

Language for Achievement—Taxonomy: Academic English Language Functions

Academic English Language Function		Operational Definition—The language needed to engage with and achieve in the content (standard or item) consists of the use of:	Academic English Language Function		Operational Definition—The language needed to engage with and achieve in the content (standard or item) consists of the use of:
A	Identification	a word or phrase to name an object, action, event, idea, fact, problem, need, or process.	K	Generalization	phrases or sentences to express an opinion, principle, trend, or conclusion that is based on facts, statistics, or other information, and/or to extend that opinion/principle/etc. to other relevant situations/context/ets.
	Labeling	a word or phrase to name an object, action, event, or idea.		Inferring	words, phrases, or sentences to express understanding of implied/implicit based on available information. Discourse markers include inferential logical connectors such as <i>although, while, thus, therefore.</i>
	Enumeration	words or phrases to name distinct objects, actions, events, or ideas in a series, set, or in steps.		Prediction	words, phrases, or sentences to express an idea or notion about a future action or event based on available information. Discourse markers include adverbials such as <i>maybe, perhaps, obviously, evidently.</i>
B	Classification	words, phrases, or sentences to assign/associate an object, action, event, or idea to the category or type to which it belongs.		Hypothesizing	phrases or sentences to express an idea/expectation or possible outcome based on available information. Discourse markers include adverbials such as <i>generally, typically, obviously, evidently.</i>
	Sequencing	words, phrases, or sentences to express the order of information (e.g., a series of objects, actions, events, ideas). Discourse markers include adverbials such as <i>first, next, then, finally.</i>	L	Argumentation	phrases or sentences to present a point of view with the intent of communicating or supporting a particular position or conviction. Discourse structures include expressions such as <i>in my opinion, it seems to me,</i> and adverbials such as <i>since, because, although, however.</i>
	Organization	words, phrases, or sentences to express relationships between/among objects, actions, events, or ideas, or the structure or arrangement of information. Discourse markers include coordinating conjunctions such as <i>and, but, yet, or,</i> and adverbials such as <i>first, next, then, finally.</i>		Persuasion	phrases or sentences to present ideas, opinions, and/or principles with the intent of creating agreement around or convincing others of a position or conviction. Discourse markers include expressions such as <i>in my opinion, it seems to me,</i> and adverbials such as <i>since, because, although, however.</i>
C	Comparison/ Contrast	words, phrases, or sentences to express similarities and/or differences, or to distinguish between two or more objects, actions, events, or ideas. Discourse markers include coordinating conjunctions <i>and, but, yet, or,</i> and adverbials such as <i>similarly, likewise, in contrast, instead, despite this.</i>	Negotiation	phrases or sentences to engage in a discussion with the purpose of creating mutual agreement from two or more different points of view.	
D	Inquiring	words, phrases, or sentences to solicit information (e.g., <i>yes-no</i> questions, <i>wh</i> -questions, statements used as questions).	M	Synthesizing	phrases or sentences to express, describe, or explain relationships among two or more ideas. Relationship verbs such as <i>contain, entail, consist of,</i> partitives such as <i>a part of, a segment of,</i> and quantifiers such as <i>some, a good number of, almost all, a few, hardly any</i> often are used.
E	Description	word, phrase, or sentence to express or observe the attributes or properties of an object, action, event, idea, or solution.		N	Critiquing
F	Definition	word, phrase, or sentence to express the meaning of a given word, phrase, or expression.	O	Evaluation	phrases or sentences to express a judgment about the meaning, importance, or significance of an action, event, idea, or text.
G	Explanation	phrases or sentences to express the rationale, reasons, causes, or relationships related to one or more actions, events, ideas, or processes. Discourse markers include coordinating conjunctions <i>so, for,</i> and adverbials such as <i>therefore, as a result, for that reason.</i>	P	Symbolization & Representation	symbols, numerals, and letters, to represent meaning within a conventional context (e.g., +, -, CO ₂ , >, Δ, π, cos, y=3x+4, c ² =a ² +b ² , h/2(b ₁ +b ₂), cat vs. cat).
I	Interpretation	phrases, sentences, or symbols to express understanding of the intended or alternate meaning of information.	Z	No Academic Language Function	Item or standard does not contain <i>any</i> academic language functions; may contain linguistic skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, syllabication).
J	Analyzing	phrases or sentences to indicate parts of a whole and/or the relationship between/among parts of an action, event, idea, or process. Relationship verbs such as <i>contain, entail, consist of,</i> partitives such as <i>a part of, a segment of,</i> and quantifiers such as <i>some, a good number of, almost all, a few, hardly any</i> often are used.			

Note: This taxonomy focuses on academic language functions and does not address the identification or definition of linguistic skills (e.g., phonology, morphology).

Language for Achievement—Language Complexity

The *Language for Achievement* language demands (i.e., academic vocabulary and grammar, functions, spoken and written text, classroom discourse) interact with language complexity. Language complexity, as used in this framework, is defined below.

Vocabulary and Grammar

Lower Complexity	Higher Complexity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantically simple words and phrases • Common, high-frequency words and phrases • Simple, high-frequency morphological structures (e.g., common affixes, common compound words) • Short, simple sentences with limited modifying words or phrases • SVO sentence structure; simple verb and noun phrase constructions • Simple, familiar modals (e.g., <i>can</i>) • Simple <i>wh-</i> and <i>yes/no</i> questions • Direct (quoted) speech • Verbs in present tense, simple past tense, and future with <i>going to</i> and <i>will</i> • Simple, high-frequency noun, adjective, and adverb constructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantically complex words and phrases (e.g., multiple-meaning words, idioms, figurative language) • Specialized or technical words and phrases • Complex, higher level morphological structures (e.g., higher level affixes and compound words) • Compound and complex sentences; longer sentences with modifying words, phrases, and clauses • High level phrase and clause constructions (e.g., passive constructions, gerunds and infinitives as subjects and objects, conditional constructions) • Multiple-meaning modals, past forms of modals • Complex <i>wh-</i> and <i>yes/no</i> question constructions, tag questions • Indirect (reported) speech • Present, past, and future progressive and perfect verb structures • Complex, higher level noun, adjective, and adverb constructions

Functions

Lower Complexity	Higher Complexity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length ranges from a word to paragraphs • No/little variation in words and/or phrases in sentences/paragraphs; consistent use of language • Repetition of key words/phrases/sentences <i>reinforces</i> information • Language is used to present critical/central details • No/little abstraction; language reflects more literal/concrete information; illustrative language is used; language is used to define/explain abstract information • Graphics and/or relevant text features reinforce critical information/details • Mostly common/familiar words/phrases; no/few uncommon words/phrases, compound words, gerunds, figurative language, and/or idioms • Language is organized/structured • Mostly simple sentence construction • No/little passive voice • Little variation in tense • Mostly one idea/detail per sentence • Mostly familiar construction (e.g., 's for possessive; s and es for plural) • Mostly familiar text features (e.g., bulleted lists, bold face) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length ranges from a word to paragraphs • Some variation in words and/or phrases in sentences/paragraphs • Repetition of key words/phrases/sentences <i>introduces new or extends</i> information • Language is used to present critical/central details, but non-essential detail also is presented • Some abstraction; language <i>may or may not</i> be used to define/explain abstract information; illustrative language <i>may or may not</i> be used; technical words/phrases are used • Graphics and/or relevant text features <i>may or may not</i> reinforce critical information/details • Some common/familiar words/phrases; some uncommon words/phrases, compound words, gerunds, figurative language, and/or idioms • Language <i>may or may not</i> be organized/structured • Varied sentence construction, including complex sentence construction • Some passive voice • Variation in tense • Multiple ideas/details per sentence • Some less familiar/irregular construction • Some less familiar text features (e.g., pronunciation keys, text boxes)

Spoken and Written Texts

Lower Complexity	Higher Complexity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short texts, or longer texts chunked into short sections (words, phrases, single sentences, short paragraphs) • No or little variation of words/phrases in sentences/paragraphs • Repetition of key words/phrases reinforces information • One idea/detail per sentence; only critical/central ideas included • No or little abstraction; mostly literal/concrete information; abstract information is defined or explained • Visual aids, graphics, and/or text features reinforce critical information/details • Common text features (e.g. bulleted lists, boldface font) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long texts (long lists of words/phrases, a series of sentences, long paragraphs, multiple-paragraph texts) • Variation of words/phrases in sentences/paragraphs • Repetition of key words/phrases introduces new information or extends information • Multiple ideas/details per sentence; non-essential ideas included • Some or much abstraction that is not explicitly defined or explained • Visual aids, graphics, and/or text features may not reinforce critical information/details • Higher level text features (e.g., pronunciation keys, text boxes)

Classroom Discourse

Lower Complexity	Higher Complexity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantically simple words and phrases • Common, high-frequency words and phrases • Simple, high-frequency morphological structures (e.g., common affixes, common compound words) • Short, simple sentences with limited modifying words or phrases • SVO sentence structure; simple verb and noun phrase constructions • Simple, familiar modals (e.g., can) • Simple wh- and yes/no questions • Direct (quoted) speech • Verbs in present tense, simple past tense, and future with going to and will • Simple, high-frequency noun, adjective, and adverb constructions <p>Note: To the extent that spoken “texts” (planned, connected utterances) are used in classroom discourse, elements of lower complexity spoken text, as defined previously, apply here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantically complex words and phrases (e.g., multiple-meaning words, idioms, figurative language) • Specialized or technical words and phrases • Complex, higher level morphological structures (e.g., higher level affixes and compound words) • Compound and complex sentences; longer sentences with modifying words, phrases, and clauses • High level phrase and clause constructions (e.g., passive constructions, gerunds and infinitives as subjects and objects, conditional constructions) • Multiple-meaning modals, past forms of modals • Complex wh- and yes/no question constructions, tag questions • Indirect (reported) speech • Present, past, and future progressive and perfect verb structures • Complex, higher level noun, adjective, and adverb constructions <p>Note: To the extent that spoken “texts” (planned, connected utterances) are used in classroom discourse, elements of higher complexity spoken text, as defined previously, apply here.</p>

Definition from the *Framework for High-Quality ELP Standards and Assessments* (AACC, 2009):

Academic language, broadly defined, includes the language students need to meaningfully engage with academic content within the academic context. This should *not* be interpreted to suggest that separate word lists and/or definitions of content-related language should be developed for each academic subject. Rather, academic language includes the words, grammatical structures, and discourse markers needed in, for example, describing, sequencing, summarizing, and evaluating — these are language demands (skills, knowledge) that facilitate student access to and engagement with grade-level academic content. These academic language demands are different from cognitive demands (e.g., per Bloom’s taxonomy). Although there may not be just one accepted definition of academic language, there are a good number of resources available that address the issue of academic language and may be considered in the development of state ELP standards and assessments. For example: Aguirre-Munoz, Parks, Benner, Amabisca, & Boscardin, 2006; Bailey, 2007; Bailey, Butler, & Sato, 2007; Butler, Bailey, Stevens, Huang, & Lord, 2004; Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1980; Cummins, 2005; Halliday, 1994; Sato, 2007; Scarcella & Zimmerman, 1998; Schleppegrell, 2001.

For a free download of the *Framework for High-Quality ELP Standards and Assessments*, go to http://www.aacompcenter.org/cs/aacc/print/htdocs/aacc/resources_sp.htm.