and few idioms. The sentences also should be shorter and simpler for this student group. Teachers can enhance their speech with gestures and movements to give clues to meaning. Adding intonation and expression can also help students understand.

Teachers should not, however, rely on simplified speech with all students. As students reach the intermediate and advanced levels of English, teacher speech should become more sophisticated. When students are ready to make the transition out of the English language program and into the mainstream program, they should have experienced their teachers talking to them as the teachers talk to native English speakers. The SIOP Model asks teachers to be cognizant of their students’ abilities and to push them forward with oral input that is slightly beyond their comfort zone.

In classes with students of mixed proficiency levels, the teacher may direct whole class instruction at the mid-range, but individual comments and questions can be phrased for each student’s level. Teachers can also plan in advance a differentiated series of questions to pose. This is particularly valuable when trying to provide opportunities for all students to respond to higher-order questions. Teachers can simplify word choice and structure in questions for newcomers and beginners but still pose questions that require critical analysis or evaluation. Finally, in mixed classes, teachers need to make sure they give enough wait time to less proficient students.

What teachers choose to say and when can increase comprehensibility for students. Repetition, for instance, helps students learn words and phrases. Paraphrasing and restating can help students understand another’s speech. While reading aloud, teachers can pause and define words or explain a difficult piece of text. In addition, teachers use their questions to prompt students to use academic language and extend their ideas.

Teachers are valuable language models to students. As students begin to learn English and later become more proficient, they tend to emulate their teachers’ speech. The Common Core State Standards call for students to meet benchmarks for listening and speaking. Modeling academic language phrasings—whether it is how to link a character’s traits to his or her actions, how to state a comparison between two classes of animals, or how to make a counterclaim—is one way that teachers can help students meet these standards.

Strategies

The long-term goal of this component is to equip students with the critical thinking skills and strategies they will need to be successful in school and beyond. Most professions require such skills and strategies, and school is an ideal venue to help students develop them. All
three features of this component have a direct connection to academic language learning, because we need knowledge of academic language to process complex tasks and to articulate abstract reasoning.

Consider the following key processes in the reading standards of the Common Core English/Language Arts State Standards: read closely, make logical inferences, cite specific evidence, support claims, analyze, summarize, interpret, assess, and evaluate. Similar processes are found in the Common Core Mathematics Standards: interpret, analyze, reason abstractly, construct, solve, apply and extend, and summarize. When these become instructional tasks, they require students to use complex cognitive processes and strategic thinking while comprehending and using academic language to demonstrate competence.

**Strategies**

13. Ample opportunities provided for students to use learning strategies.
14. Scaffolding techniques consistently used assisting and supporting student understanding (e.g., think-alouds).
15. A variety of question types used including those that promote higher-order thinking skills (e.g., open-ended questions rather than questions with yes/no responses).

**Explicit Teaching of Learning Strategies**

Decades of research show the importance of having teachers explicitly teach learning strategies to students and give them multiple opportunities to practice and apply the strategies so that they are internalized and thus available to students outside of the specific lesson (NICHD, 2000). Many of these strategies support academic language development such as vocabulary strategies, reading comprehension strategies, and other language learning strategies. Think-alouds, during which teachers describe their thinking processes, offer an excellent way to demonstrate cognitive and metacognitive strategy use to students.

Some examples of what teachers can provide direct instruction on are listed below.

- **Vocabulary strategies**—Students need to learn strategies that will help them figure out new words they might encounter in text or speech. Context clues are one means, but are helpful only if the students know the other words in the vicinity of the unknown word. Examining the word for a possible cognate, word parts, or known similar words are other strategies. Reading on or listening further is another option because a new term may be defined later. Looking up a word in a glossary or dictionary is also helpful.

- **Reading comprehension strategies**—Students with literacy in their native language may need less instruction in the procedures for strategic ways to think about text they have read, but they do need practice in applying strategies they have to text in their new language. Students without such literacy need instruction starting at the basic level of comprehension. One thing that is important here is not only to teach students steps they can use in visualizing or summarizing, for example, but also to let them try these strategies with a variety of texts and genres.
• **Other language learning strategies**—Students can self-monitor when they read to make sure they get the gist of the text as they move along or reread what they have written to make sure it clearly conveys their ideas and is cohesive. They can monitor others’ language use, such as by editing a peer’s written work and checking for specific academic language elements. They can rehearse before they speak and draft before they write. They can analyze patterns in academic English and apply them to their own work. They can use non-verbal cues to understand language input.

For this feature to be well implemented teachers need to refer to strategies frequently. They may describe their thinking processes as they read aloud, solve a math problem, or hypothesize before a science experiment. They need to model the strategic thinking and then give students a chance to do the same with a similar problem or text. Teachers should also ask students to articulate the strategies they used to generate an answer.

**SIOP® Feature #14**

**Scaffolding Techniques**

Through scaffolding, teachers enable students to complete tasks and move them toward independence. This gradual move happens in small steps. Sometimes the scaffolding is to help students understand procedures (e.g., use the illustrations to follow the steps for making a flip book) and sometimes it is to help students understand the new material being taught (e.g., take notes on this Venn diagram about the similarities and differences between the American and French Revolutions). Our interest here is the scaffolding teachers do to advance students’ language proficiency. We refer to it as *verbal scaffolding*.

Some examples of verbal scaffolding include:

• Modeling correct speech.
• Paraphrasing what a student has said in order to subtly correct a pronunciation mistake, a verb tense, a malapropism, or the like.
• Prompting students to elaborate on an idea or generate a particular vocabulary word. (With young children this process might involve letting them express a concept in everyday language but teaching them how to say it more academically later [Gibbons, 2002]).
• Helping students describe relationships between ideas, using conjunctions like *although*, *however*, and *except*.
• Providing charts with signal words and sentence starters in the room and calling attention to them to support this language development.

Often these verbal scaffolds are unplanned. Teachers find a teachable moment in the class interaction and take advantage of it.

Other verbal scaffolds can be planned within the lesson:

• Showing students how to use language tools like a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a spell checker as part of any lesson that involves writing.
• Offering a series of guiding questions to help students understand a text or draft a piece of writing.
• Providing a partially completed outline for students to add to while they watch a video or listen to a speech to organize the new information.
As with construction scaffolds, success is achieved when the scaffolds are removed and the building stands on its own. These verbal scaffolds are designed to support students as they move to higher levels of language proficiency. After students master certain sentence starters, for example, the charts can be removed from the walls. When students realize teachers won’t accept one- or two-word responses, they will begin to provide more elaborate answers.

**SIOP® Feature #15**

**Variety of Questions for Higher-Order Thinking**

Feature 15 emphasizes higher-order thinking and posing questions of various types in lessons. At first glance it may appear to have a less direct relationship to language development because the focus seems to be on thinking. However, students need to listen and participate in academic talk in order to discuss their critical reasoning. Open-ended, higher-order questions by their very nature require more language knowledge to understand the intent of the question and to produce a response.

As students begin to learn a new language, they often translate questions into their native language, think of an answer, and then translate that response into the new language before replying. This is not a very efficient method, but until students’ language abilities get stronger, it is a necessary process. Given that the majority of teacher questions only require brief responses, such an effort is not always visible or time-consuming. This feature, however, reminds teachers that questions that require elaboration, justification, evaluation, application, and so on are more valuable for students, not only to gain deep understanding of the content being taught but also to develop more sophisticated language skills.

Students learning English are capable of higher-order thinking even though they may not always be able to express their thoughts completely. English learners need teacher support to understand the intent of some higher-order questions and to articulate their ideas in academic English. Think back to the discussion of academic language in Chapter 1. Academic language calls for decoding meaning—in this case, figuring out what the question or task is asking—and then encoding meaning—giving life to one’s thoughts so they may be shared with others. Goals of academic language include being able to communicate complex reasoning and describe abstract concepts. Teachers can help students process and respond to higher-order questions and tasks in the following ways:

- Point out clues identifying that critical thinking is called for in the question or task, such as words related to cause and effect, comparison and contrast, problem and solution, alternatives, connections, and applications.
- Model how to respond to these questions, both orally and in writing.
- Provide language frames that correspond to the type of response expected, such as “One reason is . . .” to justify or persuade and “The text says . . . and I know . . ., so _______” to infer.
- Set aside time in lessons to explicitly work on comprehending and responding to higher-order questions; don’t just throw some questions out to the class in the middle of a discussion.
The Interaction component is closely focused on the development and use of academic language. Talk is an important way for us to process and retrieve information, discuss our ideas and extend our thoughts, describe what we observe and question what we don’t. Through talk we can share our vision of the future as well as our evaluations of the past. When we engage in talk with others, we can deepen our knowledge, make sense of what we are reading or hearing, and improve the tasks we are completing (Vygotsky, 1978).

The Interaction component is very important for English learners who have to meet state standards, such as the Common Core, and English language proficiency standards, such as WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment). Standards related to Speaking and Listening can be explored through engaging academic talk that is scaffolded so that English learners can articulate their ideas and develop expressive language that allows them to sound like a historian, scientist, book critic, or mathematician.

**ACTIVITY**

Try this activity. Select a text passage from any content area and practice writing higher-order questions that are appropriate for your English learners. Be sure to use a variety of types including those that:

- Elicit language—What is the author’s purpose? Tell me why you think so.
- Point out clues—Notice the word, however. This is one of our signal words. It tells us there is something to contrast. What are the two things that are being contrasted in the sentence? How do they differ?
- Clarify thinking—How is that important? Why do you think ______? Can you give me a few more details?
- Connects to an idea or another student’s contribution—Can you add something to what ______ said? How would you compare your idea to ______? What might be another point of view based on the text?

**Interaction**

16. Frequent opportunities for interaction and elaboration between teacher/student and among students, which encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts.

17. Grouping configurations support language and content objectives of the lesson.

19. Ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in L1 as needed with aide, peer, or L1 text.

**SIOP® Feature #16**

Frequent Opportunities for Interaction and Elaboration

This feature offers one of the best opportunities for teachers to help students develop academic listening and speaking skills in English. Part of the participation needed for full
engagement in an academic conversation will come from socializing students to classroom interaction patterns. Teachers cannot assume that all students, especially, for example, newly arrived immigrants, will understand expectations for speaking up in American classrooms. If they have been in school in another country, they may have experienced teaching methods that rely on teachers telling students what to learn and students rote memorizing information. Asking a teacher a question or posing a contrary opinion might have been dismissed as inappropriate behavior. Some students may never have been to school before. Moreover, even for those who have been in classrooms where academic talk between teacher and students happens regularly, getting a turn to talk and expressing an idea in a new language can still be a major barrier to participation. Therefore teachers should guide students toward the interaction desired.

This feature reminds teachers to include more techniques that require student–student interaction in their lessons, such as cooperative groups, pair work, activities that have students mingle and find partners to share ideas or information, role-plays, and simulations. Instead of leading whole class question and answer sessions, teachers are encouraged to try think-pair-share or turn-and-talk techniques so more students can practice their oral language skills. Small changes like these promote more student talk about the academic concepts.

While teachers sometimes focus on the first part of the feature—interaction between teacher and students and among students—the second half is even more important for advancing students’ skills. The elaboration aspect of oral interaction is the means by which students can express their ideas fully, make connections between ideas or opinions or claims, embed an idea within another idea, make counterarguments, and much more.

The traditional classroom discussion—where the teacher dominates by asking questions, accepting one- or two-word responses, and then elaborating for the class—is not acceptable. It will not lead students to the rigorous level of discussion required by standards such as the Common Core, nor will it give those who need oral language practice (i.e., the students) time to practice when the teacher’s words fill the air. Teachers should not elaborate on a student’s brief response, but rather ask a follow-up question, like “What do you mean by that?” or “Can you tell me more?” And they need to ask more of the students. After solving a math problem, for example, the teacher should have the students explain the steps orally.

To build student academic talk, teachers can present language frames linked to the language functions relevant to the lesson task. For example, if students were to discuss causation in science, they could be taught to use frames like:

“The cause of _____ was . . . .”
“As a result of _____, . . . happened.”
“_____ led to . . . .”

If they were to make a connection with texts they have read in language arts, they could use frames like these:

“The setting in the first book reminds me of . . . .”
“The first article said _____, but the second article reported . . . .”
“The characters in both books are similar in that they . . . .”

We hypothesize that as students become comfortable using these frames in oral interactions, they will start to use the frames in their writing and also recognize them in their readings.
SIOP® Feature #17

Grouping Configurations That Support the Language Objective

A common scene in a classroom is of desks grouped in sets of four or five. Students sit together but are not required to work together. They may share answers or ask a few questions, but typically they work on their own worksheets and interact very little. The physical structure of the classroom may look promising, but without planned collaborative activities it does not result in academic language development.

This feature connects the student groupings to the language objectives of the lesson. If the objective calls for discussion about a particular topic or use of new vocabulary terms, then the grouping and the task need to facilitate that. We have found that students use academic language more with strategic grouping and established routines.

- Teachers should consider reading ability (in the native language and in English) and English proficiency when pairing students. The higher-level partners may work more independently while the teacher spends more time supporting the less proficient pairs (Vaughn et al., 2009).
- Teachers must not only assign distinct roles to the students but also explain to them how to speak in the way their role requires as well as how to listen to their classmates and respond appropriately.
- Teachers can incorporate information gap activities in their lessons. In these cases, all students have only part of the necessary information and so must collaborate orally with partners to complete a task.

SIOP® Feature #19

Native Language Use for Clarification

A student’s native language is a resource that should be harnessed. It is another tool in a student’s toolbox for understanding and processing new information. Research indicates when students have literacy in their native language, it helps them develop literacy in English more easily (Riches & Genesee, 2006). Teachers can encourage students to continue to develop their native language skills, even if the school does not offer bilingual courses, because the benefits will accrue. Certain skills, such as reading comprehension skills, will transfer from the native language to the new one.

For students whose native language has a Latin or Greek origin, their language may come in handy when trying to determine the meaning of unknown words since so many word parts in English have origins in those languages. Teachers will want to call attention to cognates and roots, for example, that some of their students might apply in these situations.

The use of bilingual glossaries and dictionaries, as well as electronic translators, can help students clarify information that is unclear to them and can help them build knowledge about the English language, too. They can learn multiple meanings and nuances of words. These tools offer another way for students to discover cognates and roots that their native language and English may have in common.
Chapter 2  Maximizing Language Development in Lessons

In Chapter 5 we continue the discussion on interaction and explore ways to promote more oral interaction among all of our students and help them meet standards for speaking and listening, like those required in the Common Core.

Practice & Application

The Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards, place a premium on the application of knowledge. These standards want students not only to learn key topics, but also to be able to use that knowledge through guided and independent practice.

21. Activities provided for students to apply content and language knowledge in the classroom.
22. Activities integrate all language skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

SIOP® Feature #21

Activities to Apply Content and Language Knowledge

Feature 21 focuses on application of content and language knowledge. This means the students have had some practice and now are applying what they have learned to a new context. It is particularly important to give the students opportunities to explore how academic language works in new situations. We might, for instance, teach students how to read a text selection and determine the main idea and supporting details in a piece of fiction; we also would want to give them the experience of applying that reading skill to a science article, an advertisement, a poem, or another genre. As another example, consider a student learning math vocabulary and phrases that can be used to describe a bar graph. They may practice with one graph (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2  Class Votes for Healthy Snacks

- Carrot sticks
- Grapes
- Girls
- Boys

In Chapter 5 we continue the discussion on interaction and explore ways to promote more oral interaction among all of our students and help them meet standards for speaking and listening, like those required in the Common Core.
and learn to describe the graph with sentences such as “The bar representing girls’ vote for grapes is three points higher than the bar showing the boys’ vote” or “The graph shows that boys prefer carrots to grapes by 8 to 4.” An application task may have them describe a similar graph to a partner or write a summary of the information shown in the graph.

Enabling students to conduct application activities is one way to move them toward independence. We are asking our English learners to produce and practice new language and vocabulary, but we are doing so in the supportive environment of a classroom before they must do so on their own.

**SIOP® Feature #22**

**Activities That Integrate all Language Skills**

Language is the key to learning, whether it is in school, with a parent, or on the job. We primarily learn through reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking. We check our understanding mostly through language as well. For these reasons we want all SIOP teachers to develop lessons that integrate the four language skills. These four language skills are mutually supportive; working on one can shore up the others. It is a syncretic learning process (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Hinkel, 2006).

This feature does not imply that teachers need to have four language objectives each day, one per domain. No, one language objective is generally sufficient for explicit instruction in class. This feature intends for teachers to plan activities that encourage students to use their developing language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking to some extent during each lesson.

Take advantage of the opportunities these features have to engage students in meaningful tasks that integrate language and content. Student motivation will be enhanced if the activities have some authenticity and academic relevance, too. Many activities can integrate and apply the language skills in the service of deepening students’ content knowledge. Several examples include:

- **TV Talk Show:** Guests on a talk show can represent experts who have to explain, persuade, or give opinions about a current event or real-life issue. Language frames that match the language function (e.g., persuasion) can support the interaction.

- **Book Club:** Students read different books or articles or websites and come together to summarize or discuss what they have learned as related to a research question or theme. A graphic organizer could be used while reading to record information.

- **Travel Agency:** Student groups prepare travel itineraries for clients that take them back in time to visit historical sites. They may prepare a travel brochure and maps. Or, they may simulate a tour with a guide describing the sites.

- **Press Room:** Students prepare a special edition of a newspaper or TV broadcast with articles/news segments and advertisements related to the lesson or unit content topic(s).

**Lesson Delivery**

Earlier we explained the importance of careful planning when designing lessons with English learners in mind. Those lessons need careful implementation as well; teachers must
continually adjust their speech and scaffolds for the activities based on their assessment of student learning. In the Lesson Delivery component, we monitor the success of a lesson in helping students meet objectives.

**Lesson Delivery**

24. Language objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery.

**SIOP® Feature #24**

**Language Objectives Supported**

Supporting the language objective means following through on the plans made for addressing the objective instructionally back in the Lesson Preparation phase. This feature holds teachers accountable. Did they help the students meet the language objective? Did the teachers teach to it? We can’t promote students’ language development if we don’t provide explicit instruction in elements of academic language from time to time and if we don’t give students multiple opportunities to practice and use the language in a variety of contexts.

If the lesson as it unfolded did not support language learning among the students, it is useful to examine why. Sometimes a lesson doesn’t go as planned. Students may not grasp a concept as readily as expected and more time is needed to explore the new material. Sometimes a teacher assumes students can meet an objective (e.g., write a letter to the editor protesting teen curfews), but fails to provide explicit guidance in how to do so. One recommendation for teachers to keep students on track with their language development is to refer back to objective(s) during the lesson. The following suggestions may help:

- Reread the objective using shared reading during the lesson to re-focus the students.
- Ask students what they have done up to that point in the lesson that relates to the objective.
- Have students rate how well they are meeting the objective, using informal checks. For example: Thumbs up ~ I got it. Thumbs down ~ I am completely lost. Thumbs sideways horizontally ~ I’m making progress.

**Review & Assessment**

This component has several features that relate to academic language development: the review of key vocabulary (Feature 27), the provision of feedback to students on their language output (Feature 29), and the assessment of student learning as related to the language objective (Feature 30). As we increase the rigor of our instruction, we must regularly monitor student learning. Formative assessments of both the content and language goal(s) of a lesson must be implemented.

**Review & Assessment**

27. Comprehensive review of key vocabulary.
29. Regular feedback provided to students on their output (e.g., language, content, work).
30. Assessment of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives (e.g., spot checking, group response) throughout the lesson.
Review & Assessment

SIOP® Feature #27

Review of Key Vocabulary

Because vocabulary knowledge is so important for conceptual understanding and success in school, we include this feature in the Review & Assessment component. First, we know students need repeated practice with new vocabulary words, and we believe that reminding the teacher to review these words at the end of a lesson offers an opportunity for engagement with the new terms. Second, we know that students often receive an overwhelming amount of input in their new language in each lesson and having the teacher point out the key vocabulary and concepts for students to remember helps keep them focused on the big picture.

Spending 3–5 minutes at the end of class can be a rewarding way to grow students’ vocabulary repertoire. There are many techniques to do so, as these few examples indicate:

- Play a vocabulary game like *Pictionary*, bingo, charades, 20 questions, word splash, and word generation (more games can be found in the *Making Content Comprehensible* for English Learners and *99 Ideas* books).
- Have students write a sentence using the word on an exit slip.
- List new and old words on the board, and have students choose two to make a sentence.
- Give students a category and ask them to generate a list of related words, including new words and ones previously taught.

A word of caution is merited here. As we wrote in *Making Content Comprehensible* (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2013, p. 216):

Please remember that effective review does not include the “dreaded word list” . . . nor the equally ineffective assignment of having students write vocabulary or spelling words ten (or more) times each. Research findings are very clear—isolated word lists and dictionary definitions alone do not promote vocabulary and language development.

SIOP® Feature #29

Regular Feedback on Student Output

Content teachers generally give students sufficient feedback on their understanding of curriculum topics or task assignments, but they are less apt to give feedback on students’ use of academic language. While they might help with pronunciation or finding the right verb tense, they rarely correct the syntax of a sentence if it is comprehensible or push the students to elaborate their sentences into more fully formed thoughts that might warrant the use of conjunctions, relative clauses, logical connectors, and so on. Teachers often accept a one- or two-word answer from a student and provide the elaboration themselves.

At times teachers do not want to call attention to a student’s linguistic error. Sometimes doing so will interrupt the flow of the lesson or take the discussion off on a tangent; sometimes doing so will, in the teacher’s mind, embarrass the student in front of his or her classmates; and sometimes the teacher is unsure how to explain or correct the error. In the first case, teachers can make time later, perhaps in another lesson, to address the language error. If a number of students would benefit, a mini-lesson explicitly focusing on the grammar point or language usage issue may be called for. In the second case, the teacher can pull the student aside to arrange a time to talk about the error outside the class period or during time
that students are working independently. Modeling is another way to provide feedback on accurate language use. Teachers can correctly restate the statement the student made, thus validating the student’s utterance but also demonstrating the correct form or pronunciation. In the third case, the content teacher may want to let the ESL teacher know about the error and ask him or her to address it. That ESL teacher may also be able to tell the content teacher whether the error is a typical language acquisition issue and is something that is more likely to be learned when the student is more proficient in English.

One reason we are experiencing more long-term English learners in districts across the United States is because their academic language skills are “good enough” to get by in a content classroom but they don’t reach an advanced or transitional level of English language proficiency. Giving students explicit feedback, and not accepting an answer that approximates what should be said, especially for students who are at an intermediate proficiency level or beyond, will help them in the long run.

We also want to point out that feedback can be offered regarding class and group participation. By giving feedback to students as they work together in groups, teachers can guide them to use the type of language associated with individually assigned roles. In order to help students take responsibility for their own academic language development, teachers can also instruct students in ways they can provide feedback to one another. Then activities like peer editing of written work and peer rating of oral presentations can be incorporated into lessons. These activities work best when peers not only indicate what needs to be improved but also express how it may be improved.

**SIOP® Feature #30**

**Assessment of Student Comprehension**

When we coach teachers, one important question we ask after an observation is “When did learning occur?” An effective SIOP teacher is able to answer this question, in part because she or he has regularly assessed the students’ progress toward meeting the content and language objectives. Informal checks of comprehension and performance throughout the lesson inform teachers about which students may need some reteaching and which ones are able to move forward.

While this feature refers to both the content and language objectives, we are concerned with the assessment of academic language in this chapter. Some teachers may not feel comfortable assessing students’ language development, but if they are taking the SIOP Model to heart, they need to give equal time to assessing both the students’ content knowledge and their ability to use academic language to discuss and demonstrate their knowledge of the lesson topics as well as their facility with using academic language in appropriate ways. Sometimes we find that English learners do know the information on which they are being assessed, but because of language proficiency issues, including low vocabulary, reading, and writing skills, they are unable to demonstrate their knowledge fully. We encourage teachers to find accommodations to the language barriers that assessments raise. Multiple indicators—a number of different options for students to show their knowledge—are recommended.

Other ways to assess student learning of the language objective include:

- Have students rate and express their learning for the day, indicating with their fingers 1, 2 or 3:
  
  1. I can use the new academic language. For example . . .
2. I can want to know more about . . .
3. I need more help with . . .

- Have student groups do a Round Robin activity (talking consecutively for a specified time; or writing on, then passing around a single sheet of paper) about the aspect of academic English they learned in that lesson, or can do (e.g., generate sentences using the language target of the lesson).
- Before students leave the classroom, have them complete a Tickets Out card (also known as an Exit Slip) telling what they learned and/or asking any clarifying questions they need answered.

Summary

As you plan and deliver lessons that integrate content with language learning, features from the SIOP Model can keep academic language development on track. Working through lesson planning carefully can help ensure that English learners have multiple opportunities to learn and practice the language associated with the content topics and tasks. Remember the following points:

- Recognize that language learning opportunities occur frequently in every lesson. Learn to spot each opportunity and capitalize on it.
- Plan for instruction in elements and uses of academic language.
- Be explicit and model the type of academic language you want students to acquire.
- Remember that a well-crafted SIOP lesson with meaningful activities offers English learners and other students who need to strengthen their academic language and literacy:
  - targeted practice in academic language skills
  - instruction that matches the linguistic skills needed for processing the lesson’s conceptual information or conducting the lesson’s tasks.

Questions for Reflection

1. Write down the eight components of the SIOP Model. Under each, summarize the features that focus specifically on language development. Which component(s) do you typically implement in lessons? Which one is less familiar to you? How will you begin to incorporate those features into lessons?

2. Describe three types of learning strategies that support academic language development. Which strategy will you teach students to use at the beginning of the school year? Which might you teach later in the year?

3. Make an audio recording of your own teaching or use an available recorded lesson. How clear and understandable is the speech? Is there differentiation for various proficiency levels, such as simplified sentence structure for beginning speakers? Does the teacher modulate his or her speech to increase students’ oral comprehension? What suggestions would you give to the teacher?

4. Make an action plan. What are two ways you will try to maximize the academic language development of your students over the next few months?