

Developing Academic Language Lesson



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Introduction

Academic language includes understanding and developing the skills of communicating content or subject matter in written and/or oral forms. Interpreting and applying the many and varied language patterns and structures that facilitate the learner's abilities to acquire the meaning of content represents the purposes of learning academic language.

The study of academic language is parallel to understanding and applying the Depth and Complexity prompt: Language of the Discipline. Both academic language and the language of the discipline focus on the need for all students to develop the language patterns appropriate to be conversant and knowledgeable in the disciplines. The development of expertise in a discipline is contingent on developing comprehension and usability of the language representative of that discipline.

The emphasis on the development of academic language is often times associated with English Language Learners. However, the need to develop academic language has been discussed in the literature as an educational practice that is appropriate for all learners, including those who are proficient in English.

The activity sheet provides a framework to introduce the nomenclature and nuances in words across the discipline. The following lesson illustrates how the same word has different meanings in different disciplines. Educators, caregivers, and students can embark on a "treasure hunt" to identify and define the many and varied words that have multiple meanings across the disciplines.

The language grid below is followed by resources that will help students get started on completing this lesson.

Developing Academic Language

How does the same work have different meanings in different disciplines?
How many different words can you fill in?

Science	Social Studies	Language Arts	Math	Art
plant	plant			
cell	cell			

Academic Language Lesson

There are a variety of learning experiences that can be accomplished using the completed “Developing Academic Language” sheet as a reference:

1. *Guess the Word* — Players provide words with multiple disciplinary meanings in a “charades” type game where they act out the meaning of the word. The other players try and guess the meaning based upon the content clues acted out.
2. *Think Like a Disciplinarian* — Players select a discipline and identify the word(s) and/or phrase(s) that have meanings in other disciplines. For example: I am an entomologist who studies ants as social insects of a family. Players must identify the vocabulary within the context of the disciplinarian’s comments that have meaning in other disciplines. Example: ant versus aunt.

Resource Websites to get you started with the Developing Academic Language Grid

1. **Definitions of “Plant”**
2. **Definitions of “Cell”**
3. **Words with Multiple Meanings**